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Excerpt

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CHAPTER 1

THE SUCCESSORS OF CONSTANTINE

DAVID HUNT

I. THE DYNASTIC INHERITANCE, 337-40

Newly baptized into the faith which he had professed and fostered in the Roman empire for twenty-five years, Constantine died in an imperial villa on the outskirts of Nicomedia at Pentecost (22 May) in 337. Amid public expressions of grief, soldiers of the guard laid the body in a golden coffin and bore it, draped in a pall of imperial purple, into Constantinople, where the dead ruler lay in state in his palace surrounded by brightly burning candles on gold candlesticks, guarded day and night by palace officials. Adorned with the diadem and other symbols of the imperial office, Constantine in death continued to receive the rituals of homage which military and civilian leaders normally addressed to a living emperor – he still reigned in his city (Eus. *V. Const.* iv.66–7). Of the other members of the ruling dynasty, it was Constantine's middle son, Constantius, who arrived from Antioch (where he was preparing for imminent conflict with Persia) to assume control of the funeral arrangements; although summoned at the news of his father's illness, he came too late to find him still alive (Jul. *Or.* i.16c–d, ii.94b; Zon. xiii.4.28). With Constantius at their head, soldiers and people accompanied the coffin to Constantine's recently completed mausoleum; but here the Caesar and his troops withdrew, and it was left to the 'ministers of God' and a thronged congregation of the faithful to conduct the final obsequies. Raised on a lofty catafalque, Constantine was laid to rest, as he had intended, in the midst of memorials of the twelve apostles, and now in company with them in God's kingdom he received the prayers of his Christian subjects (*V. Const.* iv.60, 70–1). In eastern Christianity Constantine remains to this day the 'equal of the apostles'.¹

For Eusebius, to whose praises of the Christian Constantine we owe these details of his funeral, this seamless web of ritual and piety was the only fitting climax to Constantine's earthly existence. Yet the ceremonies evoked by the death of the first Roman emperor to espouse Christianity

¹ For Constantine's funeral, see Kaniuth (1941), who notes (pp. 7–9) the separation of the religious ceremony from the rest of the proceedings. For the date of the Church of the Holy Apostles next to the mausoleum, see below, p. 38.

were more an amalgam of traditional and novel components. As throughout Constantine's rule, the deposit of past practice and symbolism was tenacious, and had not yet had time to give way (indeed, there is no reason to expect it) to exclusively Christian forms of expression. Hence the strictly Christian aspect of the proceedings was confined to the funeral service proper in church – and here Eusebius' rhetoric manages to conceal a significant innovation: gone was the huge pyre of great imperial cremations of the past, to be replaced now by Christian burial. The state ceremonial, on the other hand, the homage of leaders and people, the military escort, retained features inherited from previous imperial funerals (despite Eusebius' predictable insistence on the uniqueness of the Constantinian occasion).² Nor did Constantine escape the overtly pagan fate of deification. Some sources (*Aur. Vict. Caes.* xli.16; *Eutr.* x.8.2) report the traditional appearance of a comet in the skies portending his death and apotheosis, while even Eusebius – somewhat disingenuously, in the context of Christian devotion – acknowledged the issue of posthumous coinage depicting Constantine rising to the heavens in a chariot to be received by the hand of God, and (at Rome) pictures of the dead emperor dwelling above the globe of the world (*V. Const.* iv.69.2, 73). Both these images derived from the traditional store of pagan iconography:³ panegyrists, for example, had spoken of Constantine's father being carried to the skies in the sun's chariot, to be received there by the outstretched right hand of Jupiter. While Christians could, and did, reinterpret them in their own terms (referring them respectively to the Old Testament ascent of Elijah and to the eternal rule of Christ over the earth), their appearance to honour the dead Constantine owes more to previous usage than to the new faith. It is not hard to credit the story reported by Philostorgius (ii.17) that Constantine's statue in the forum of Constantinople became the object of pagan rituals aimed at warding off misfortune: Constantine in death was not, *pax* Eusebius, solely the preserve of Christian religious observance.

