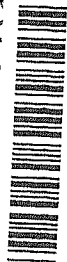


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AN ESCHATOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF CONSTANTINE'S LABARUM COIN

By
Charles M. Odahl

Shortly after the opening of the Constantinople mint in A.D. 326, several coin types were issued commemorating Constantine's victory over Licinius in the recent civil war.¹ Among these was a bronze issue displaying reverse iconography strongly suggesting biblical imagery. The motif depicts a labarum piercing a dragon or crooked serpent, with the legend SPES PVBLIC (Hope of the Commonwealth) stamped across the field (Figure 1). The labarum on the coin is the Christian war standard originated by Constantine, and described in Eusebius' *Vita Constantini* I. 31:² a vexillum topped with a monogram composed of the first two letters of the Greek word *christos*, a chi superimposed on a rho.³ Overlaid on the descending staff is a crossbar carrying a banner with three medallions representing Constantine and his two sons holding the rank of Caesar (Constantine II and Constantius II). The four regular specimens of this coin type in museum collections contain obverses only of Constantine I, with the legend CONSTANTI-NVS MAX AVG.⁴



Figure 1: obv. CONSTANTI-NVS MAX AVG, Laur. head, r:Aes follis
rev. SPES - PVBLIC, Labarum piercing serpent;
Constantinople, A off. RIC, VII, 19 (British Museum)

1. For the opening of the Constantinople mint, and the dating of its early issues, see: P. Bruun, *Roman Imperial Coinage*, VII (London: Spink & Son, 1966), pp. 76-78, & 563-75; and R. Carson, P. Hill, & J. Kent, *Late Roman Bronze Coinage* (London: Spink & Son, 1960), pp. 23-24.
2. Eusebius was the bishop of Caesarea in Palestine during the reign of Constantine. He became a court favorite and confidant of the emperor. His most famous works are a *Church History* and *The Life of Constantine*. The Greek text of the latter used for this article is that in *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller*, I. Heikel, ed. (Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1902).
3. Eusebius' description also included a wreath encircling the Christogram. ✠
4. Two are in Vienna's Bundessammlung von Münzen und Medaillen, Kunsthist. Museum, and are described by the museum's late Roman curator, G. Bruck in "Die Verwendung christlicher Symbole auf Münzen von Constantin I. bis Magnentius," *Numismatische Zeitschrift*, LXXVI (Vienna, 1955), p. 27; and two are in the British Museum. The B.M. also has two contemporary forgeries of smaller diameter. The specimens printed in this article are from the B.M. collection whose Constantinian coins I recently examined.

Christian imagery does not often occur on the coins of Constantine. When it does it usually takes the form of a cross or monogram employed as a mark of issue, or at best as a decorative element on the imperial visage, such as a helmet or shield marking. Therefore, this coin type with its novel imagery of the labarum piercing a serpent covering the whole reverse flan has usually been regarded as the most important of Constantine's "Christian coin types." If this is so, we may be justified in trying to discover just what Constantine and his mint officials had in mind when devising such a motif. What was the message that the imagery of this coin was supposed to project?

The interpretations of modern scholars fall into three categories. First, there is the view expressed by J. Maurice, A. Alföldi and G. Bruck that the motif is a pro-Christian propaganda attack against paganism. Maurice says the "étendard exprimait le triomphe du christianisme sur le paganisme," and suggests the motif was engraved "by order of the emperor."⁵ Alföldi and Bruck agree,⁶ and interpret the serpent as representing paganism pierced by Christianity. They further suggest that the anti-pagan message was so strong that a protest from the pagan aristocracy caused Constantine to suspend the issue. This would account, they maintain, for the scarcity of these coins in the major museum collections. Two comments might be offered regarding their latter contention. First, because this coin type was among those summing up the end of the civil war, such as LIBERTAS PVBLICA—in other words it was minted to commemorate a specific event—it would naturally have been a smaller issue than the long lasting, general types like PROVIDENTIAE AVGG and GLORIA EXERCITVS. Second, since Alföldi's and Bruck's comments on this subject were published, another regular specimen of the coin has been acquired by British Museum (Figure 2).⁷ The new specimen is of a different die than the museum's previous one, and both B.M. specimens are of different dies than those in Vienna.⁸ Therefore, this coin type may not have been as minute an issue as formerly thought, and was at least of wide enough currency to inspire contemporary forgeries;⁹ the B.M. has two of the latter (Figure 3).

