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CO

A

The post-plinthophoric silver dra
with A.-P. C. WEISS

The victorious signs of Constanti

A seventh-century Syrian hoard
coins, by MARCUS PHILLIPS AN

Fātimid and post-Fātimid glas
Prague, by VLASTIMIL NOVÁK

A large hoard from the Latin
Henry I of Cyprus (1218-53),

Local bronze tokens issued in Ji
WANG

The Alexander-Eagle hoard: TI

More pseudo-Rhodian drachm
ASHTON

On the bridge on a coin of S
DESNIER

A Sponsian re-discovered, by L

A hoard from the Blois region a
c. 920/40, by JENS CHRISTIAN

Countermarked Islamic gold c
BROOME

The Scottish thirty-shilling pie

COIN

ANCIENT HOARDS

A 1971 group of Rhodian
BOEHRINGER

Britain

that Alain Bresson was preparing Attic weight drachms for the next time for exchanging drafts with us. I am concerned about the gap in minting after the disaster of 42 BC. We still favour of a gap are attractive, but I do not argue that the Attic weight series began before 43 BC, and that the Rhodian series during such a gap is a matter for debate still in circulation, with foreign coins (published July 1997), pp. 43–61, on the plinthophoric gap, although he is correct, in particular by not taking due account of the coins which were hedged, and by claiming that Attic weight drachms c. 40 BC–AD 20. The Nero/Nike bronzes were struck in honour of Nero's defeat of the Republicans in 47 BC and Antony's death a year later. One of the large Nike bronzes of Nero. The gap of a century which it entails between the Nero/Nike issue and the Dionysos/Nike bronzes in *CH* 2, *pace* Hijmans, that signed by the left field, ethnic similarly arranged to Dionysos/Nike bronzes in *CH* 2, condition (e.g. Ashton 1991, pp. 10–11) that they had been in circulation as concealed, at the earliest in the period that the wide variation in wear on the obverse suggests a period of minting by Hijmans.

The Victorious Signs of Constantine: A Reappraisal

PATRICK BRUUN

[PLATES 17–19]

THE CONSTANTINIAN SIGNS

THE Constantinian signs discussed in the text below are,¹ generally speaking, a series of signs and designs preserved by different kinds of sources from different periods of time, differently interpreted, and identified with the heavenly signs reported to have been observed by the emperor Constantine before the impending battle of the Milvian bridge on 28 October AD 312 outside the walls of Rome. Constantine's victory made him master of the western part of the Roman empire. At the same time it was a victory for Christianity as literary sources fairly close to the event testify (Lactantius and Eusebius). All this is common knowledge, well established. However, there is doubt concerning the shape of the heavenly sign observed by the emperor, a sign which, according to Lactantius (*de mortibus* 44.5), Constantine *transversa X littera, summo capite circumflexo, Christum in scutis notat*. Eusebius in his Church history confirms that there was a sign (*Hist. Eccl.* IX.9.10: τοῦ σωτηρίου τρόπαιου πάθους, and IX.9.11 τοῦτω τῷ σωτηριώδει σημείῳ), without describing it in detail. Only later, in *Vita Constantini*, does he testify to a heavenly vision of a sign and of an inscription 'τοῦτω νίκα' (I.28), but the context is different and the location somewhere in Gaul. However, Eusebius continues and describes a military standard (*labarum*) which he had seen with his own eyes. On the top of the standard, above the drapery, was a wreath within which were two letters referring to Christ (obviously the Greek X (*chi*) and P (*rho*); the X was located with its centre in

¹ This paper was read at the meeting of the Royal Numismatic Society, 12 December 1994. Its revision for publication has been delayed by the author's ill health. He is grateful to Dr John Kent for his assistance with regard to the coin material. When the paper was written, *RIC* X had not yet been published. Dr Roger Bland of the British Museum read and adjusted the original text, and eliminated errors of numismatic relevance. The following abbreviations have been used:

AIRF *Acta Instituti Romani Finlandiae*, vol. 1, 1–2. *Sylloge Inscriptionum Christianarum Veterum Musei Vaticani*, ed. Henrik Zilliacus (Helsinki, 1963): 1. Textus, 2. Commentarii.
ICVR *Inscriptiones Christianae Veteres Urbis Romae*, ed. G. B. de Rossi, I (Rome, 1857–63).
SICV *Sylloge Inscriptionum Christianarum Veterum*, see *AIRF*.

the middle of the vertical axis of P. By this time, however, a quarter of a century had elapsed since the battle of the Milvian bridge.

All this is common knowledge today, the only point of controversy being the exact shape of the sign seen in the Constantinian vision. Closest topographically and chronologically, and indisputably connected with Constantine's victory is, however, the sign depicted on a silver medallion issued by the mint of Ticinum, most likely in the year 315. The sign was located on the front of a new type of helmet (3/4 facing) at the root of a high, bushy crest (see **Pl. 19, 6**; *R/C VII*, p. 364, no. 36).

With so much being well known, what is the specific purpose of this reappraisal? The contention is that in a wider and longer perspective, a close analysis of the numismatic material of a century after the Milvian bridge illustrates different opinions and attitudes prevailing within the Church, which are also reflected by the literary sources. These attitudes suggest that the prime element connected with the sign of the Milvian bridge was not the name of Christ, nor the Christian creed, but the force of the divinely inspired Constantine. The heavenly intervention in his favour before the battle is differently described by contemporaneous sources. Therefore 'Constantinian' appears to be a proper designation of the signs which appeared to safeguard his victory, a prerequisite for the religious toleration codified by the emperors Constantine and Licinius in Milan in February 313. Only later did the undisputable Christian significance of the victorious sign become clear beyond doubt.

The fact that Constantine, in spite of his apparent interest in ecclesiastical matters, can rarely be seen to employ the wondrous sign of AD 312, is surprising. Before the inauguration of Constantinople it appeared only exceptionally and in the 330s mostly in connection with military standards depicted on bronze coins. This does not appear to be consistent with the emperor's self-assertive references to the blessings he had bestowed upon the Empire with the coming of the new religion.