Eusebius' tableau of Constantine's uninterrupted transition from earth to heaven also hides from view the political and dynastic dislocation which ensued at his death. It is necessary to revert briefly to the last years of his reign.⁴ In their final form Constantine's intentions for the succession had embraced both his own three surviving sons (the youngest of whom, Constans, had become a Caesar in 333) and the descendants of his stepmother Theodora: her grandson, Constantine's nephew Dalmatius, was made a fourth Caesar on 18 September 335, and the following year a granddaughter was married to the Caesar Constantius; while Dalmatius' brother Hannibalianus, honoured as a *nobilissimus* and accorded the title 'king of

² See Price (1987) 99ff. ³ See MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, 121–32.

⁴ Constantine's dynastic arrangements are conveniently summarized in Barnes, *CE* 250–2.

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kings' (in the context of threatened hostilities against Persia), was given Constantine's daughter Constantina in marriage. Constantine had evidently envisaged that the two families would share the inheritance of his empire. This was not how Eusebius came to portray the succession. For him Constantine's heirs were exclusively his own three sons, no less by the will of God than by that of their father, and it was because of their (temporary) absence at the time of his death that Constantine 'continued to rule' from the grave; when he was translated to the company of the apostles, his empire on earth carried on in the persons of his three sons. This posthumous rule of Constantine, which is reflected in a surviving law of 2 August 337 issued still in his name (*C.Th.* XIII.4.2), was in reality a far cry from the unbroken continuity hymned by Eusebius. Not for the first time in the succession politics of Roman imperial history a dead emperor was kept 'alive' until the resolution of dynastic conflict. It was only in fact on 9 September 337 (*Chron. Min.* I, 235), more than three months after Constantine's death, that his sons Constantine II, Constantius II and Constans formally succeeded him as Augusti. Eusebius' picture thus reflects the situation as it stood after that date, and the interests of the new rulers in presenting themselves as the heaven-sent and exclusive claimants of their father's inheritance.

Meanwhile, in an episode consigned to diplomatic silence by Eusebius, the descendants of Theodora had been violently displaced from the share in the succession which Constantine had destined for them. The summer of 337 saw what Gibbon famously termed a 'promiscuous massacre'.⁵ The future emperor Julian, at the time a child of six years or so, later looked back on the murders of nine of his relatives (*Ep. ad Ath.* 270c-d): his father and uncle (Julius Constantius and Flavius Dalmatius, the sons of Theodora), six of his cousins (including Dalmatius Caesar and Hannibalianus) and his oldest brother (unknown). Another victim is likely to have been the Caesar's tutor, the eminent Gallic rhetor Aemilius Magnus Arborius.⁶ Julian himself and his older half-brother Gallus, who was seriously ill at the time and expected to die in any event, proved to be the sole survivors of this family bloodletting (*Greg. Naz. Or.* IV.21; *Lib. Or.* XVIII.10). Julian recalled these unsavoury events in 361, when he was a usurping emperor embarked on civil war against Constantius II: small wonder that in such circumstances he should accuse Constantius of the murders. But even in the context of an earlier panegyric, Constantius could not entirely escape censure: Julian acknowledged that in the sequel to Constantine's death he had been 'forced by circumstances and reluctantly failed to prevent others doing wrong' (*Or.* I.17a). It is hard not to conclude that Constantius had some part in this

⁵ *Decline and Fall* (ed. Bury), vol. 2, p. 236. For summary narrative, Barnes, *CE* 261-2; more detailed discussion in Olivetti (1915), Klein (1979a).

