

CONSTANTINE IN RELATION TO CHRISTIANITY

BY REV. J. H. BARBER, TH.D., TUSCALOOSA, ALA.

I.

CONSTANTINE'S CONVERSION.

In the words of Sozomen (H. E. 1:3), "Constantine was led to honor the Christian religion by the concurrence of several different events." When he was on his way to Rome to attack Maxentius, he began, naturally enough, to think of the surest source of strength. He reflected how former emperors who had trusted in many gods and persecuted the Christians' God, came to an unhappy end, while his father, Constantius, who had honored the Christians' God, was successful; further, that those—namely, Galerius and Severus—who had marched against Maxentius had been defeated. This led him to incline toward his father's God.

Consequently he prayed, says Eusebius (H. E. 9:9; V. C. 1:28), to that God to reveal Himself and give power in the present trouble; and while praying he saw, just after noon, a cross of light and on it these words: "Conquer by this." Socrates and Sozomen say nothing about Constantine's praying, but remark that while in a state of uncertainty, he saw a sign. That night while Constantine was sleeping, Christ appeared to him, "and commanded him to make a likeness of that sign which he had seen in the heavens" (V. C. 1:29), and to use it as a safeguard in his battles. Early next day he called for some of the Christian leaders, who taught him the fundamentals of Christianity (V. C. 1:32). These teachings compared so favorably with his vision that Constantine's judgment was confirmed. Shortly afterward he had a cross made, wrought out in splendid fashion, and with it before his army marched to victory. Eusebius says that he himself saw the banner of the cross; and that years

afterward while in conversation with Constantine the latter confirmed these things with an oath (V. C. 1:30, 31.)

The above are the facts in brief as given by the historians. Evidently there was a phenomenon of some kind, so interpreted by Constantine as to lead him to embrace Christianity. Whatever the explanation of the appearance of the cross, the evidence leads to the conviction that there was in the life of Constantine some *inner* result, that it was not altogether external or of a political nature; that the sign of a cross with its accessories was not a pure concoction to explain a merely shrewd decision that it would be wise to espouse Christianity.

II.

CONSTANTINE AND CHRISTIANITY IN GENERAL.

A very interesting, if not determining, comparison is that to be made between the edict of 311 and that of 312. The first, issued by Galerius, Constantine and Licinius, has not a genuinely favorable word for Christianity; it gives bare toleration, but not real religious freedom. It closes by calling on the Christians to supplicate their God for the safety of the rulers, that of the people at large, and their own. It is true that this was a state paper, and gave Constantine, therefore, no opportunity to express fully his personal attitude; as to what that attitude was one cannot dogmatize.

But, on the other hand, it is a fact that soon after the overthrow of Maxentius, after the time, therefore, that Constantine claims to have been converted, the edict of Milan was issued, which gave religious freedom; to quote the exact words: "That each one should have the liberty of choosing and worshipping whatever deity he pleases" (Eus. H. E. 10:5). It provides also for the restoration of all church property. But nothing is said at this time as to the property of individual Christians being restored.

This edict was issued by both emperors, and presumably was meant for all Christians, East and West. Yet it is doubtful if Licinius was ever vigorous in carrying out his part of the edict. However that may be, attention is now directed to Constantine and his relation to Christianity in general.

The years between 313 and 323 form a distinct period, in that during that time Constantine's power was limited to the Western world.

With reference to individual Christians, those who had been exiled were recalled; those in prison were set free; and those deprived of their property as a result of persecution were reimbursed. Church property of whatever kind — church buildings, gardens, etc. — was restored, even if it had to be done at the expense of the public treasury. According to Eusebius and Socrates, Constantine gave money to enlarge church buildings, but it seems to be nowhere stated that he built, at this time, any churches outright. Again, Constantine took an active interest in the clergy. A striking instance of this is seen in his gift of a large sum of money (one writer estimates it at probably ninety thousand dollars) to the African clergy. They were also exempted from all public duties, a privilege afterward (319) conferred on the clergy of other provinces. It was also not uncommon for ministers of Christianity to be admitted into the Emperor's apartments, and taken with him on long journeys. In the matter of church councils Constantine displayed the same interest. Specifically, he called the Synod of Rome in 313, that of Arles 314. To sum up in a sentence: He acted as if he had been a "general bishop constituted by God" (Eus. V. C. 1:44).