With the passing of time the Constantinian sign(s) were named 'Christograms', i.e. monograms or *compendia scripturae* of the name Christos (a translation to Greek of the Hebrew *Messiah*, the Anointed One in the New Testament), but when the signs were first understood and read in such a way is uncertain. Lactantius (*de moribus* 44.5) writes *Christum in scutis notat*, which may be correct as a general expression signifying that under the protection of this sign Constantine fought the battle. We have, however, no evidence of shields marked with the name of Christ.² We should, therefore, regard the expression as a manner of speaking. Lactantius, who wrote very soon after the event, but after the meeting of the emperors Constantine and Licinius in Milan, where they agreed on the religious

² The coinage offers no instances of shields decorated with the sign. The labarum was clearly a standard, as described by Eusebius in his *Vita Constantini* I.31.

toleration, clearly could see the Constantinian victory as a victory of Christ. Hence he could have said, figuratively, that Constantine had used Christ as a shield. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Eusebius did not mention any of the particulars given by Lactantius except for the fact that Constantine had had a vision.³

The monogrammatic signs ✠, ✡, ✢ and the like were at the outset regarded as Constantinian signs, the chief elements of which appear to have been the letters X and P, the Cross at this juncture being alien to Constantine and his counsellors. With Magnentius' rebellion we move on to solid Christological ground with the sign flanked by the biblical letters A and Ω, where the sign represents Christ. Again, Magnentius' coin reverses appear to be a counterstroke to Vetrano's reverses inscribed **HOC SIGNO VICTOR ERIS**,⁴ a translation of the Eusebian expression *τοῦτοῦ τοῦ κρ.* As a parallel development one should interpret epigraphical formulae in funerary inscriptions where ✠ (and similar monograms) were employed syntactically, i.e. in expressions like **IN PACE ✠** (to be read *in pace Christi*; consequently the symbolic function of the sign has disappeared, cf. **Pl. 17, 2**). The earliest example of the epigraphical ✠, securely dated, is found in an epitaph, where the sign appears twice, in a symbolic as well as in a syntactic function in an inscription of AD 331 (**Pl. 17, 4**).⁵

On the pre-Constantinian occurrence of monogrammatic signs, there is little to report.⁶ Most of the inscriptions are impossible to date. Generally speaking, it is natural that, in an era characterized by persecutions, and consequently by cryptography, transparent references to the Saviour would have been rare. Nevertheless, as instances of funerary inscriptions where the monogrammatic ✠ occurs, three epitaphs, now in the Vatican Galleria Lapidaria are illustrated here. They represent three stages of 'Christianization', of the understanding and acceptance of the message of the Church. Certain things should, however, be considered when trying to identify the deceased and his or her socio-cultural background. On the one hand, it is logical that most of those who paid for the burial place (for instance a *loculus* in the catacombs) and employed a *lapicida* to cut the text into the stone would have been fairly well-to-do, although not necessarily

³ This interpretation is basically the same as the one presented by the author in *R/C VII* (pp. 61f.).

⁴ P. Bruun, *AIRF I*, vol. 2, 'Symboles, signes et monogrammes', pp. 73-166, at p. 157.

⁵ *JCR I*, 39 = E. Diehl, *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres I* (Berlin, 1925), no. 1545. The reproduction shows, and de Rossi remarks, that Boldetti in a publication of 1710 could read the entire inscription, part of which later had been erased by the public walking across it. For the consular date, see A. Degraffi, *I fasti consolares* (Rome, 1952), p. 80.

⁶ The author is restricting himself to the epigraphic material presented earlier (Bruun, *AIRF I*, 2) although impressive volumes of the *Corpus inscriptionum* and *Sylloge inscriptionum Christianarum Veterum* have been published during the last decades. However, three cases of crucial importance are nevertheless reviewed below because the readings and the contexts in the light of recent research have necessitated some re-interpretations.

literate. The *lapicidae* were certainly equipped with models, both pictorial and textual. External factors, and not necessarily religious, may have decided the choice of symbols and formulae. Customs may have varied in different catacombs, or in the offices of different masonries. It is, therefore, very hard to reconstruct the backgrounds of single epitaphs. The three slabs illustrated should show the workmanship of the stonemasons to compare with the technical aptitude of the die-cutters working in the imperial mints.

The three inscriptions (PI. 17, 1-3) are presented according to the presumed internal chronological order, with *AIRF* I, 1, no. 274 of uncertain provenance coming first, then no. 250, also of uncertain provenance, and finally no. 115 from the catacomb of Cyriacae.

No. 274. The inscription is topped by ✠, and ends with the formula **IN PACE**. The sign is clearly symbolical (but of what?). The opening reference **ETERNA DOMO REQVI (escit)** represents a pagan tradition, whereas **IN PACE** is Christian. Whether ✠ belongs to the mundane or the heavenly sphere is uncertain.

No. 250. The opening formula **IN PACE ✠** should probably be read *in pace Christi*.

No. 115. The Christogram with the apocalyptic letters corresponds to a Magentian coin reverse, cf. PI. 17, 14.

Three cases of crucial importance for the analysis of the development should, in addition to those above, be reviewed in this context. The first concerns a monogram discovered under the foundations of the baptistry of St Giovanni in Laterano, the second a Greek cross in the catacombs named Hypogeum Aurelliorum in a fresco painting in a vault, and the third the remnants of a mosaic in the necropolis located along the Via Triumphalis running from the Castel St Angelo at the Tiber through the Vatican area (*in Vaticano ad Circum*). The mosaic showed a young male with a nimbus with a cross (*nimbus cruciger*), obviously standing in a chariot. It has been regarded by many highly respected scholars as the earliest likeness of Christ.

All these interpretations have been shown to rest on faulty knowledge of their contexts. Modern excavations of the baptistry have shown, with regard to the first case, that the Lateran area, part of which had been donated by Constantine to his wife the empress Fausta (*Dornus Faustae*), had been insufficiently known, and that the constructions of the basilica started only after 317, when the emperor allotted funds and domains in areas conquered in the Civil War of 316/17, to pay for the enterprise,⁷ and that in the second case, the cross in the catacombs proved to be, by recent examinations with

⁷ See P. Bruun, 'The Church triumphant "intra muros"', *QT* 10 (1981), pp. 371ff., for the Constantinian sign with reference to G. Pelliccioni, *Le nuove scoperte sulle origini del battistero Lateranense*, Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia, Serie III, Memoriae, vol. 12 (The Vatican, 1973), p. 83 and particularly with reference to an inserted note by Dr Paavo Castrén on the inscription with the sign beneath the foundations of the baptistry.

the aid of modern technical equipment,⁸ a well preserved fragment of an intricate pattern of vines and garlands. The third case, the 'nimbate Christ', has been discovered in three synagogues in the Galilee, and the figure has been identified as Helios (PI. 18, 5).⁹ The Christ of the Vatican necropolis is consequently the sungod Helios in an astrological setting, which is made clear by the script and the context.

Thus we are left with the problem of why Constantine would have chosen, in a Latin-speaking area, a monogram composed by two Greek letters, a *compendium scripturae* alien to the epigraphical conventions in Italy. Today the answer seems to be that, whatever the sign originally meant in the eyes and in the mind of Constantine, it underwent a long development until it was accepted as a Christian sign and symbol, and until it achieved the distinction of a Christogram. As we are using the coinage as a yardstick, we move in the highest strata of the Roman society, the administration and the Imperial court.

When trying to follow the Constantinian sign on its way to full Christian glory, we have to accept that the sign might have varied a little and could have been interpreted as **XP, XI** or a *crux monogrammatica*, but the victorious *vexillum* or standard could also be marked with a cross (Greek, Latin or oblique, i.e. the cross of St Andrew).

In the Constantinian coinage it is impossible to find anything explicitly Christian, or anything crypto-Christian, but at the disposal of the mint officials there was always an array of signs and marks to serve administrative or decorative purposes. This repertory was in the post-Milvian era increased by varieties of the Constantinian signs. Significantly, that happened first in the mint of Ticinum, where the well known silver medallion with the helmeted 3/4 facing portrait of Constantine included the sign of Pons Milvius on the front of the helmet, just below the crest (PI. 18, 6). The next mints to display the same sign, although now as a serial mark on coins, were Ticinum (*RIC* VII, pp. 366, 376ff.), Aquileia (*RIC* VII) pp. 400f.) and Siscia (*ibid.*, 440f.) on Sol and VIRTUS EXERCIT coin types.