⁶ Ausonius, *Profess.* XVI.13ff. (with R. P. H. Green *ad loc.*).

brutal overturning of his father's dynastic plans. He was the Caesar first to appear after Constantine's death and seize the initiative in Constantinople – to the displacement, it would appear, of Dalmatius, of whose whereabouts we hear nothing, but who as Caesar in Moesia and Thrace ought to have been closest at hand to the affairs of the capital. The actual agents of the destruction were the troops in and around Constantinople, who staged a military coup against Dalmatius and the rest of Theodora's clan (the survival of the two boys Gallus and Julian may owe something to the fact that Constantius was married to their sister); if Aurelius Victor is to be believed, the soldiers had already voiced their dissent at Dalmatius' elevation as Caesar in 335.⁷ This uprising effectively resolved the dynastic rivalries, as the troops were made to proclaim their allegiance to 'no ruler other than the sons of Constantine' (Zos. II.40.3; for Eusebius (*V. Const.* IV.68) such pronouncements only served to confirm his image of seamless continuity from father to sons); and their conduct was later provided with a semblance of justification, as an act of revenge, by the circulation of a rumour that Constantine had actually been poisoned by his half-brothers.⁸ Even bathed in the language of Julian's panegyric, Constantius had 'failed to prevent' these murders; another source has him *sinente potius quam iubente* (Eutr. *loc. cit.*; cf. Socr. *HE* II.25.3). Whatever his precise role, the soldiers delivered him the outcome which served his interests, and a determination to keep the military under control was, with good reason, a hallmark of his rule (Amm. Marc. XXI.16.1–3). In the early stages he may already have faced a reaction from some of his father's establishment figures, for he soon found it convenient to remove the powerful and long-serving praetorian prefect Flavius Ablabius, and the following year (338) had him and some associates killed amid accusations of attempting to seize power.⁹

Constantius' two brothers, elsewhere in the empire at the time of their father's death, apparently took no part in the events which secured the removal of their rival dynasts. In the autumn of 337 the three new Augusti conferred in Pannonia and agreed on the division of their empire:¹⁰ Constantius retained the whole of the east, where he had been serving as Caesar, to which was added the diocese of Thrace (formerly in the control of Dalmatius); the remainder of Dalmatius' domain (Moesia) went to Constans, who controlled the rest of Illyricum, Italy and Africa; while Constantine, the senior of the three, was left with the region where he had been Caesar, the western prefecture of Gaul, Spain and Britain. It was not

⁷ *Caes.* XLI.15 (reading '*obstitentibus*'). For this military uprising, see also Eutr. x.9.1; *Epit. de Caes.* XLI.18; *Jer. Chron. s.a.* 338 (ed. Helm, 234); *Greg. Naz. Or.* IV.21.

⁸ A story unique to Philostorgius (II.16), the one ecclesiastical historian sympathetic to Constantius.

⁹ *Jer. Chron. s.a.* 338 (Helm, p. 234). For the pagan view of the Christian Ablabius' fate see the narrative of Eunap. *V. Soph.* 464 (Loeb, pp. 388–90), and Zos. II.40.3.

¹⁰ *Jul. Or.* I.19a. For the movements of the new rulers, see Barnes, *Athanasius* 218ff.

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long before all three were advertising their imperial credentials by embarking on military campaigns. From Antioch in 338, amid mounting tensions with Persia, Constantius intervened to secure a friendly ruler in Armenia; while around the same time Constantine claimed a victory over the Alamanni, and Constans took the field against the Sarmatians across the Danube (*ILS* 724). All these were tasks which reflected a continuity of concerns inherited from Constantine's last years.