I would agree with Maurice, Alföldi, and Bruck that the subject matter of the coin was Christian inspired and

5. J. Maurice, *Numismatique Constantinienne*, II (Paris: Leroux, 1911), pp. LXXI & VII respectively.
6. A. Alföldi, *The Conversion of Constantine and Pagan Rome* (Oxford: University Press, 1948), pp. 84-85; G. Bruck, "Die Verwendung christlicher Symbole," p. 27.
7. Acquired from B. McNall in November, 1972.
8. The B.M. Coins have laureate obv. busts; those in Vienna, diadems. RIC, VII, pp. 572-73.
9. Or, as Dr. Kent of the British Museum's Dept. of Coins & Medals suggests, they had a high ratio of valuable metal content, and were thus worth the trouble of forging.

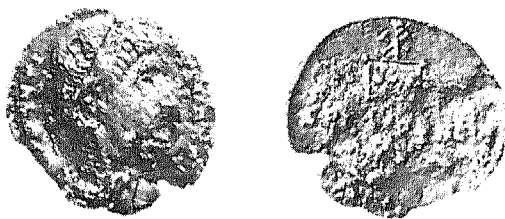


Figure 2: obv. Same as Figure 1. Newly acquired specimen of Constantine's Labarum coin: Aes follis
rev. Although lower half of motif is damaged, the upper features indicate this coin is of a different die than specimen in Figure 1 (British Museum)

represented the emperor's thinking, but not that it was issued as a direct propaganda attack against pagans. Would not such a move have conflicted with Constantine's public policy of religious toleration? A contemporary edict does express his preference for Christianity, but firmly establishes "equal privileges to all" in religious matters (V.C.II. 56). The numismatic evidence would not support their interpretation either, since only one out of the four bronze types commemorating the civil war has any Christian imagery. Thus, it seems better to suggest that the Christian imagery on the coin was directed toward Constantine's Christian subjects rather than against his pagan subjects.

A second, and secular line of interpretation has been offered by J.M.C. Toynbee and P. Bruun.¹⁰ They suggest that the serpent may represent either "barbaric hordes" threatening to destroy the empire from without, or the internal enemy Licinius.¹¹ In either case, "the new miraculous sign of the emperor" was seen crushing imperial foes. Since Constantine himself (V.C. II. 46), and Eusebius following the emperor's lead (V.C. II.1), refer to Licinius as a "dragon" or "crooked and wriggling serpent," and the coin type in question was minted after civil war II, the

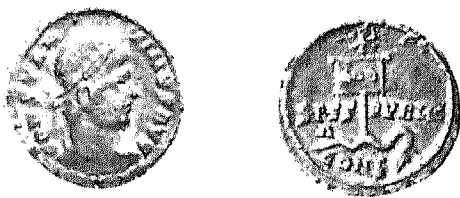


Figure 3: obv. CONSTAN-TINVS AVG, contemporary forgery of Constantine's Labarum coin: Aes 3
rev. The clear iconographical features on this forgery show the serpent's head plunging toward the abyss - Rev. 30:3 (British Museum)

temporal reference of this coin motif certainly points back to the defeat of Licinius. But I suggest that the coupling of the monogram of Christ's name with the pierced serpent imagery is too pregnant with biblical overtones to be merely a secular summing up of a Roman civil conflict. It must not be forgotten that Constantine's second war with Licinius was waged as a virtual holy crusade (cf. Eseb. V.C. I. 49 - II. 18; and Constantine's own comments on the war in V.C. II. 24-28, & II. 46).

A third line of interpretation has been offered by E. Stauffer and H. Dorries.¹² Both have underscored the essential religious quality of the motif, and its symbolization of a new era for the Christians. The slaying of the dragon-serpent has for them a double meaning: it refers both to the emperor's recent defeat of Satan in his earthly manifestation, and to the spiritual battle of Christ that will one day make a final end of the devil. Both authors recognize the apocalyptic nature of the imagery; and Dorries stresses Constantine's sense of mission as the servant of God who brings in "the new era."

I think that this third interpretation comes closest to the originally intended meaning of the coin motif; for the coin does echo biblical imagery, and that imagery is of an apocalyptic nature.¹³ The comments offered by Stauffer and Dorries are of a somewhat skeletal nature due to the larger framework in which they are encompassed. Therefore, I would like to develop this line of interpretation further in the hope of offering some new and deeper insights into the underlying meaning of the motif and its intended message for Constantine's Christian subjects. The key to unlocking the motif's message is to be found among the contemporary documents of Constantine and his Christian circle. There we will find verbal imagery similar to that expressed pictorially on the coin motif. Such language can lead us back to the biblical *loci* inspiring that motif, and provide insights into the contemporary understanding of those passages. We are fortunate in having Eusebius' *Life of Constantine* to aid us in this task; for the *Vita* contains an interpretative description of a large-scale palace painting with imagery similar to that of the coin, and preserves several contemporary letters and edicts of Constantine which shed light on the Emperor's Christian beliefs and provide clues to the sources of the ideas underlying the coin's imagery.