The first time the sign appeared as an integral part of the imagery is on the Constantinopolitan **SPES PVBLIC** reverse depicting a vexillum piercing a serpent on the ground. The vexillum staff is topped by the **XP**-monogram (PI. 19, 7), and the banner is decorated by three discs (*imagines clipeatae*) mentioned in Eusebius' description in the *Vita Constantini* (I.28-31). They stand for the portraits of the emperor and his two sons. The labarum was this time tantamount to the emperor's own personal standard. The serpent on the

⁸ N. Himmelmann, 'Das Hypogäum der Aurelii in Viale Manzoni. Ikonographische Bemerkungen', *Abh. Mainz* 7 (1975), pp. 7-28. Himmelmann's study was subsequently verified and reported by Lars Djerf, 'Aureliernas hypogeum', *Rom horisont* 27 (Uppsala, 1984), 17-19.

⁹ K. Weitzmann, 'Late Antique and Early Christian Art, third to seventh century', in *Age of Spirituality* (New York, 1979).

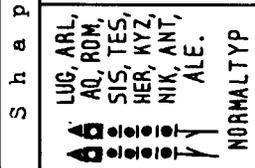
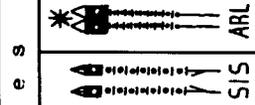
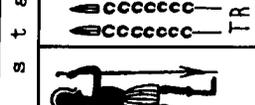
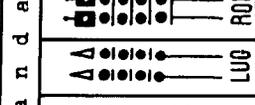
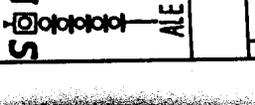
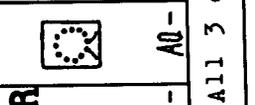
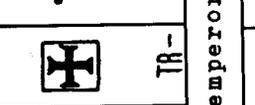
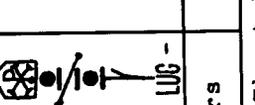
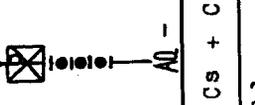
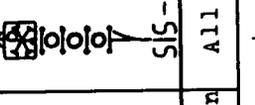
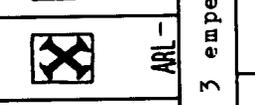
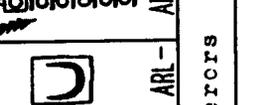
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FIG. 1. GLORIA EXERC-ITVS, AD 330-335. 2 Soldiers with spear and shield, between them, 2 standards.

ground was the defeated Licinius, the internal foe within the realm, destroyed by Constantine. The time of issue was about 327.

After the dedication of the eastern capital in 330 a new reverse was introduced to be struck by all the mints of the Empire, **GLORIA EXERCITVS**. The reverse depicted two soldiers facing, each leaning on a spear held in the outer hand and with their inner hand resting on a shield. Between them two military standards display very small banners, in most cases decorated by a disc, probably representing the image of the emperor (Fig. 1).¹⁰ Certain mints, mainly the western ones, had additional marks on the reverses, among them the Constantinian sign, employed as one of the six signs at Arles.

Five years later, in connection with a new reduction of the coin module, the reverse legend was maintained, but the design this time depicted two soldiers with a single standard between them (Fig. 2). Now the banner was larger. The Constantinian sign decorated the banner at first at Trier (later M),

¹⁰ To survey the organization of the issues of single reverse types empire-wide or regionally, the Viennese scholar Guido Bruck's drawings in his book *Die spätantische Kupferprägung* (Wien, 1961), written at a time when the *RIC* series only extended to Diocletian, appear to be a very useful tool. Like many other Austrian scholars, Bruck was an excellent draughtsman with a keen eye for the typical, for the common denominator. He illustrated how the engravers of each mint copied the models of the dies. Bruck worked exclusively on the coins in the collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, which for this particular period is very rich. Each survey comprises a statistical account of the coins. The figures have been excluded from the reproductions for practical reasons, but to give a picture of the extent of the Vienna collection and of the thoroughness and ambition of Dr. Bruck, it may be noted that the figures given for Bruck's graph for **GLORIA EXERCITVS**, 2 standards on p. 25 (Fig. 1) are 1,024 coins from 13 mints, and the figures for the **GLORIA EXERCITVS**-series and the two series of the type with one standard only (Fig. 2: before and after the death of Constantine, see Bruck pp. 27ff.) together are 2,400 coins.

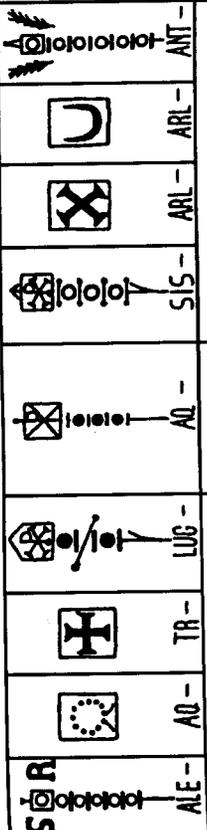
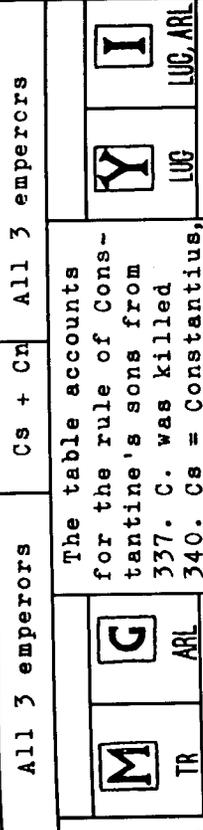
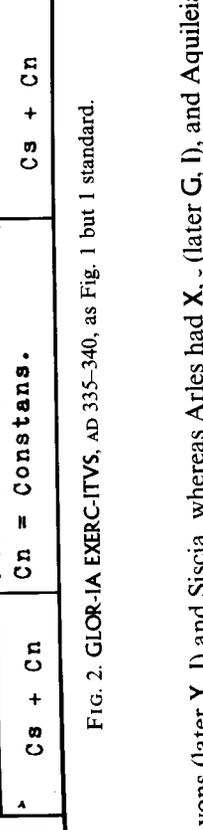
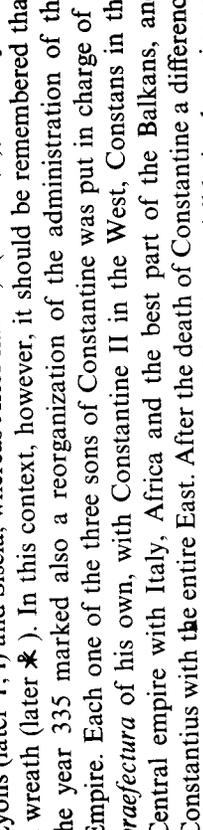
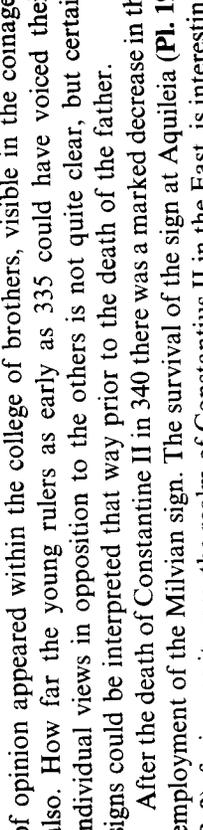
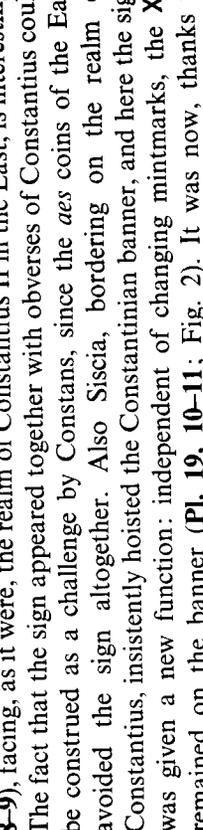
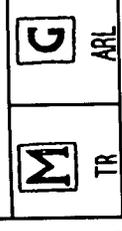
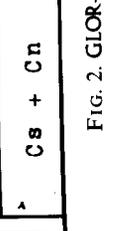
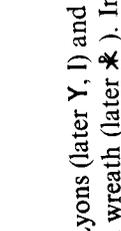
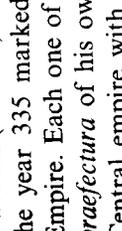
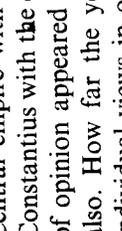
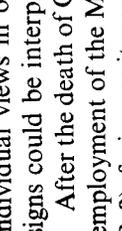
All 3 emperors		Cs + Cn		All 3 emperors	
					