But events were soon to prove that the dynastic competition had still not run its course. Constantine II, the oldest of the heirs and longest serving of his father's Caesars, had already seized the initiative of seniority as early as June 337 (before the three were named as Augusti) to order the return of the exiled bishop Athanasius to Alexandria, claiming the authority of the unfulfilled intentions of his late father.¹¹ After the formal division of autumn 337 Constantine continued to assert a senior authority over his youngest brother's share of the empire (Constans was still only in his early teens in 337): according to some accounts he sought to extend his control into Italy and Africa (*Epit. de Caes.* xli.21; *Zos.* ii.41), an allegation given some support by his addressing a law from Trier on 8 January 339 to the proconsul of Africa (*C.Th.* xii.1.27). Early in 340, not content with merely legislative intervention in Constans' territory, Constantine led an army across the Alps from Gaul and invaded northern Italy.¹² Constans, based at Naissus in Moesia, sent troops to confront his brother; these led Constantine's army into a disastrous ambush near Aquileia, and Constantine himself was killed, his body cast into the river *Alsa* (*Ausa*) (*Epit.* xli.21; *Zon.* xiii.5.7–14). His failed territorial ambitions thus provided the opportunity for Constans to gain possession of the entire western empire. By April Constans had himself reached Aquileia, and on 29th of that month the praetorian prefect of Italy received a law repealing some of the acts of the *publicus ac noster inimicus* (*C.Th.* xi.12.1). The official record was soon to obliterate the memory of the younger Constantine: when Libanius came to compose a panegyric of the emperors (*Or.* 59) in the later 340s it was as if he had never been. Constantius, now embroiled in a dogged confrontation with the Persians in Mesopotamia, had no cause to intervene in the fraternal strife in the west: Julian (*Or.* ii.94c–d) was later to commend him for seeking no territorial advantage from the conflict.

II. CONSTANS AND THE WEST, 340–50

The provinces of the west which had briefly owed allegiance to Constantine II appear to have been largely unmoved by his downfall, and

¹¹ See letter cited by Athan. *Apol. c. Ar.* lxxxvii.4–7.

¹² On the pretext of advancing eastwards to aid Constantius: *Zos.* ii.41.

readily transferred their loyalties to Constans. The only hint of reprisals lies in the persuasive conjecture that Constantine's praetorian prefect in Gaul, Ambrosius (father of a famous son), was a victim of the change of regime.¹³ For most of the next decade Constans divided his residence between Trier, the capital in Gaul which his family had made their own, and the north of Italy. He may, too, have visited Rome.¹⁴ The most obvious opportunity for a rare imperial *adventus* into the ancient capital might have been provided by the occasion of Rome's eleventh centenary in 348, a date which passed without celebration, we are told (at least by comparison with the millennium a century earlier), but which Constans duly marked with the issue of the new FEL TEMP REPARATIO coinage.¹⁵ While still in northern Italy in the summer of 340, after the overthrow of his older brother, Constans had received a delegation from Rome headed by the city prefect, Fabius Titianus (*Chron. Min.* 1.68), which presumably presented appropriate congratulations on his victory: it was a timely gesture of loyalty by Titianus, who the next year became Constans' long-serving praetorian prefect of Gaul.

For the Gauls, Constans' government was marked, at least in its early years, by his adherence to the vigorous stance against barbarians across the Rhine which he inherited from his dynastic predecessors who had held court at Trier: the fear which the Alamanni had of Constans, claims Ammianus (xxx.7.5), was eclipsed only by their later respect for the successes of Julian. Of actual campaigning, all we hear is of two expeditions against the Franks, an inconclusive contest in 341 followed by a victory for Constans the following year, when the enemy were forced into submission and a peace treaty.¹⁶ In the early months of 343 Constans crossed the English Channel for a brief foray into Britain (he was back in Trier by June), an episode sufficiently celebrated for Libanius to devote several chapters of his panegyric to expounding it (*Or.* LIX.137ff.), and for Ammianus to have made it the occasion for a digression in one of his lost books on the geography of Britain (xxvii.8.4). What in fact captured the interest of writers was the emperor's perilous winter crossing of the Channel¹⁷ – Ammianus had spoken of 'the movements of the rising and falling Ocean' – and not his exploits in Britain, which appear to have been minor. We may infer from Libanius (ch. 141) that this British expedition was not forced upon Constans by revolt or disorder in the island; furthermore, he was reportedly accompanied by a retinue of only one hundred men (ch. 139). It was evidently not a military campaign, and may have had a more administrative purpose: the only hint of its object perhaps lies in Ammianus' remark

¹³ *PLRE* 1, 51 'Ambrosius 1'. ¹⁴ T. D. Barnes, *HSCP* 79 (1975) 327–8.