In 323, Constantine became sole ruler, and was now free to act as he pleased. Furthermore, the policy of Licinius since 313 had created problems in Christianity that had to be met. As has already been suggested, he never directly favored the Christians. It was evident to him that

Constantine was allied with Christianity, and that the Christians, even in his own territory, were loyal to Constantine. This only aggravated the larger political antagonism between the two rulers. Hence it was easy for Licinius to suspect Christians of treason. At any rate, he began the persecution of Christians about 319. Those of his palace were expelled; others were put to death; still others were banished and their property confiscated. Soldiers who were loyal to Christianity were stripped of their rank. Bishops were forbidden to assemble or to visit neighboring churches. Women were not permitted to worship with men or to receive instruction from the bishops, but were to receive instruction from women only. In some instances Christians were forced to worship outside the city in the open air (Soc. 1:3; Eus. H. E. 10:8; V. C. 1:51).

Hence Constantine, in 323, found the Christians in the eastern portion of his realm somewhat in the same position they occupied under former persecuting emperors. This necessitated action in the East similar to that which had been pursued in the West since 313.

With reference to individual Christians, those in exile were recalled; those working in mines and public works, set free; those in harems, linen factories, and women's apartments, liberated. Those who had been deprived of their honorable rank were restored. Any who had been enslaved were freed. All Christians who had been "enrolled as public functionaries" were, according to Sozomen (1:8), "restored to liberty." Eusebius quotes Constantine as decreeing that all who had been "enrolled in the registers of the public courts, though in time past exempt from such office" were released (V. E. 2:30). Again, any Christian who had, on the ground of his faith, been deposed from the army was given the choice of either taking his former military rank or being honorably discharged. In the last place, if any one who had been deprived of property was still living, he was reim-

bursed, even at the treasury's expense. If the Christian whose property had been confiscated was not living, then it must go either to the legal heir or, in case there was no heir, to the church nearest the property.

One source of the church's property has just been indicated. In addition, all property that formerly belonged to the church was restored. Also, the tombs of martyrs were turned over to the churches. Evidently, the government, whether under Licinius or former emperors, had taken these tombs from the Christians. Being centers of Christian enthusiasm and devotion, they were in the eyes of the government suspected sources of rebellion.

Regarding church buildings, those that were sufficiently large were repaired; others were enlarged; some were erected, especially where none had existed. Sozomen says that Constantine was careful to erect a church in the palace so as to win the soldiers. For the same purpose the weapons had on them the symbol of the cross. In fact a complete outfit for worship—a kind of tent—accompanied each legion. Church buildings were erected, under the direct supervision of Constantine, in the principal cities of the provinces; for example, at the oaks of Mamre, in Bethlehem, on Mount of Olives, in Heliopolis, in Phœnicia, and in Nicomedia. In Jerusalem a church was erected in commemoration of Christ's resurrection. Byzantium was "enlarged, surrounded with massive walls, and adorned with various edifices," and given the name of Constantinople. In Constantinople, or New Rome, all heathenism was excluded, and images that formerly served the purposes of worship in various parts of the Empire now ornamented the city as works of Art. Several churches were built, the most important one being that in honor of the twelve Apostles. In this Constantine was buried (Soc. 1:16).

An expression of Constantine's deep interest in the clergy is seen in his decree which set aside from them the

taxes from certain tributary countries. It seems to have been his wish that this policy be continued after his death (Soz. 1:8).

In addition to that action of the Emperor (after 323) which was but the continuation, largely, in the East, of a method already pursued in the West, there were new policies inaugurated, which applied to the whole Empire. Some of these will be briefly mentioned. Crucifixion as a Roman method of punishment was abolished, and penal law was further modified in a salutary way by the forbidding of gladiatorial spectacles (Soz. H. E. 1:8).