The table accounts for the rule of Constantine's sons from 337. C. was killed 340. Cs = Constantius, Cn = Constans.					
					

FIG. 2. GLORIA EXERC-ITVS, AD 335-340, as Fig. 1 but 1 standard.

Lyons (later Y, I) and Siscia, whereas Arles had X, - (later G, I), and Aquileia a wreath (later ✱). In this context, however, it should be remembered that the year 335 marked also a reorganization of the administration of the Empire. Each one of the three sons of Constantine was put in charge of a *praefectura* of his own, with Constantine II in the West, Constans in the Central empire with Italy, Africa and the best part of the Balkans, and Constantius with the entire East. After the death of Constantine a difference of opinion appeared within the college of brothers, visible in the coinages also. How far the young rulers as early as 335 could have voiced their individual views in opposition to the others is not quite clear, but certain signs could be interpreted that way prior to the death of the father.

After the death of Constantine II in 340 there was a marked decrease in the employment of the Milvian sign. The survival of the sign at Aquileia (Pl. 19, 8-9), facing, as it were, the realm of Constantius II in the East, is interesting. The fact that the sign appeared together with obverses of Constantius could be construed as a challenge by Constans, since the *aes* coins of the East avoided the sign altogether. Also Siscia, bordering on the realm of Constantius, insistently hoisted the Constantinian banner, and here the sign was given a new function: independent of changing mintmarks, the XP remained on the banner (Pl. 19, 10-11; Fig. 2). It was now, thanks to Constans, an integral part of the standard (*RIC* VIII, pp. 355, nos 85-104). However, Constans' first issue at Aquileia, comprising double- and sesquiosolidi, may have been struck after the death of Constantine II (*RIC* VIII, pp. 314f., nos. 1-3, cf. also pp. 306f.). On these coins the emperor had

taken the place of the common soldier, and the legionary standard had been substituted by the emperor's personal standard, the *labarum*.

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE CONSTANTINIAN HERITAGE

The fifteen years after the death of Constantine could be labelled 'the struggle for the Constantinian heritage.' The prelude was, of course, the massacre in the summer of 337 of all the relatives who were regarded as potential threats by the imperial brothers, Constantine II, Constantius II and Constans. In September 337 all three assumed the title of Augustus. The continuation of the struggle was the rivalry of the brothers, which brought about the death of Constantine II in 340. Religious views and ecclesiastical affairs played here an important part, Constantius being a devoted Arian, whereas Constans' views were orthodox (Nicæan), possibly because he was the only brother who had been baptized.¹¹

An essential part of the *aes* coinage up to the mid-340s was the consecration and memorial series showing Constantine as *Divus Constantinus* and *Pater augustorum* issued by the two eldest sons, whereas Constans refused to recall the memory of his father in this fashion (Fig. 3).¹² On the other hand, he was the first ruler to attribute to the Constantinian sign a strictly confessional value, as his issues of Siscia (Pl. 19, 10-11) and Aquileia (Pl. 19, 8-9) show. Constantius' Arianism may explain why he declined to follow suit. The thought that the Constantinian sign could be interpreted in a Christian way, as a *compendium scripturae* of *Χριστός*, and that Christ could have died on the Cross, was contrary to the Arian concept of his divine nature (*οὐσία*).¹³

The controversies on the confessional level appear to provide an explanation for the heavy and varied issues of *aes* coins celebrating the millennial jubilee of 348 under the heading of **FEL TEMP REPARATIO**. In a paper published in 1933 Harold Mattingly wrote on the **FEL TEMP REPARATIO**: 'the use of the *labarum* was probably acceptable to all the parties.'¹⁴ This assertion should be tested, and for this purpose the four **FEL TEMP** types analyzed by Konrad Kraft should be sufficient.¹⁵ The analysis comprises coins of the largest module (AE 2 or *maiorina*). It includes two types with *labarum* (Figs. 4-5) and in addition (i) Helmeted soldier leading a small figure from a hut beneath a tree (Pl. 19, 13), and (ii) Helmeted soldier

¹¹ A. Piganiol, *L'Empire Chrétien* (325-395), Histoire romaine IV, 2 (Paris, 1947), p. 79.

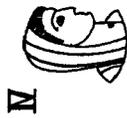
¹² K. Kraft, 'Die Taten der Kaiser Constans und Constantius II', *JNG 9* (1958), pp. 141-86.

¹³ The details of Constantius' intervention in ecclesiastical affairs and of the controversies of the imperial brothers are examined in Timothy Barnes' recent book *Athanasius and Constantius* (Harvard U.P., 1993).

¹⁴ H. Mattingly, 'FEL TEMP REPARATIO', *NC* 1933, pp. 182-202, at p. 191.

¹⁵ Kraft, Tab. 2, p. 167, and J. P. C. Kent, 'FEL TEMP REPARATIO', *NC* 1967, pp. 83-90; cf. also Fig. 4.