¹⁵ J. P. C. Kent, *RIC* 8 (1981) 34–5. For the comparison with the proceedings of 248, see *Aur. Vict. Caes.* xxviii.2. ¹⁶ See *Jer. Chron. s.a.* 341, 342 (*Helm*, p. 235); *Lib. Or.* LIX.127ff.; *Socr. HE* II.13.4.

¹⁷ Cf. *Firm. Mat. De errore prof. relig.* xxviii.6, with Turcan (Budé) *ad loc.*

(xxviii.3.8) that his account of Constans in Britain had made mention of an obscure corps of couriers known as *areani*. It is rash to attribute to this brief and little-known episode, as some have tried, a wholesale reorganization of the northern frontier in Britain, or the building of certain Saxon shore-forts (Pevensey?).¹⁸

If Constans inherited from his father's era the need for the emperor of the west to show himself an effective bulwark against the barbarians, he could also not forget that he was a scion of the first Christian dynasty to rule the empire; and he ruled, unlike his father or his fellow emperor Constantius, as one already baptized in the faith (Athan. *Apol. ad Const.* vii). It is to a law of Constans, issued in 341 to the *vicarius* of Italy, that we owe the earliest general condemnation of pagan cult preserved in the Theodosian Code: *cesset superstitio, sacrificiorum aboleatur insania* (*C.Th.* xvi.10.2: significantly, Constans was careful to invoke the precedent of a law of his father's, *divi principis parentis nostri*). The next year (xvi.10.3) he conceded to the prefect of Rome the preservation of temple buildings outside the walls as the points of origin of many of the public entertainments of the capital, though with the inevitable proviso that pagan rites were debarred. In dealing with the established institutions of Rome, where Constantine had already charted the pragmatic course which would be followed by his Christian successors through the century, the emperor faced constraints against the thoroughgoing eradication of paganism which the will of God ideally required – and of which Constans and his brother were eloquently reminded about this time in Firmicus Maternus' pamphlet *On the Error of Profane Religions*: 'only a little of the task remains before the devil will be utterly cast down and laid low by your laws, in order that the deadly contagion of past idolatry may perish' (xx.7).

A more definitive legacy of Constantine's was the transformation of ecclesiastical politics into affairs of state.¹⁹ Not only did the Christian ruler believe himself called to forge unity among church leaders, but the bishops now found themselves blessed with privileged access to the imperial court and 'appeal to Caesar'. In the 340s a Roman empire shared between two servants of God redoubled the possibilities of episcopal lobbying, as Constans' heartlands of Italy and Gaul played host to bishops who had fallen foul of their fellows in the east, and had been banished on the orders of his fellow emperor.²⁰ The amnesty signalled by Constantine II's restoration of Athanasius in 337 had proved short-lived, and it was not long before the political dominance of Athanasius' opponents reasserted itself:

¹⁸ See e.g. Frere (1987) 336–8; Johnson (1980) 93–4.

¹⁹ See the concise summary in Barnes, *Athanasius* 165–75.

²⁰ Note the complaint of western bishops at the council of Sardica about 'bishops who do not cease going to the court' (Can. 8 Hess). On the ecclesiastical politics of the 340s, see e.g. Frend (1984) 528ff.; on the role of Constans, Barnard (1981), Barnes, *Athanasius* 63ff.