Under Augustus, there originated a law the purpose of which was to increase the population of Rome. In essence the law was this, that all unmarried and childless people forfeited thereby their right of inheritance. In opposition to such a policy Constantine decreed that all childless people should inherit. Two observations, according to Eusebius (V. C. 4:26), led the Emperor to annul the existing law: Some for physical reasons were childless, others were childless because of their devotion to the service of God through virginity. The latter was probably the more potent consideration; for Constantine gave to those in the practice of "continence and virginity" the unique privilege of making their wills before arriving at puberty. "For a similar reason the ancient Romans permitted the vestal virgins to make a will as soon as they attained the age of six years" (Soz. H. E. 1:9). This new legislation concerning the childless is evidence for the existence of asceticism in form as well as in spirit.

Again, the clergy were exempted from taxation. Almost from the first, in the West at least, Constantine relieved the clergy from public functions, and gave them financial aid; first, those in Africa, afterward (319) those in other provinces. Later he extended his favors by making it the settled policy of the government to contribute to them a definite portion of the taxes from trib-

utary countries (Soz. 1:8). In this law, exempting the clergy from taxation, the climax was reached. They were now not only made the object of state aid, but also relieved from any obligation, financially, to support the government. Such a law could have, whatever else it might have, one definite result. Two types of men were influenced to assume ministerial functions: The one composed of those in need of life's necessities, but not in want of a strong desire to be guaranteed a sure livelihood; the other made up of those who, while possessing wealth, did not have a strong sense of civic obligation. Such a result tended inevitably to lower the efficiency of the clergy.

Furthermore, Constantine enacted "that 'all those individuals' in the churches, whose freedom should be attested by the priests, should receive the freedom of Rome" (Soz. 1:8). Ostensibly, this was meant to put Christianity on the side of the oppressed and thereby make it popular with a large, though comparatively unimportant, element in Roman society. It was a strong incentive, no doubt, to that element to espouse the Christian faith. But, at the same time, it forced owners of slaves to negotiate with the Church, through its officers, and if need be even to join the Church, in order to win the priests to their side and thus counteract the practice of freeing slaves. If such a law tended, and undoubtedly it did, to popularize Christianity and the Church among the masses, it also extended the grip of the priests over the influential citizenship, and thereby played into the hands of the then fast-becoming politico-Christian officials.

The power of these Church officials was increased in another way. Bishops were constituted judges, their decisions to be executed by the civil officers (Soz. 1:9). And the decrees of synods were irremissible even by provincial governors (Eus. V. C. 4:27). These two things, followed later by a rigid codifying of canon law, resulted during the Middle Ages in a practice, the effect of which

for brutal persecution was appalling and for shrewd self-defense ingenious. There was opened the way for forcing the civil authorities to execute all kinds of ecclesiastical decisions, while it enabled that ecclesiasticism to wash its hands of all responsibility, and openly to declare—alas! true only technically—that it never persecuted or oppressed anyone.

The last law to be treated in this connection, was that dealing with Sunday and Friday. There are two accounts, purporting to give Constantine's attitude on this point: One in Sozomen's Church History (1:8), the other in Eusebius' Life of Constantine (4:18, 19, 20). According to the first account, Constantine enjoined the observance of the Lord's day and Friday, "and commanded that no judicial or other business should be transacted on those days, but that God should be served with prayers and supplications." There are in this two things to be noted: First, Sunday and Friday were equally honored; second, these days were for both rest and worship. It would perhaps be well to remember that Sozomen wrote about a century after the time of Constantine and Eusebius.

In turning to the account of Eusebius, the following questions need consideration: (1) Did Constantine put Sunday and Friday on the same basis legally? (2) Was the cessation of all labor on Sunday enjoined? (3) Was worship on Sunday required of all people—Christians and pagans alike? (4) If so, was the form and object of that worship uniform for all?

According to Eusebius, Sunday was to be observed as a day for prayer and rest, and Friday was to be "honored." Just how Friday was honored is not clear; but that it was not revered equally with Sunday and, therefore, not on an equal basis with the latter, is apparent for two reasons: First, though Eusebius was a contemporary of Constantine, and wrote his Life of Constantine shortly after the death of the latter, he was, at

that early date, in doubt as to just why Friday was, in the mind of the Emperor, worthy of honor at all. Though this doubt does not explain what was meant by "honoring" Friday, it does clearly indicate that in the time of Eusebius the day was not especially observed. Secondly, the practice of Constantine himself shows that he did not consider the two days as of equal importance. This is seen in the fact that special observance of Sunday was required of the soldiers, though nothing of the kind was required on Friday.