DVCONSTANTI NVSPTAVGG



MIT GLEICHER BÜSTE UND AVERSLEGENDE WERDEN VON CONSTANTIN II UND CONSTANTIVS II MÜNZEN ZUR ERINNERUNG AN IHREN VATER CONSTANTIN DEN GROSSEN MIT FOLGENDEN VIER REVERSE GEPRÄGT:

OHNE LEGENDE	AETERN APIETAS	VN MR	IVST VENMEM
NORMALTYP	NORMALTYP	NORMALTYP	NORMALTYP
QUADRIGA 9 3	TR LUG ARL AQ ROM SIS TES HER CONS KYZ NIK ANT ALE	VN MR	FLÜGEL: ALE
AETERNA PIETAS 2 8	QUADRIGA 9 3	IVST VENMEM	
IVST VEN MEM			
MÜNZSTÄTTEN:			
TR LUG ARL AQ ROM SIS TES HER CONS KYZ NIK ANT ALE			
QUADRIGA 9 3			
AETERNA PIETAS 2 8			
VN MR			
IVST VEN MEM			
AVERSLEGENDEN:			
DVCONSTANTI NVSPTAVGG: HER, CONS, KYZ, NIK, ANT, ALE.			
DIVCONSTANTI NVSPTAVGG: TR. DIVOCONS TANTINOP: LUG, ARL.			
REVERSOLEGENDE:			
AETERN APIETAS: ARL			
*AETERNA XPIETAS: DAS BEZEICHEN "X" IN DIE LEGENDE GESTELLT: LUG			
*IVSTVENMEMOR ALE: BEACHTET AUCH DAS ABWEICHENDE BILD			
IVST VENMEM: HER, CONS, NIK, ANT. IVST VENMEM! SCHREIBFEHLER: ANT, VN MR HER, CONS, KYZ, NIK, ANT, ALE.			
REVERSEBEZEICHEN:			
QUADRIGA	AETERNA PIETAS	VN MR	"IVST VENMEM"
S/R	N	X	HAT OBERHAUPT KEINE BEZEICHEN
ALE	ARL	ARL, LUG	CONS KYZ
ANT	ARL	ARL, LUG	CONS KYZ
OHNE REVERSEBEZEICHEN ALLE	VIER REVERSE-ÜBERALL		

FIG. 3. Constantine as *Divus Constantinus* and *Pater augustorum*.

The probability that all the parties concerned would have found the labarum equally acceptable – as suggested by Mattingly – should consequently, with reference to Kraft's survey, be regarded as unlikely.

When Constans was killed early in 350, a victim of the rebellion of Magnentius, the Persian war held Constantius in the East, particularly during Shapur's siege of Nisibis. However, in the autumn he could set out westwards, travelling via Heraclea to Sardica in time to engineer the abdication of the rebel Vetranio at Naissus on 25 December. With Constantius far away in the East, Magnentius had been able to consolidate his position in Europe, hoping to be accepted as a legitimate ruler of the West. When overtures with this aim proved fruitless, the usurper appointed his younger brother Decentius Caesar. An open clash between the East and the West was thus unavoidable. Magnentius prepared himself by way of his coinage, showing himself to be a follower and an admirer of the great emperor Constantine, and so did his competitors Vetranio and Nepotian. The *FEL (icium) TEMP (orum) REPARATIO* slogan fitted well into the general mood of the day.

There were many points of appeal to the Constantinian memory excepting those mentioning the deceased by name. The following should be noted:

- (i) The sign of the Milvian bridge, ✠ or ☩.
- (ii) The labarum or the vexillum with ✠ on the banner, exceptionally ☩, X, or +.¹⁹
- (iii) Magnentius' bronze coins with the constantinian sign flanked by A and Ω (PI. 19, 14). The use of these letters shows that the emperor had read the monogram as a Christogram. It should be remembered that Magnentius was a Christian. He had reverses struck with the Constantinian sign as the central symbol (✠, ✠, ☩, ☩) at the mints of Amiens, Trier, Lyons, Arles, Aquileia and Rome.
- (iv) The combination of the ✠ with A Ω, a reference to the Scriptures, appears initially with Constans,²⁰ subsequently with Magnentius, and is probably the earliest reference to the Bible on coins.
- (v) The coin reverse **HOC SIGNO VICTOR ERIS**, the Latin translation of the

later Valentinian married his sister Justina, the widow of Magnentius (*PLRE* I, s.v. Valentinianus No. 7). Important in this context is, however, that Justina's brother's name, Constantinianus, testifies to her father's sympathy for the Constantinian name and policy. One could even venture a suggestion that the names Flavius and Constantinianus for Iustus' son originated in the same Magnentian efforts in the Gallic emperor's strike for the imperial crown in succession to Constantine II and Constans.

¹⁹ Eusebius describes the imperial standard in detail and reads the component parts of the sign as an endeavour to form the name of Christ by a combination of two letters (*Vita Constantini* I, 31): τὸ σήμα βολον διὰ στωγάτια τὸ Χριστοῦ παρασηλοῦντα ὄνομα [διὰ τῶν πρωτῶν ὑπερήμιανων χαρακτήρων], χαζομένου τοῦ βῶ κατὰ τὸ μεσαιάρον...

²⁰ On a unique light miliarensis issued in Rome in the period 348–350 of the type **VIRTUS EXERCITVM** (*RIC* VIII, p. 252, no. 71), a reverse depicting four standards, the two central standards of which are inscribed with A and Ω; above and between them is a Chi-Rho (✠).

heavenly words Eusebius reported Constantine to have read in his vision. This reverse legend was first issued by the usurper Vetranio, whose usurpation might have been an operation directed against Magnentius in support of Constantius, who at the time was in the East. His first gold coins were struck at Siscia (*RIC* VIII, no. 260) with the appropriate reverse legend **SALVATOR REIPUBLICAE** (PI. 19, 15), showing the emperor holding a standard with Chi-Rho on the banner, to the r. Victory crowning him. Subsequently the same reverse appears on *aes* coins with the legend **HOC SIGNO VICTOR ERIS** (*RIC* VIII, pp. 368f., nos 272, 275, 278f., 282, 283).²¹

(vi) The employment of Constantine's high-crested helmet in the gold coinage of Constantius in his tricennial issues (PI. 19, 16).

(vii) The employment of the *nimbus* to distinguish imperial rank on coin reverses.

(viii) The epithet **PERPETVVS** (once, for Magnentius, **PERPETVO IMP**), normally abbreviated **PERP AVG** (PI. 19, 17). Once Constantius is addressed as *Perpetuitas*. This attribute goes back to early Constantinian base silver struck at Trier (**VICTORIAE LAETAE PRINC PERP/VOT PR**, cf. *RIC* VII, p. 281). The concept of *perpetuitas* appears in Constantinian times in connection with the imperial portraits crowned by the high-crested helmet (PI. 19, 18). No other ruler was depicted with this helmet, and yet Constantine did not have the epithet integrated with his other titles. Constantine's younger sons, after their brother Constantine's death appropriated the epithet, adding *perpetuus* to their titles on the obverses, normally connected with a new facing and helmeted portrait.

(ix) A tell-tale attempt to succeed in politics by referring to Constantine was Magnentius' claim to be a member of the House of Constantine by adding **FL (avius)** to his name formula on the coin obverses (PI. 19, 19), (see note 18).