Eusebius and the Eschatological Origin of the Pierced Dragon Motif

In Book III, chapter 3 of the *Vita*, Eusebius describes a monumental painting that was posted above the imperial palace portico. It depicted the labarum (*σωτήριον σημειῶν*) placed above the heads of the emperor and his sons.

10. J.M.C. Toynbee, *Roman Medallions* (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1944), p. 182; P. Bruun, "The Christian Signs on the Coins of Constantine," *Arctos*, n.s. 3 (1962), pp. 21-23.

11. P. Bruun, in his later work, *RIC*, VII, p. 64, and P. Bastien, "Le chrisme dans la numismatique de la dynastie constantinienne," *Collectionneurs et Collections numismatiques* (Paris: Hotel de la Monnaie, 1968), p. 112 interpret the serpent as Licinius, the internal enemy. Quotation in following sentence is from Bruun.

12. E. Stauffer, *Christ and the Caesars* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955), pp. 272-75; H. Dorries, *Constantine the Great* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 58-67.

13. Apocalyptic in a double sense: 1) it is inspired by biblical apocalyptic literature; and 2) it is apocalyptic itself in being a revelation disclosed to the faithful who know how to interpret its meaning. For a discussion of the general characteristics of apocalyptic literature, see: J. Kallas, *Revelation: God & Satan in the Apocalypse* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1973), pp. 41-51.

Wriggling beneath their feet was "the hateful and savage beast (θῆρ) who had besieged the church of God." He was shown "in the form of a dragon . . . pierced in the middle of his back with a spear, and falling headlong toward the abyss." Eusebius maintains that Constantine chose this motif because "the oracles in the books of God's prophets had described the beast as a dragon and a crooked serpent" (δράκων και σκολιὸς ὄφις). He expresses his wonder at "the intellectual greatness of the emperor for giving visual form to the words of the prophets concerning the end of the beast." He then quotes a passage from the Isaiah-apocalypse where the imagery of God piercing the dragon and crooked serpent is found (Is. 27:1).

Obviously, we have in this palace painting the artistic prototype for the coin motif.¹⁴ But what is the significance behind this imagery, its meaning within the Judeo-Christian heritage? In its Old Testament form it was that part of apocalyptic literature which referred to "the Day of Yahweh," the hoped for *eschaton*.¹⁵ As R.T. France has pointed out, "the eschatology of the Old Testament prophets is not concerned with the end of the world, but with that decisive act of God which will bring to an end the existing order of things in the world, and inaugurate a new era of blessing"¹⁶ for God's chosen people.

In Old Testament eschatological imagery the dragon-serpent symbolizes the oppressor(s) of the faithful Jewish remnant. Its slaying and consignment to the abyss represents Yahweh's historical intervention on behalf of his persecuted people over against their enemies. The exodus from Egyptian oppression was recalled with such imagery in Psalm 74: 12-13: "Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. Thou didst divide the sea by thy might; thou didst break the heads of the dragons on the waters." Ezekial 29:3 describes the Egyptian Pharaoh as "the great dragon that lies in the midst of his streams." The piercing of the dragon-serpent in the Isaiah-apocalypse looks forward to "Yahweh's end-time victory and the final deliverance of His people,"¹⁷ followed by the new order with its messianic banquet and a resurrection of the dead (Is. 24-27).

This dragon-serpent imagery was taken over by the New Testament seer, John of Patmos, to describe God's eschatological victories over the devil. John's Apocalypse depicts him as "the great dragon, the primeval serpent, who is called devil and Satan" (δράκων, ὄφις, διάβολος, σατάν). After being defeated in heaven and cast down to the earth, he is shown handing over his power and authority to a beast from the sea (θηρίων - Rev. 12 & 13). To Christians, the beast of Revelation symbolized the persecuting Roman emperors who would one day be defeated with the dragon and thrown into the abyss (Rev. 19:11 - 20:3). This saving act of God would usher in the Millennial Kingdom of their Lord where the saints would reign in glory for a thousand years before the final Judgment Day. John's visionary language does not make it explicit where this Millennial Kingdom would exist (though an earthly kingdom is implied). But those martyrs and confessors who had faithfully "witnessed for Jesus" and resisted worshipping the devil empowered beast would be especially honored (Rev. 20:4-6).