The second question as to whether or not cessation of all labor on Sunday was enjoined, Eusebius and Sozomen are agreed in answering in the affirmative. According to the latter, "no judicial or other business should be transacted;" while the former says: "Accordingly he enjoined on all the subjects of the Roman empire to observe the Lord's day as a day of rest."

On the third question there is room for difference of opinion, and to reach any answer at all close attention must be paid to what Eusebius has to say. "He ordained, too," says Eusebius, "that one day should be regarded as a special occasion for prayer." Then the writer points out the provision Constantine made for his own private worship. The question follows: Did the Emperor "ordain" that all his subjects should observe this day of prayer? Eusebius answers this question in the negative in the following words: "The same observance was recommended"—note the word recommended—"by this blessed prince to all classes of his subjects; his earnest desire being gradually to lead all mankind to the worship of God." And it was because of this desire that Constantine set aside Sunday as a legal day of rest for all. Constantine did not, then, force either Christians or pagans to worship on Sunday; but he went as far as he could, short of force, to require the former to worship. And as regards the latter, he was truly pedagogic; first, he set aside a day on which labor was to cease; second,

that day, though for Constantine hallowed, being the day of Christ's resurrection, aroused in the pagans no prejudice, since it was also the sun's day; third, moral suasion, through Christian practice and teaching, was brought to bear on pagans, to inculcate in them the spirit of worship on this rest day. Constantine's attitude toward his soldiers is of interest in relation to this whole question. To those soldiers who were Christians he gave special leisure on Sunday so that they could worship in the Church. And even of those soldiers who were not Christians he required, through a special statute, a prescribed form of worship. It has to be admitted that in this particular case Constantine forced some of his subjects to worship on Sunday. Yet the fact that this was done through a special statute shows that it was not his uniform policy.

Having seen that, for the single exception of some soldiers, Constantine did not force worship upon any of his subjects, but that he was at the same time anxious that all should worship, one should be interested to ascertain just what was the form and object of that worship. For Christians, evidently, the form and object of worship was that prescribed regularly by the Church; but for those not Christians the worship consisted of what may be called simple monotheism. This latter fact comes out clearly in the form of worship required of pagan soldiers, which was a short, concise prayer written by the Emperor himself. In this prayer the single object of worship is God, and in it not one element is to be found of what may be called distinctly evangelical Christianity. This does not mean that Constantine was not an evangelical Christian, at least in the thought of that day, but that as a propagandist to the pagan world he limited himself to two elements of Christianity—monotheism coupled with special providence.

III.

CONSTANTINE AND THE SCHISMATICS.

Constantine's attitude toward institutional Christianity has already been outlined. For the sake of general peace and the well-being of the Church, he could not have been other than very sensitive to any disturbances among the Christians.

Such disturbance was ready to hand when Constantine became a Christian. During the Diocletian persecution there were some Christians out and out unloyal, some equally loyal, with some more or less unloyal. When the persecution was practically over, and as soon as the Church had time to get its bearing, one of the very first problems naturally to arise was that of dealing with the unloyal element. For the out and out unloyal there could be only one sentence—excommunication. But over those representing varying shades of unloyalty there at once arose difference of opinion. Two parties crystallized, the rigid and the lax. In Northern Africa, about Carthage especially, this state of affairs was pronounced, intensified as it was by a characteristic temperament—puritanical enthusiasm. Here then there was ready rich soil for growing dissension. It came; but the exact form was determined by a peculiar incident. It will be recalled that one of the points in the edicts of Diocletian was that calling on his officials to search for copies of Scripture, which when found were to be burned. Any Christian who surrendered the Scriptures was known as a *traditor*.

In Carthage, 311, it became necessary to elect a bishop. Cæcilianus, an adherent of the lax idea of discipline, was the man chosen. The rigid party, now the disgruntled element, objected. They sought grounds on which to invalidate the new bishop's consecration. These were found in the man who ordained Cæcilianus, Felix, bishop of Aptunga, who, it was claimed by the rigid party, was a *traditor*. They at once called a synod and

elected and consecrated Majorinus an opposing bishop. The split was on, the bone of contention being whether a man's personal acts affect the validity of his official acts. The schism revolved around the clergy, the question being as to clerical discipline.