the bishop of Alexandria and others who had succeeded in returning (including Marcellus of Ancyra, whose contentious views on the indivisibility of the divine nature had led to his condemnation before Constantine in 336) were re-exiled from their sees. Athanasius was ousted from Alexandria in March 339. The first port of call for these dislodged easterners was Rome, where they were received into the fold by bishop Julius (Athanasius, *Apol. c. Ar.* xxxiii). Although the western emperor cannot have been unaware of these arrivals in Rome, it was to be three years before Athanasius was summoned to a meeting with Constans in Milan (*Apol. ad Const.* iv). Perhaps it was the confidence of military success over the Franks which induced the emperor to turn his attention to healing the divisions of the church – to say nothing of the influence of bishops close to the court, like Maximinus of Trier, who favoured the cause of the exiles (whose number now included Paul, the ousted bishop of Constantinople).²¹ Like his father before him, Constans was confronted by a world of disaffected bishops and doctrinal differences which invited the intervention of a Christian ruler aware of his responsibilities to his God. He took the initiative with his brother in convoking what was intended to be a general council of western and eastern bishops at Sardica, on the eastern border of his empire – at their meeting in Milan he told Athanasius that he had already communicated with Constantius on the subject – and it was from his court at Trier the next year (343) that Athanasius and the venerable Ossius of Cordova set out for the council (*Apol. ad Const.* iv). Sardica was to be Constans' Nicaea.

Some 170 bishops (with the westerners in the majority) came at the imperial bidding to Sardica,²² but the two factions stayed apart, and the council failed amid mutual recriminations and excommunications. While the western group held their own gathering, the eastern bishops found an excuse to withdraw in the summons to celebrate a Persian victory by Constantius (*Hist. Ar.* xvi.2): so interlocked by now were matters ecclesiastical and secular. In these years around the council of Sardica imperial diplomacy between west and east was dominated by the subject of bishops banished by one ruler only to have their causes taken up by the other. In the spring of 344 Constans despatched a delegation to Antioch (*Hist. Ar.* xx.2; Theod. *HE* II.8.54), consisting of two bishops (Vincentius of Capua and Euphrates of Cologne) and a general, his *magister equitum* Flavius Salia, to press his brother for the return of Athanasius to Alexandria, and he had further meetings with Athanasius in Italy and Gaul on the question of his reinstatement (*Apol. ad Const.* iv). This diplomatic offensive mounted by

²¹ For Maximinus' reception of Paul and support of the exiles, see the complaints of the eastern bishops at Sardica: *CSEL* I.xv, pp. 66–7.

²² For the number 'about 170', see Athanasius, *Hist. Ar.* xv. On the council, see Barnes, *Athanasius* 71–81.

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the western emperor, aided perhaps by the fact that Constantius continued to have pressing preoccupations on the Persian front, eventually bore fruit in consent to Athanasius' return (his see was in any case vacant since the death of his 'replacement' Gregory in June 345): the bishop of Alexandria triumphantly reclaimed his city on 21 October 346.²³ The degree to which Athanasius later (in his *Apology to Constantius*) protested his innocence of fomenting fraternal strife between the emperors suggests that these ecclesiastical differences had placed real strain on the *concordia* of Constantine's heirs – even to the extent that Constans was apparently ready to threaten military intervention against his brother.²⁴ Their political estrangement is confirmed by the fact that their joint consulship of 346, the last year in which they shared the office, went unrecognized in Constans' half of the empire.²⁵ The eulogy, in Libanius' panegyric of the imperial brothers (*Or. LIX.152ff.*), of the fellow-feeling which united the two rulers of separate territories may have a more than conventional significance.

Yet another Constantinian legacy came to haunt the government of Constans. In 347 two imperial officials, Paul and Macarius (tradition, but no ancient evidence, calls them *notarii*), arrived in Carthage on a mission to distribute funds for the churches of Africa and for almsgiving (*Optatus*, III.3). The divisions of African Christendom, Catholic and Donatist, which Constantine had despairingly abandoned to the 'judgement of God', made their task a minefield; but from the perspective of Donatus and his followers they were perceived to behave with undisguised partisanship for Catholic congregations.²⁶ It was these agents of Constans who first provoked the outraged question, *quid est imperatori cum ecclesia?* As they travelled into Numidia, Donatist resistance was roused: the bishop of Bagai summoned up bands of circumcellions and confronted the officials, who replied by sending in soldiers – the bishop was among the victims (*Optatus*, III.4). Other Donatist martyrs soon followed, while in Carthage on 15 August 347 the proconsul of Africa issued a decree of Constans, in response to the violence, ordering the unity of all the churches under the Catholic bishop of Carthage. This made Constans 'religiosissimus' in the eyes of the Catholics of Africa, and Paul and Macarius 'servants and ministers of the holy work of God';²⁷ yet to the Donatists the age of persecution and martyrdom had returned, and Constans was the reincarnation of his pagan predecessors. They would have found it difficult to credit the

²³ *Festal Index* 18; cf. *Greg. Naz. Or.* xxxi.27–9. For Constantius' agreement to his return, see Athan. *Apol. c. Ar.* LI.4.