The fact that Eusebius calls the dragon-serpent of the palace painting "the beast" (θῆρ) indicates that he sees reflected in this motif the eschatological imagery of Revelation. The beast of the Apocalypse was the emperor Domitian, a persecutor of the church in John's time; so too was Licinius who had "besieged the church of God" prior to the second civil war with Constantine (A.D. 324). In describing the Licinian persecution, Eusebius in fact uses apocalyptic terms for the emperor. He calls him "a savage beast or wriggling serpent" (τις θῆρ δεινὸς ἢ σκολιὸς ὄφις - V.C. II. 1).

Thus, the beast represented in the form of a "dragon or crooked serpent" on Constantine's painting (and we must also assume the coin) was interpreted by the great church historian as the emperor Licinius who had been doing the devil's work on earth.

Constantine and Dragon Imagery

Eusebius credits Constantine with the origination of the pierced dragon motif (V.C. III.3). We have many reasons to believe that the first Christian emperor had the capability to draw upon biblical imagery for an artistic propaganda message to his Christian subjects. Eusebius informs us in the *Vita* that the emperor became a devoted student of the Bible immediately after his conversion in A.D. 312, and continued this study throughout his reign (V.C. I. 32; IV. 17). Ancient tradition is unanimous about the emperor's participation in the theological debates at the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325, and about his habit of sermonizing on theology before his court (V.C. III. 12-13; IV. 29).¹⁸

The letters and edicts of Constantine seem to bear out the Eusebian testimony to the emperor's knowledge of the Bible. In regard to the subject under discussion here, we

14. Numismatists are well aware of the frequent occurrence of imperial coin motifs displaying miniature representations of monumental artistic prototypes.

15. In Greek, ἐσχάτος: meaning "last or 'end' with a temporal reference to the end of an era, as in Christ's eschatological discourse" (Matt. 24-25). English translations of the scriptures used for this article are *The Holy Bible*, "Revised Standard Version" (Camden, New Jersey: Thomas Nelson, 1952); and *the Jerusalem Bible* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966). The Greek text of the New Testament employed in this article is *The Greek New Testament*, Kurt Aland, et. al., ed., Second Edition (New York: American Bible Society, 1968).

16. R.T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale Press, 1971), p. 84. For a general treatment of biblical eschatology, see: *The Problem of Eschatology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1969). For the dragon-serpent motif in biblical literature, see: F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1969), pp. 40-50. For the original context of Is. 27:1, see: O. Ploger, *Theocracy and Eschatology* (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1968), pp. 53-78.

17. F.F. Bruce, *New Testament Development*, p.43.

18. See also the *Church Histories* of Socrates, I. 8; Sozomenus, I. 19-20; and Theodoret, I.6. English translations available in *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, II & KKK (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1969). Volume I of the same collection contains the works of Eusebius.

have three relevant communications from the pen of Constantine written between the defeat of Licinius and the appearance of the labarum coin.¹⁹ In a letter to the eastern bishops (*V.C.* II. 46) Constantine refers to Licinius and his recent persecution of the Christians in apocalyptic language. He was "that dragon" (*ὁ σαράκων ἐκείνος*) whose "unholy and willful tyranny was persecuting the servants of the saving God." It was "through the providence of the great God and [Constantine's] instrumentality that he was driven from the government of the commonwealth;" . . . thereby "making manifest to all the divine power" (*ἡ θεῶν δύναμις*). In this language, which is remarkably similar to that found in Rev. 12:9-10, we find the use of dragon imagery in the emperor's own words. Here we see confirmed the imperial initiative for the biblical dragon imagery that Eusebius suggests.

The Eschatological Significance of the Christogram

The wriggling serpent is only one part of the iconographical features of the coin motif. What of the Christogram atop the imperial labarum which pierces the serpent? How does it fit into this apocalyptic picture? Does it have any eschatological significance in its own right that can add to the strength of the overall message of the motif? Clues to answer these questions can be found in two contemporary public edicts of Constantine (*V.C.* II. 24-42, and II. 48-60).