The party of Majorinus, soon to be known as Donatists, appealed to the, now, Christian Emperor, who called a synod—that of Rome, 313—to decide the matter. The party making the appeal lost the decision. Enraged at this, they again appealed to Constantine, who then called a second synod—that of Arles, 314—to reinvestigate, with the result that the former synod's decision was affirmed. Then the Donatists appealed to the Emperor for a personal decision. This followed in 316, from Milan, and was opposed to the Donatists. Very soon laws were issued against them, threatening their bishops with banishment and their church property with confiscation. These laws seem not to have been enforced, or if at all, only slightly (Eus. H. E. 10:5; Augustine, Ep. 88).

There were other schismatics, in dealing with every one of which Constantine manifests the same purpose as that expressed in his attitude toward the Donatists when he called the synod of Rome. "I have such reverence," he goes on to say in his letter to the bishop of Rome, "for the legitimate Catholic Church that I do not wish you to leave schism or division in any place" (Eus. H. E. 10:5). These words were written in 313. Years later, probably in 332, Constantine issued a sweeping edict against all heretics, naming specifically the Novatians, Valentinians, Marcionites, Paulians and Montanists; and lest some might think themselves not involved, the edict includes "all ye who devise and support heresies." The features of the edict were as follows: First, they were not at all to assemble themselves; second, their places of public worship were to be given "without delay to the Catholic Church;" they were forbidden even to meet in

private, any places being so used to be "confiscated to the public service;" fourth, though the edict does not say so, yet according to Eusebius, their books were to be searched for (V. C. 3:64, 65, 66). Sozomen, however, points out that the Novatians were not seriously injured by the edict against the heretics, giving as the reasons for it, their general agreement, on the question of Christ's deity, with the Church, and Constantine's friendship for one of their bishops, Acesius of Constantinople (H. E. 2:32).

One other body of Christians calls for consideration in this connection, namely, the Arians. Before taking up Constantine's relation to these, one point, indicated by Sozomen, should be mentioned. The Arians, though heretical, were not really a schismatic body. That is to say, they did not organize a distinct institutional activity. In that sense, the Arian controversy was waged on the inside of the Church. This is to be borne in mind if one is to arrive at a correct solution of Constantine's position in the matter. Another thing to be remembered is that he could not rid himself of the political consequences involved in Christian division and strife.

To come at once to Constantine in relation to the Arian controversy, only a bare outline of the controversy can be given in this connection. As soon as the trouble in Alexandria was made known to Constantine, he wrote a letter, in 324, to the bishop, Alexander, and Arius the presbyter, urging harmony and unity. When this failed, he called the council of Nicæa, in 325, which condemned and banished Arius. Of all the bishops present, but two, Secundus and Theonas, refused to approve the action of the Council. Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicæa disapproved the action, but signed the creed and sanctioned the condemnation of Arius and his followers. The two bishops first named, together with Arius, were banished. In a few years Eusebius and Theognis were recalled from banishment. In the presence of Constan-

tine they subscribed to the orthodox theology, and gave as their reason for not sanctioning the condemnation of Arius in 325 their belief that Arius did not hold the views attributed to him. This satisfied the Emperor, and they were restored to their bishoprics. At once they attacked Athanasius, claiming that he was unworthy personally, and that his ordination to the bishopric of Alexandria (which took place in 328) was not valid; but the real source of their opposition was in their hatred of Athanasius for opposing their views. Notwithstanding their attack, they sought to have Athanasius fellowship Arius and thereby secure the latter's recall from banishment. When Athanasius refused to do this, Eusebius, through a presbyter who was very influential with the Emperor, prevailed on the latter to give Arius a hearing. "If Arius will subscribe with the synod and hold its views," said Constantine, "I will give him an audience, and send him back to Alexandria with honor." Arius came, subscribed to orthodox theology in the presence of Constantine, was restored and sent to Alexandria. But Athanasius, the bishop, would not receive him. Then Eusebius and Theognis, together with some others, especially the disgruntled Melitians, accused Athanasius on various charges. A synod was called at Tyre, in 335, which condemned Athanasius. The latter went immediately to Constantine, and demanded a hearing in his presence. The bishops composing the synod at Tyre were commanded to assemble at once in Constantinople; but most of them out of fear went home, only a few complying with the royal demand; of the latter Eusebius again being the leader. Additional charges were now brought against Athanasius, and substantiated by what Constantine evidently considered to be reputable witnesses. As a result of this investigation, Athanasius was banished to Gaul, in 336. Arius was now free to return to the Church in Alexandria, which he did; and in keeping with the man he was, shortly raised another dis-

turbance. Again he was required to present himself before the Emperor and there swear, falsely, allegiance to the orthodox faith. Before leaving Constantinople he died, as did Constantine soon afterward.