During the era of internal struggles and civil wars the sons and successors of the great Constantine reaped much of what their predecessor had sown, carried it on and at times developed it further. That the Constantinian sign by now was equivalent with a Christogram must have been apparent to all those who cared about such things. The dated inscription of 331 (PI. 18, 4) confirms this.²² Constantius II obviously cared. After the defeat of Magnentius the Christogram and the like did not appear on his coins in the East.

²¹ Mint of Sirmium. In the later series obverses of Constans occur with the same frequency as those of Vetranio. Later on Constantius, having returned from the East, continued the *aes* coinage with the reverse **HOC SIGNO VICTOR ERIS** (*RIC* VIII, pp. 386f., nos. 23f., 30f.) in the name of himself and of the new Caesar, Gallus.

²² See note 5 above, with de Rossi's remarks on the condition of the slab when first described by M. A. Boldetti. Eusebius' reading of the sign in his *Vita Constantini* is roughly contemporaneous with the consular inscription on the slab.

RESTITVTOR REIPVBLICAE		GRÖSSE I REVERSOLEGENDE RESTITVTOR REIPVBLICAE AQ ROM SIRM HER CWS ANT VALENTI-5 3 2 2 2 1 VALENS 4		GRÖSSE KLEINER ALS III REVERSOLEGENDE RESTITVTOR REIPVBLICAE ROM SIRM TES CWS KYZ ALE VI. 2 3 4 4 5 6 VS.	
WIRD IN DREI GRÖSSEN I, III UND KLEINER ALS III GEPRÄGT BEACHTE: GRÖSSE I HAT VOLLKOMMEN GLEICHES BILD WIE VICTORIA ROMANORVM*		GRÖSSE III REVERSOLEGENDE: RESTITVTOR REIPVBLICAE TR LUG ARL AQ ROM SIS SIRM TES HER CWS KYZ NIK ANT ALE VALENTINIAN I 3 2 3 4 5 8 4 1 7 3 3 1 4 VALENS 3 2 3 4 4 7 4 4 3 1		GRÖSSE III REVERSOLEGENDE: RESTITVTOR REIPVBLICAE TR LUG ARL AQ ROM SIS SIRM TES HER CWS KYZ NIK ANT ALE VALENTINIAN I 3 2 3 4 5 8 4 1 7 3 3 1 4 VALENS 3 2 3 4 4 7 4 4 3 1	
DVALENTINI ANVSPFANG: ÜBERALL, UND FÜR ALLE DREI GRÖSSEN GLEICH DNVALEN SPFANG: ÜBERALL, UND FÜR ALLE DREI GRÖSSEN		AVERSOLEGENDEN			

FIG. 6. RESTITVTOR REIPVBLICAE. Emperor with labarum.

In the West, after Magnentius' withdrawal from the Balkans, when Constantius usually wintered in Italy, above all in Milan, coins with the labarum were minted sporadically and exceptionally at Aquileia in a **GLORIA ROMANORVM** reverse showing the city rescued by the emperor (*RIC* VIII, p. 333, no. 186); at Rome a rare **FEL TEMP REPARATIO**, Emperor on galley, holding Victory on globe and labarum, obv. of Gallus (Fig. 5), probably refers to the Caesar's crushing of the last Jewish rebellion (*RIC* VIII, Rome, no. 250) in the summer of 352;²³ roughly contemporaneous are some *vota* coins for Constantius and Gallus (*RIC* VIII, Rome nos. 251-3).

The West under the rule of young Julian did not, would not or could not take much interest in the religious symbolism of the day. The labarum reappears with Jovian on light miliarenses and on *aes* coins of the same description of Arles (*RIC* VIII, nos. 328 and 335) of the reverse **RESTITVTOR REI P**. The same applies to Rome (*RIC* VIII, nos. 469, 471, 474) on bronze medallions.

THE HOUSE OF VALENTINIAN

The coinage of the House of Valentinian, which remained in power almost to the end of the western empire, opened with a massive series of

²³ Bruck, *Die spätromische Kupferprägung*, p. 24 (Fig. 11) records two specimens of this type struck at Rome and 11 at Siscia.

I. PERIODE		II. PERIODE		III	
ROM	Broad bust	AQ, ROM, SIS, THES	TR, LVG, ARL, SIS, THES, HER, ANT, ALE	THES, HER, CONS, CYZ	TR(ier)
Design of drapery					
	TR, LUG, ARL, AQ, SIS, SIRM, TES, HER, ANT, ALE		ARL, TES, ALE		ROM, TES, KYZ, NIK

FIG. 7. GLORIA ROMANORVM, AD 364-88. Emperor with labarum adv. 1. with bound captive. Struck in two bouts, the chronological divide being the death of Gratian in AD 383.

RESTITVTOR REI P (or **REIPVBLICAE**) struck in gold, silver and *aes* (for *aes*, see Fig. 6) throughout the empire. The signum of this period was the Christogram, mostly marking the labarum, although it could be exchanged for crosses of different shapes (Fig. 7). It appears that the Christogram and the Cross by now were of equal value.

Valentinian took over the western part of the empire, leaving the East to his brother Valens. Valentinian was not very interested in the theological disputes of the East. He died in 375 and Valens lost his life three years later. To support the young members of the imperial family, Theodosius in 379 was nominated augustus and put in charge of the East. He proved to be an efficient organizer. Not only did he solve the Gothic problem, partly by successful operations, partly by persuading the Goths to enter into Roman service as allies. He was also a strict Athanasian who, after the council of Constantinople, imposed the Niceno-Constantinopolitan orthodoxy in his dominion, whereby the Arian controversy came to an end, and, finally, Christianity was made the only lawful religion in the empire.

Arcadius and Honorius were his sons and successors, having had imperial rank conferred upon them as children. Theodosius II was the son of Arcadius. He was appointed augustus in 402 while still a baby. He succeeded his father in 408.

It seems appropriate to conclude this account of the development of the Constantinian and Christian signs on the late Roman coins with Theodosius. However, in order to understand what happened during the last phase, one has to turn to the theological field, torn asunder particularly by the Arianistic feud.

We have seen how Constantine's memory was honoured and kept sacred

after his death and how competing forces and imperial pretenders referred to him when trying to find support for their causes.

At the Council of Nicaea, Constantine had deprecated Arius and supported Athanasius, but later he changed his mind and Athanasius was banished from his see of Alexandria. A few years later Constantine died, but before that he was baptized by the bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia, who was an Arian. In Hieronymus' (St Jerome) edition of Eusebius (the church historian, bishop of Caesarea) for the year 337 we read: 'Constantinus extremo vitae suae tempore ab Eusebio Nicomedensi episcopo baptizatus in Arrianum dogma declinat. A quo usque in praesens tempus ecclesiarum rapinae et totius orbis est secuta discordia.'²⁴ Constantine... was baptized by Eusebius of Nicomedia and slipped down into the Arian creed. With this, there followed up to this day the plunder of churches and the discord of all the world.' The Arian baptism was, of course, a very serious matter, at least in clerical circles. Church historians therefore avoid going into detail: the name of the bishop is at times left out, in order to obscure the fact that the rite was performed in accordance with the Arian dogma. Only Philostorgius, himself an Arian, mentions it.²⁵

St Jerome's words contained a revealing note on the religious policy of the first Christian emperor and at the same time a crushing verdict. Yet, under the new dynasty of Valentinian the labarum appears to have been employed as the normal attribute and insignia of the emperor. With Theodosius II and the fifth century there occurred a momentous change. The labarum did not disappear, but it was surpassed by the Cross, which was employed in an increasing number of symbolic representations, although in other respects the iconography of the reverses did not radically change. The imperial propaganda continued to stress the bravery of the emperor, his victories and the pains he took for the common good. But in one way or another the Cross could take over the functions of the labarum, the sceptre, the trophy and, at times, of the Victory (Pl. 19, 20-22).