In the first edict, which he addressed to the eastern provinces at the conclusion of the war, Constantine described the calamities afflicted upon the Christians in particular and the commonwealth in general by the persecuting emperors (Diocletian to Licinius, A.D. 303 - 324). He then states that the "deity, who is alone and truly God, the possessor of almighty and eternal power, sought out and chose me as the instrument (*ἡ ἐμὴ ὑπηρεσία*) for his special purpose" (*V.C.* II. 28)²⁰ — that purpose being the defeat of the devil empowered persecutors and the vindication of God's faithful servants.

In the second edict to the eastern provinces, Constantine specified how he was empowered to carry out this divine purpose (*V.C.* II. 55). Referring to his recent victory over the last persecutor, he rhetorically tells God: "Under your guidance I undertook and accomplished these blessed acts; preceded everywhere by your sign (*σφραγίς*) I led my army

to victory. And wherever the state is endangered I will pursue the enemy with the symbol of your prowess" (*σύνθημα τῆς σῆς ἀρετῆς*). The victory bringing sign of which the emperor speaks is the labarum he would soon display on the SPES PVBLIC coin we are discussing. The constitutive element of that vexillum was the symbol of Christ's name ☩ the monogram at the top of the standard. We have the proof of this in the emperor's next sentence: "For your name (*ὄνομα*) I truly love, and I regard with reverence its power (*δύναμις*), which you have shown with abundant proofs to the increase of my steadfast faith."

Here in Constantine's own words we are told that the name of Christ had given him the power to gain the victory that "restored public liberty and drove the persecuting dragon from . . . the commonwealth" (*V.C.* II. 46 — episcopal letter). We have abundant literary and numismatic testimony for Constantine's veneration and use of Christ's name in monogrammatic form as a talisman of victory. Besides employing it on the labarum carried before his armies, he put it on his personal war helmet (Figure 4: cf. *V.C.* I. 31 & III. 2), and had it inscribed on the shields of his soldiers (Euseb. *V.C.* IV. 21).



Figure 4: obv. IMP CONSTANT-INVS AVG, high crested helmet coin with monogram on cross-bar: Aes follis
rev. VICTORIAE LAETAE PRINC PERP, Victories with shield over altar; Siscia, B off. *RIC*, VII, 61 (British Museum cast of Vienna specimen)

Yet how is power through Christ's name related conceptually with the eschatological pierced dragon motif? Where in the Christian scriptural tradition could Constantine have found a text that connects Christ's name with Satan's fall, serpents and power over the enemy? There is a passage in Luke 10:17-19 that seems to meet our needs.

In this text the disciples of Jesus are seen returning to their master reporting that "even demons are subject to us through your name" (*ὄνομα*). Responding with an apocalyptic vision, Christ beholds Satan (*σατάν*) falling from heaven (cf. Rev. 12); and then commits to his followers "authority to tread upon serpents (*ὄφεις*) and scorpions, and upon all the power of the enemy" (*δύναμις τοῦ ἐχθροῦ*), . . . assuring them that . . . "nothing shall in anywise injure you." How apropos is this passage to

19. Since the recent discovery of a papyrus role containing portions of the Constantinian edict identical to that preserved by Eusebius in *V.C.* II.24-42, scholars have come to accept the Eusebian documents as authentic copies of original government texts. *Papyrus Londiniensis* 878, which contains parts of chapters 26-29 of the above listed edict, is discussed by A.H.M. Jones, in "Notes on the Genuineness of the Constantinian Documents in Eusebius's Life of Constantine," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, V (1954), pp. 196-200. Hermann Dorries, who probably knows the mind of Constantine better than any other modern scholar, sees the personal touch of the emperor in the letter and two edicts we are about to discuss (*Constantine the Great, ibid.*)

20. This sentence, which affirms Constantine's monotheistic beliefs and his own sense of mission, is found in the Egyptian papyrus cited above. The Greek text of the papyrus is given on p. 199 of the Jones article.

Constantine's own experience!²¹ He had invoked the name of Christ as a victory bringing talisman in his war against Maxentius (312), and twice against Licinius (316 & 324). The Christogram each time protected him against injury and enabled him to overcome the power of his enemy.

The Lukan text very neatly brings together the pictorial imagery of Constantine's coin motif. It looks forward to Revelation's fall of Satan, and back to the Isaiah serpent imagery, drawing both together with the power of Christ's name. Constantine saw this power as the means to fulfilling the assignment that God had committed to him. Eusebius supports this interpretation by stating in his palace painting description: "It was through the power (*δύναμις*) of the salutary trophy that the secret enemy of mankind was cast down to the abyss of destruction" (V.C. III. 3).