This, in brief, was Constantine's relation to the Arian controversy. By way of summarizing, it should be noted, in the first place, that Constantine sought harmony primarily. His position as ruler made this necessary, as did his interest in Christianity. Moreover, though clearly not a theologian, he at the same time seems to have held firmly to the formal statement of the Nicene creed, and to have required all others, at least openly, by oath, to do likewise. Yet it is evident that he was deceived by Eusebius, Theognis and Arius as to their theological views and as to the validity of their accusations against Athanasius. He must have looked on the latter as an obstinate personage. In short, Constantine was trying to handle the Church largely from the political point of view.

IV.

CONSTANTINE AND PAGANISM.

It is evident that Constantine, so far as he could do so, made Christianity the State religion. No doubt this created in the minds of all non-Christians the presumption that the State was now against them. Further study is necessary to ascertain if this presumption was correct.

With the sources of Constantine's life before us, it will be found on investigation that perhaps no problem is more difficult of exact solution than that now to be considered. Enough has been written already to show the favors bestowed upon the Church, and everyone at all familiar with history knows that up to that time the separation between Church and State had not been realized. It follows that, probably, Constantine either

avored Christianity and opposed paganism or sought to recognize both as State religions.

To pass in review the facts in the case, before undertaking their interpretation, one finds that Constantine had church buildings erected at the oaks of Mamre, and on what was supposed to have been the Sepulchre, in both cases the destruction of pagan places of worship being involved. Places that involved impure practices were destroyed, as at Aphaca on Mount Lebanon and in Heliopolis of Phœnicia (Soc. 1:18). Constantinople was made a Christian city, many churches erected, and all forms of idolatry removed. Eusebius says of Constantine, "Being filled with Divine wisdom he determined to purge the city which was to be distinguished by his name, from idolatry of every kind," and points out how the imperial city "was everywhere filled with brazen statues of the most exquisite workmanship (V. C. 3:48, 54). These images, more for purposes of art than for worship, were all taken by force from the various heathen temples.

In regard to Constantine's general policy Sozomen says, "The worship of false gods was universally prohibited" (2:8). According to Socrates (1:3) Constantine "either closed or destroyed the temples of the pagans, and exposed the images which were in them to popular contempt." Eusebius says that every means was used "to rebuke the superstitious errors of the heathen"; that entrances to some of the temples were left exposed, the doors of others removed, while the roofs of still others were destroyed. The content of many temples was removed; the portions of it that were useless were destroyed, while that which was valuable, as brass and gold images, was given to public use. And interesting to say, military aid was not required; Christians of the palace armed with imperial letters did the work (V. C. 3:54; Soz. 2:5). A law was enacted which "provided that no one should erect images, or practice divination and other false and foolish arts, or offer sac-

rifice in any way." This law, together with one having as its object the enlargement of church buildings, was sent by Constantine to the governors of the various provinces (V. C. 2:45; 4:23).

In choosing governors, proconsuls, and Pretorian Prefects, the Emperor selected for the most part those who were Christians. Those chosen who were not Christians, were required "to abstain from idolatrous sacrifices" (V. C. 2:44). Sozomen puts the matter in a more sweeping way when he says, "Christians were thus placed in almost all the principal posts of the Roman government" (1:8).