Theodosius I had firmly silenced the pagan and the Arian opposition. Confessional disputes were not encouraged. The Christian doctrine, generally speaking, was the only religion accepted by the Roman state. Constantine's fame and reputation rose once more, although for different reasons than before. This was largely due to Theodosius II, who by chance or design did much to reinstate Constantine in the role of the champion of Christendom. The True Cross of Calvary played a distinct and important part in this process, as did the tradition that it had been discovered by Helen, the mother of Constantine.

²⁴ Eusebius Werke. VII. *Chronik des Hieronymus*, 2 ed. Rudolf Helm (Berlin, 1956).

²⁵ Philostorgius, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.16 mentions the presence of Eusebius of Nicomedia at Constantine's death-bed, but gives no particulars of the baptismal rite. The negative conclusions of the consequences of the baptism have to be ascribed to Hieronymus.

In a recent monograph Borgehammer reviews the literary evidence relating to the finding of the Cross.²⁶ His analysis is based on a reconstruction of what he held to be the original and most reliable account of the discovery, that of Gelasius of Caesarea, compiled about 390. Without dwelling on particulars of the story, it should be noted that Theodosius II in a letter of 420 instructed the bishop of Jerusalem to erect a jewelled golden cross on the place where the holy wood (Cross) had been found (*Theophanes*, i, 86).

Two years later there was a cross on the festal solidus of Theodosius. Kent drew attention to this coin (Pl. 19, 21) in a paper published in 1960 and quoted a passage by St Prosper about the Persian persecutions, the Byzantine victory won by the soldiers with cross-symbols on their armour, concluding his statement thus: 'Unde etiam victor, auream monetam eodem cum signo fieri precepit, quae in usu totius orbis et maxime Asiae hodieque persistit.'²⁷ The text was probably written between 450 and 455.

This signified the return of Constantine to the gallery of historical heroes, still champion of Christianity, but not necessarily as the victor of Pons Milvius. The Cross emerged as his main attribute with reference to the vision before the battle, and to his mother's discovery of the remnants of the True Cross. None of our primary, i.e. contemporary, sources had testified to a vision of a cross in 312. Eusebius does not speak of a cross in his account of the battle of Pons Milvius in his church history (*Hist. Eccles.* IX.10-11). He employs paraphrases like 'the saving' or the 'wholesome' (*σωτήριος* or *σωτηριώδης*) with reference to the sign of Constantine's vision. But in the early half of the fifth century the vision of the Cross was common parlance of the ecclesiastical chroniclers.

The conviction that Constantine had seen a cross in a vision sent to him by God increased the emperor's reputation and standing. The imperial couple Marcian and Pulcheria were present at the council of Chalcedon in 451, when the emperor was acclaimed as *novus Constantinus, novus Paulus, novus David*,²⁸ a formula henceforth employed at turning points in the history of the orthodox church, e.g. at the second council of Nicaea in 781. The comparison of Constantine with Paulus was based on the heavenly vision, which in both cases (Constantine - St Paul) brought about a conversion. At the same time it made the eastern church as equally prestigious as the western one, described as *patrimonium Petri*.

²⁶ S. Borgehammer, *How the Holy Cross was Found* (Stockholm, 1991).

²⁷ J. P. C. Kent, "'Monetam auream... cum signo crucis'", *NC* 1960, pp. 129-32. The citation reads in translation to English: 'As a result indeed the victor (Theodosius) ordered gold coins to be made with this, same symbol and these are still in use today throughout the whole empire, especially Asia.'

²⁸ E. Ewig, 'Das Bild Constantins des Grossen in den ersten Jahrhunderten des abend-ländischen Mittelalters', *Das byzantinische Herrscherbild, Wege der Forschung* 341 (Darmstadt, 1975), pp. 128f.

Now the course of events in the early 420s appears firmly established by pieces of evidence mutually supporting one another, the most remarkable being the Theodosian solidus described by St Prosper – a fitting end to the story of the Constantinian sign and its vicissitudes up to the final victory of the Cross.

ILLUSTRATIONS IN FIGURES 1–7

Illustrations of the diffusion of certain fourth century bronze coin types. References are to Bruck, *Die spättrömische Kupferprägung*.

Fig. 1, p. 25: **GLORIA EXERCITVS** (2 standards)

Fig. 2, p. 29: **GLORIA EXERCITVS** (1 standard)

Fig. 3, p. 11: **DV CONSTANTINVS PT AVGG** (Four rev. types)

Fig. 4, p. 14: **FEL TEMP REPARATIO** (labarum and captives)

Fig. 5, p. 24: **FEL TEMP REPARATIO** (Emp. w. labarum on galley)

Fig. 6, p. 56: **RESTITVTOR REIPVBLICAE** Emp. w. labarum, Vict. on globe)

Fig. 7, p. 35: **GLORIA ROMANORVM** (Emp. w. labarum, and captive)

The graphic drawings in Bruck's book, illustrated here, show the dispersion of types and assist us to recognize the common features of the design and the variations in detail. Whereas all the drawings are copied from the book, the layout of the presentation may differ from the originals in order to present particulars relevant for the present enquiry. For Fig. 3, where the common denominator is the obverse of *Divus Constantinus*, the whole page has been copied in order to show the distribution of reverse types in different parts of the empire, and the refusal of Constans (mints: Aquileia, Rome, Siscia and Thessalonica) to issue any at all. This aspect is eloquently illustrated by the statistics under *Münzstätten*. The English text inserted in the drawings is by the author of this paper.

ILLUSTRATIONS ON PLATES 17–19

1. Inscription *SICV* no. 274.
2. Inscription *SICV* no. 200.
3. Inscription *SICV* no. 115.
4. Inscription *ICVR* no. 39 (AD 331).
5. Mosaic; Weitzmann (see n. 9), pp. 374f., cat. no. 342 (floor mosaics of the Synagogue of Hamat Tiberias, c. AD 300).

