

## REMEMBERING CONSTANTINE AT THE MILVIAN BRIDGE

Constantine's victory in 312 at the battle of the Milvian Bridge established his rule as the first Christian emperor. This book examines the creation and dissemination of the legends about that battle and its significance. Christian histories, panegyrics, and an honorific arch at Rome soon commemorated his victory, and the emperor himself contributed to the myth by describing his vision of a cross in the sky before the battle. Through meticulous research into the late Roman narratives and the medieval and Byzantine legends, this book moves beyond a strictly religious perspective by emphasizing the conflicts about the periphery of the Roman empire, the nature of emperorship, and the role of Rome as a capital city. Throughout late antiquity and the medieval period, memories of Constantine's victory served as a powerful paradigm for understanding rulership in a Christian society.

Raymond Van Dam is Professor in the Department of History at the University of Michigan. His most recent books are *Rome and Constantinople: Rewriting Roman History during Late Antiquity* (2010) and *The Roman Revolution of Constantine* (Cambridge, 2007).

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RAYMOND VAN DAM

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



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Raymond Van Dam

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*For Anne*

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## PREFACE

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A book about memories of Constantine is also an album of memories for me. Earlier versions of parts of chapters were presented as the Moritz Lecture at Kalamazoo College, a plenary lecture at the annual conference of the North American Patristics Society, and a lecture at Calvin College. The most rewarding moments of those occasions were always the complementary conversations: with Anne Haeckl, John Wickstrom, and their students at Kalamazoo College; with Paul Blowers, Virginia Burrus, Elizabeth Digeser, David Hunter, Adam Schor, and Dennis Trout at NAPS; and with Young Kim, Mark Williams, and their students at Calvin College.

As an undergraduate and a graduate student I was blessed to enjoy the company and learning of wonderful professors. As a professor I continue to learn from the undergraduates in my survey courses and the graduate students in my seminars, who have become my most invigorating teachers. After his victory at the Milvian Bridge, the emperor Constantine relished arguing with bishops at their councils. He would likewise have enjoyed talking about late antiquity with Alex Angelov, Jon Arnold, and Rob Chenault, and with Ian Mladjov, who designed and drew the splendid maps.

Stimulating comments from Mark Humphries and the anonymous Press readers were helpful, encouraging, and much appreciated. Publishing with Cambridge University Press is a high honor; working with Beatrice Rehl, the best editor in academic publishing, is a delightful pleasure.

## ABBREVIATIONS



ACW	Ancient Christian Writers (Westminster)
Budé	Collection des Universités de France publiée sous le patronage de l'Association Guillaume Budé (Paris)
CChr.	Corpus Christianorum (Turnhout)
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus inscriptionum latinarum</i> (Berlin)
CSEL	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum (Vienna)
FC	Fathers of the Church (Washington, D.C.)
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte (Berlin)
<i>ILS</i>	<i>Inscriptiones latinae selectae</i> , ed. H. Dessau (reprint: Berlin, 1962)
LCL	Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.)
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae historica (Berlin, Hannover, and Leipzig)
NPNF	A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (reprint: Grand Rapids, Mich.)
OCT	Oxford Classical Texts (Oxford)
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologia graeca</i> (Paris)
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia latina</i> (Paris)
<i>PLRE</i>	<i>The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> (Cambridge). Vol. 1, A.D. 260–395, ed. A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale, and J. Morris (1971). Vol. 2, A.D. 395–527, ed. J. R. Martindale (1980). Vol. 3, A.D. 527–641, ed. J. R. Martindale (1992)
SChr.	Sources chrétiennes (Paris)
Teubner	Bibliotheca scriptorum graecorum et romanorum Teubneriana (Leipzig and Stuttgart)
TTH	Translated Texts for Historians (Liverpool)