Were there no other words from Constantine, what his attitude toward paganism was would be conclusive. But words of a very different, and apparently contradictory kind are quoted by Eusebius (V. C. 2:56, 60) from an edict sent to the eastern provinces: "Let those, therefore, who still delight in error, be made welcome to the same degree of peace and tranquility which they have who believe Let no one molest another, but let every one do as his soul desires." Further on in the same edict are these words: "Once more, let none use that to the detriment of another which he himself may have received on conviction of its truth. . . . For it is one thing voluntarily to undertake the conflict for immortality, another to compel others to do so from the fear of punishment We understand there are some who say that the rites of the heathen temples, and the power of darkness, have been entirely removed. We should indeed have earnestly recommended such removal to all men, were it not that the rebellious spirit of those wicked errors still continues obstinately fixed in the minds of some, so as to discourage the hope of any general restoration of mankind to the ways of truth."

How can such words as these be harmonized with those previously quoted? Three possible explanations will be suggested. First, Constantine may have pursued

the one policy in some sections, the other policy in other sections, the historians failing to make the distinction. Against this it should be urged that Socrates and Sozomen represent Constantine as forbidding, without limitation, all pagan worship; while Eusebius, in some places, uses equally universal language.

The second explanation is that which represents Constantine as forbidding all *private*, and permitting all *public*, worship. This explains more of the facts than the first proposed explanation. In 319 Constantine speaks after this fashion: "Those who are desirous of being slaves to their superstition, have liberty for the public exercise of their worship." "You, who consider this profitable to yourselves, continue to visit the public altars and temples, and to observe the solemnities of your usage; for we do not forbid the rites of an antiquated usage to be performed in the open light." As Neander (v. 2, p. 22) observes, these laws, while they permit public worship, "presuppose the prohibition of sacrifices in private dwellings." But this only answers for the years up to 319. In 323, in his edict to the eastern provinces, which was issued just after the overthrow of Licinius, Constantine seems to have given freedom of worship to all, forbidding anyone to "molest another, but let every one do as his soul desires." These words do not single out public worship and make it legal against private worship. On the other hand, Constantine is quoted by Eusebius (V. C. 2:45) as promulgating a law which "provided that no one should erect images, or practice divination and other false and foolish acts, or offer sacrifice in any way." This law, as in the case of the edict to the eastern provinces, does not in so many words single out public and private worship, but it does forbid the offering of sacrifice "in any way."

It would seem then that after 319, the theory which makes Constantine forbid private, and permit public, worship does not give complete harmony. Neander (II,

p. 28) says: "At length the erection of idolatrous images and the performance of religious sacrifices were universally forbidden," and points out in a foot-note that Constantius, in 341, renewed this prohibition.

In view of the failure of either of the two proposed explanations to give harmony, a third one is offered. Though for some years, up to 319 at least, public worship was allowed, while private worship was illegal, at length even the former was forbidden. This explanation gives room for growth in policy. At first private worship, from fear of plots being laid against the Government, was forbidden. More and more political offices were filled by Christians. And finally all pagan worship, public and private, was made illegal, that is, worship of an external kind.

Ultimately, then, Constantine reached a policy which kept in mind a distinction between institutional and what may be called spiritual paganism. That is not a complete solution which contrasts public and private worship; that is the more probable solution which contrasts institutional and non-institutional worship, making the former illegal and the latter legal, at least constituting it a realm in which law did not presume to operate.

If it be objected that there could not have been, in the minds of the masses of pagans, any real distinction between institutional and non-institutional worship, the answer simply is that Constantine was aware of that fact. That is to say, he followed, or reached ultimately, a policy that was for him consistent, yet one that he knew to be impossible of realization by many individuals, and, therefore, a progressive method of destroying paganism. He realized that paganism under such conditions would gradually disappear. And it did; for the masses have never been able to worship without symbolism and externals. The ideals and impulses of paganism, however, did not die, but appeared again, and this time more and

more on the inside of the Church, acting as a constant impetus toward the paganizing of institutional Christianity.

This solution does not give perfect consistency, but it does secure to Constantine's policy a working consistency. And a striking fact is that this ultimate policy toward paganism was very similar to the attitude of paganism toward Christianity before this time. Christianity was ever an illegal religion, in the eyes of the Roman government, but it was not continuously persecuted. There was one important difference, however, in the two policies: Whereas formerly an individual, if the test came, had to worship according to the prescribed form, now if he chose he could refuse to worship at all, the only limitation upon him being that if he chose to worship in an external way, he had to do so, to be in legal standing, according to Christian form. A negative and subtle contribution though this was, it marked, from the present point of view, an important step upward in religious progress.