Coins

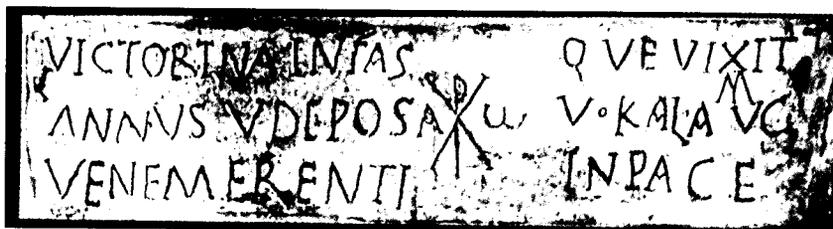
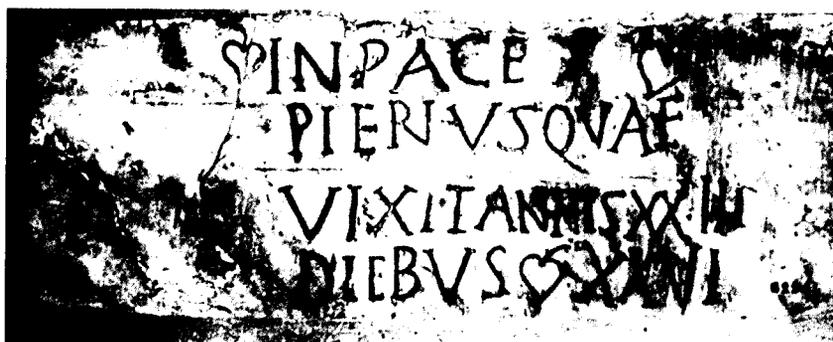
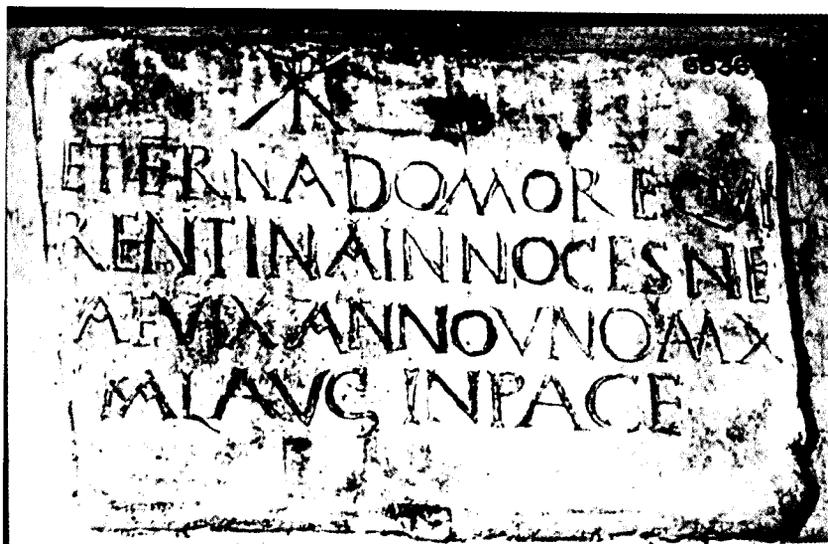
When necessary, the list specifies which side of the coins is shown. References are to *R/C*, giving volume, mint and serial number, and, in the last column, the source of the coin.

No.	Side	Mint	Metal	Emp.	Design details	<i>R/C</i>	Coll.
6	obv.	Tic.	AR	C	facing high-crested helmet, ✱	7, 36	Mun.
7	rev.	Cple	AE	C	standard topped by ✱	7, 19	B
8		Aqu.	AV	Cn	emperor with labarum	8, 2	BM
9		Aqu.	AV	Cn	emperor with labarum	8, 1A	BM
10		Sis	AR	Cn	emperor with labarum	8, 148	D. Oaks

11	Sis	AV	Cn	emperor with labarum, obv. with CN MAX AVG	8, 9	BM
12	rev.	Cple	AE	emperor spearing fallen horseman	8, 82	BM
13	rev.	Trier	AE	emp. assists barb. in leaving hut	8, 221	BM
14	rev.	Trier	AE	SALVS DD NN AVGG ET CAES AΩ	8, 318	BM
15	Sis.	AV	Vetr.	emp., labarum: SALVATOR REIPVBLICAE	8, 260	BM
16	obv.	Rome	AV	emp. facing, high-crested helmet	8, 293	BM
17		Rome	AV	emp., obv. legend w. PERP (etuis)	8, 227	BM
18		Sis.	AE	emp., rev. legend with PERP	7, 95	Mazzini V
19		Aqu.	AV	emperor as FL (avitus) with labarum	8, 124	BM
20	obv.	Cple	AV	emperor with cross-sceptre	10, 221	BM
21	rev.	Rav.	AV	(for Galla Plac.) w. jewelled cross	10, 2012	BM
22	rev.	Thes.	AV	emp. w. labarum, cross-on-globe	10, 361	BM

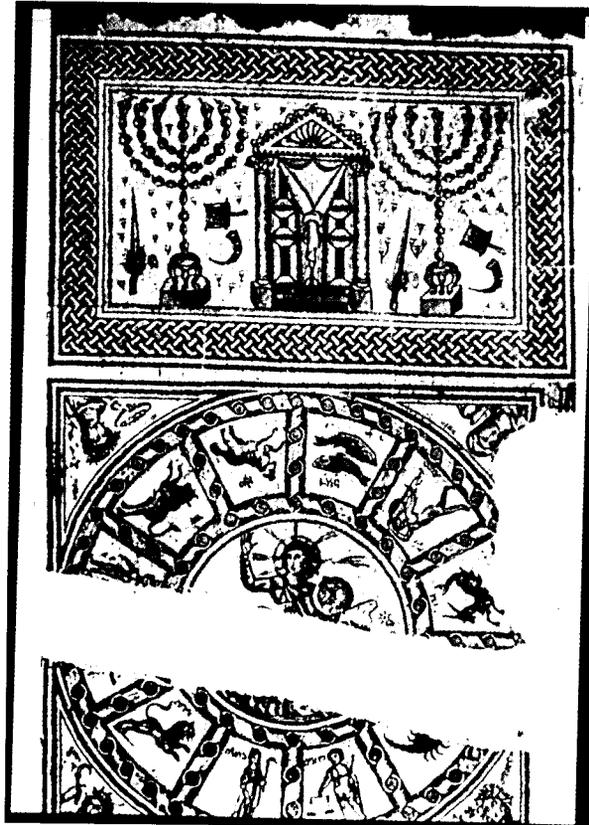
Notes

15. *Aes* coins of this description are mostly classified as rare, but they occur at Siscia with obverses of both Constantius and Vetrico (nos. 272, 275, 278f., 282f.).
18. The reference is to the Mazzini catalogue, vol. V, no. 570/a (Milan, 1958).
22. Kent discusses the frequency of this type in *R/C* X, p. 91, and on p. 373 records similar coins issued at Constantinople, Nicomedia and Cyzicus in bronze.



BRUUN. CONSTANTINIAN SIGNS (1)

✠ ASELUSETLEAPRISCOPATRIBENEMERENTI IN PACE
 QVI BIXIT ANNIS LXIII MENSIBVS · III
 IN SIGNO ✠
 ✠
 VVKVOCTO BASSO ET ABLAVIO
 CONSS



BRUN. CONSTANTINIAN SIGNS (2)



BRUUN. CONSTANTINIAN SIGNS (3)