# TIMELINE



early 21st century: this book  
mid-19th century: Jacob Burckhardt's *Die Zeit Constantins des Grossen* (Chap. 1)  
late 18th century: Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (Chap. 1)  
mid-17th century: Bernini's statue of Constantine in the Church of St. Peter (Chap. 2)  
early 16th century: Raphael's frescoes in papal apartment (Chap. 2)  
medieval period: Donation of Constantine (Chap. 2)  
late 9th century: Byzantine *Life of Constantine* (Chap. 2)  
late 8th or early 9th century: forgery of *Constitution of Constantine* (Chap. 2)  
late 6th century: historian Evagrius (Chap. 3)  
527–565: emperor Justinian  
early 6th century: historian Zosimus (Chap. 3) and historian John Malalas (Chap. 2)  
430s–440s: historians Socrates and Sozomen at Constantinople, and bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus (Chap. 3)  
425–455: emperor Valentinian III  
early 5th century: historian Rufinus (Chap. 3, 7)  
late 4th–early 5th century: Eunapius of Sardis (Chap. 3)  
379–395: emperor Theodosius  
361–363: emperor Julian  
early 350s: revolts of Magnentius and Vetranio; letter of bishop Cyril of Jerusalem (Chap. 3)  
after 337: Praxagoras' "History of Constantine the Great" (Chap. 6)  
337–361: emperor Constantius II

**CONSTANTINE AND EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA** (see next page)

303: visit of Diocletian and Maximian to Rome; Monument of Five Columns (Chap. 6–7, 9)  
from 284, Tetrarchic emperors: Diocletian (284–305), Maximian (285–305, 306–310), Constantius I (293–306),  
Galerius (293–311), Severus (305–307), Maximinus (305–313), Licinius (308–324)  
late 3rd century: construction of Aurelian Wall at Rome  
161–180: emperor Marcus Aurelius  
117–138: emperor Hadrian  
98–117: emperor Trajan  
31 B.C.–A.D. 14: emperor Augustus  
late 3rd century B.C.: construction of Flaminian Way (Chap. 7) and Milvian Bridge (Chap. 10)  
late 6th century B.C.: establishment of Republic; defense of Sublician Bridge by Horatius Cocles (Chap. 10)

CONSTANTINE	BOTH [OR NEITHER]	EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA
		339(?) May 30: death after May 337: <i>Life of Constantine</i> (Chap. 4)
337 May 22: death		
	336 July 25: celebration at Constantinople of 30th anniversary of Constantine's accession, including banquet for bishops and oration by Eusebius	
330 May 11: dedication of Constantinople		
326 July–August: visit to Rome (Chap. 6)		
	325 July 25: celebration at Nicomedia of 20th anniversary of Constantine's accession, including banquet for bishops and oration by Eusebius	
	325 June–July: council of Nicaea (Chap. 4)	
324–325 winter or 325 spring: visit to Antioch (Chap. 4)		325 March(?): council of Antioch (Chap. 4)
		after September 324: "third edition" of <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> 8–10 (Chap. 5)
324 September 18: final victory over Licinius		
	[321 March: Nazarius' panegyric at Rome (Chap. 6)]	
316 October–317 February: conflict with Licinius		
		before autumn 316: "second edition" of <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> 8–9 + 10 (Chap. 5)
315 July 21–September 27: visit to Rome; dedication of arch of Constantine (Chap. 6)		315(?): oration at Tyre (Chap. 5, 7)
ca. 314/315: Lactantius' <i>Deaths of the Persecutors</i> , at Trier (Chap. 6)		
314 summer: council of Arles (Chap. 7)		
314–335: Silvester, bishop of Rome		
		late 313 or 314: "first edition" of <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> 8–9 (Chap. 5)
313 late summer (?): panegyric at Trier (?) (Chap. 6, 7)		
	313 summer: death of Maximinus	
Porfyrius the poet (Chap. 7)		after October 312: anonymous source about Maxentius and Constantine at Rome (Chap. 5, 7)
312 October 29–313 January: visit to Rome; Church of St. John Lateran (Chap. 7)		
<b>312 October 28: battle at the Milvian Bridge;</b> death of Maxentius (Chap. 1, 9)		
311–314: Miltiades, bishop of Rome		
310 summer: death of Maximian; Constantine's vision of Apollo (Chap. 1); panegyric at Trier (Chap. 7)		
306 October 28: Maxentius proclaimed emperor at Rome (Chap. 9)		
306 July 25: Constantine proclaimed emperor at York (Chap. 9)		