In summation, Constantine combined in the coin/painting motif the Old Testament eschatological imagery of the pierced dragon, and the related New Testament conception of the *eschaton* that predicted Satan's fall, and the defeat of this earthly agents through power from the Word of God — graphically represented by the Christogram piercing a tumbling serpent. Starting from the bottom of the coin motif, the imagery may be read as follows: 1) the piercing of the dragon-serpent and his headlong fall into the abyss represents *God's purpose* being fulfilled; 2) the banner on the staff depicting Constantine's portrait with his sons represents *the agents* who accomplished God's will in history; and 3) the Christogram topping the vexillum represents *the means* by which Constantine was empowered to carry out God's purpose. The whole represents the fulfillment of the Judeo-Christian eschatological hope. The language in Constantine's episcopal letter and his public edicts point to imperial initiative for the motif. The Eusebian testimony (V.C. III. 3) confirms this judgement.

Conclusion: The Message

The Christians of the eastern provinces had experienced some twenty years of intermittent but often severe imperial persecutions (described by Lactantius in *The Deaths of the Persecutors* and Eusebius in his *Church History*). Through such times of testing and hardship they could closely identify with the apocalyptic literature in their scriptures which held hopes of God's intervention against the oppressors of his people. By drawing upon imagery from that very literature for his coins, paintings,²² and letters Constantine was proffering a message that his co-religionists would understand.

The motif of a dragon pierced and cast down to the abyss announced that the old era of imperial persecution had come to an end, and a new era of imperial favor had begun. By displaying himself beneath the monogram of Christ, Constantine was indicating his election as God's special servant to initiate this new era of blessing. An empire led by a God-fearing prince could hope for better days, as the legend SPES PVBLIC indicates.

Implicit in the message of the motif was an invitation to the Christian population to join with their Christian emperor in making the new era one of "undisturbed concord" (V.C. II. 56). Those Christians who formerly had felt reluctant to serve the empire because it seemed to be in the camp of the devil, need no longer hold back. The pierced dragon falling to the abyss apocalyptically symbolized the end of the devil's earthly reign, and the start of Christ's Millennial Kingdom. It is dubious that many Christians actually thought the reign of Christ had begun with Constantine's victory over Licinius.²³ Yet in their euphoric release from the tortures and troubles of the long night of persecution, they could sincerely feel with Eusebius "that a new and fresh era of existence had begun to appear, and a light heretofore unknown suddenly to dawn from the midst of darkness over the human race" (V.C. III. 1).²⁴

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Office of Graduate Studies & Research, and the Department of History at the University of California, San Diego, for providing a Dissertation Research Grant which enabled me to study first hand the Christian symbols on the coins of Constantine the Great in the major museum collections of Europe. Concerning the coins discussed in this article, I owe special thanks to Mr. R.A.G. Carson and Dr. J.P.C. Kent of the British Museum's Department of Coins and Medals for discussing with me some technical aspects relating to the production of the coins, as well as my ideas concerning the motif's interpretation. Mr. R. Gardner, British Museum photographer, provided me with the photos for Figures 1-4; Dr. S.A. Chodorow of the UCSD History Department kindly reviewed the article in rough draft form, and suggested some helpful editorial changes.

21. Well known is the tradition that Constantine got the idea to use Christ's name in war through a dream before his battle against Maxentius (See: Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, 44, in *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, XXVII (Vienna, 1897); and Euseb. V.C. I. 27-31). Less often stressed is the report that after the dream he went to Christian teachers for an interpretation (V.C. I. 32). What better text could they have pointed to than this one in the very pro-Roman Gospel of St. Luke that we are discussing?

22. Eusebius also reports that Constantine put up paintings from the apocalyptic book of Daniel at public fountains (V.C. III. 49).

23. Eusebius, however, did compare Constantine's Vicennalia banquet for Christian bishops to "a picture of Christ's kingdom" (V.C. III. 15); and the building of the Church of the Savior in Jerusalem to the "second and New Jerusalem spoken of in the predictions of the prophets" (V.C. III. 33; cf. Rev. 21:2).

24. We are informed by Eusebius (V.C. IV. 52) that at the end of Constantine's reign "the military officers of the highest rank, and those who had control of the public business" were Christians. It would therefore seem that the emperor's apocalyptic summons to his eastern co-religionists had been heartily accepted. I am dealing with this issue at greater length in my doctoral dissertation on "Constantine and the Militarization of Christianity" at UCSD.