²⁴ A threat implied in Constans' letter cited by Socr. *HE* II.22; for further discussion, Barnes, *Athanasius* 89ff. ²⁵ See Bagnall *et al.* (1987) 226–7.

²⁶ Frend, *Donatist Church* 177–82. For a narrative based on Donatist sources, see Grasmück (1964) 112ff.

²⁷ So the documents of the subsequent council of Carthage: Munier (ed.), *Concilia Africae (CCSL 149)*, p. 3.

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claims later put to Constantius by Ossius of Cordova, that Constans never used violence against bishops, nor had his officials exercised coercion (Athanasius, *Hist. Ar.* XLIV.6).

Constans' Donatist subjects in Africa might have had more sympathy with the judgement of Eutropius (x.9.3) that he was 'intolerabilis provincialibus'. Even the population of Gaul, where Constans could bask in the credit of successes against the Germans, doubtless came to resent the financial impositions demanded to sustain a vigorous military effort – and on the part of an emperor who seems increasingly to have deserted them for other parts of his domain,²⁸ while military discipline also began to take its toll of the soldiers' loyalty, to such an extent that by the end Constans was equally unpopular with the army, *militi iniucundus*. He surrounded himself, it is alleged, with bad company, and failed to listen to wise counsel (cf. Amm. Marc. XVI.7.5) – but that is a conventional charge to level at fallen rulers. Certainly he had his rapacious subordinates, like the *magister officiorum* Eugenius,²⁹ yet the allegation that he kept a coterie of captive barbarians to gratify his homosexual tastes sounds more like hostile folklore.³⁰ Revealing, though, of the extent of disaffection from Constans is the fact that the ringleaders of the coup which overthrew him represented both the military and civilian echelons of his court: Fl. Magnus Magnentius was commander of the leading field army regiments, the Joviani and Herculiani, and his chief lieutenant, Marcellinus, was Constans' *comes rerum privatarum*. The desertion of Magnentius has added significance in that his service to the imperial house went back to Constantine, and he owed a debt of loyalty to Constans, who had once rescued him from a military mutiny (Zos. II.46.3, Zon. XIII.5.16). Another notable deserter was Fabius Titianus, who had served Constans throughout the 340s as praetorian prefect of Gaul, only to throw in his lot with Magnentius and return to Rome for a second tenure of the city prefecture (February 350). It may have been in the same context of alienation from Constans that the elder Gratian, father of future emperors, retired from a distinguished military career to his home in Pannonia (where Magnentius was later to be a guest: Amm. Marc. xxx.7.3). The regime of Constans evidently forfeited the allegiance of some of its most prominent members.

The setting for Magnentius' coup was Autun, a city which looked back to a time when it had been rebuilt by Constans' grandfather and further honoured by his father, but which was now overshadowed by the primacy which Trier had come to enjoy as the favoured imperial residence in Gaul:

²⁸ The evidence is scanty, but Constans is last attested in Gaul in 345: Barnes, *Athanasius*, 225.

²⁹ Lib. *Or.* XIV.10; for Eugenius' presence at court, cf. Athanasius, *Apol. ad Const.* III.

³⁰ E.g. Amm. Marc. *Caes.* XLI.24; Zos. II.42.1; Zon. XIII.5.15, 6.7–9 (the most detail). In this context it is ironic that Constans was the author of a notably strident pronouncement against homosexuality: *C.Th.* IX.7.3.