theme suggested the only legitimate rulers were those who yielded to priests. The ultimate authority for this subversive message was none other than Moses (Deut 17:18–19). Thus Eusebius, who is frequently scorned for doting on the emperor, quite significantly steered clear of Pauline analogies in the life and chose instead to call attention to Constantine's similarity to the Hebrew lawgiver (*Vit. Const.* 1.12).

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II. Islam

Constantine (or *Qasṭanṭīn*) receives only minor and relatively bland notices in many of the great chronicles written during the classical Islamic period. Intriguingly, many Muslim versions of Constantine's conversion to Christianity appear to draw upon the account of Eusebius (d. 340) rather than the somewhat better known version of Lactantius (d. 320). In Lactantius, Constantine glimpses Christ's monogram, the Chi-Rho, in a dream and then has this mark placed on his soldiers' shields before the battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312, after which he defeats his rival Maxentius to become sole emperor of Rome (*Mort.* 44). Eusebius' version, on the other hand, is more complex: Constantine has a daytime vision of a cross of light above the motto τούτῳ νίκα ("conquer with this"), followed by a dream in which Christ instructs him to make the sign he saw in his vision into a triumphal standard before the battle (*Vit. Const.* 1.28). Eusebius' description of the standard – a baroque conglomeration of a spear, a transverse bar, the Chi-Rho, and a portrait of the emperor himself – clearly informs Muslim interpretations of the episode, for the spear is the central recurring motif in their versions. Notably, the classical Muslim historians seem entirely ignorant of the Chi-Rho.

Constantine appears at the head of the list of the Christian kings of Rome assembled by al-Yaʿqūbī (d. after 907 CE), in whose account Constantine is reportedly inspired by a dream to mark his spear with the sign of the cross, after which Constantine accepts Christianity following an important (but unspecified) victory over his enemies. However, this part of al-Yaʿqūbī's account is wholly overshadowed by his subsequent description of the Council of Nicaea (325 CE), in which Constantine hardly plays much of a role at all. Al-Yaʿqūbī claims thirteen discrete sects were represented at the council (his account colored by a longstanding Muslim stereotype of Christianity as characteristically fractious; cf. S 2:253), and he incorrectly promotes Arius to the Patriarchate of Alexandria. Nevertheless, his representation of the basic theological issues at hand, as well as the outcome of the council, proves surprisingly sound: the Arian position of Christ as a semi-divine created being is rejected after the majority asserts the Son's preexistent divine nature is authentically divine like that of the Father.

Nothing explicitly pejorative emerges in al-Yaʿqūbī's account; the same is true of the references to Constantine in the chronicle of al-Ṭabarī (d. 923 CE), which are even more terse, perhaps since the author's conspicuous interest in Iranian antiquity overshadows his treatment of Rome. Al-Masʿūdī (d. 956 CE) offers a far richer account than either al-Yaʿqūbī or al-Ṭabarī: he not only describes Constantine's conversion and the Council of Nicaea but also provides brief resumes of the transfer of the imperial capital from Rome to Byzantium, Helena's travels and building projects in Palestine and Syria, and her discovery of the true cross in Jerusalem. Though similar to al-Yaʿqūbī's, his description of Constantine's vision indicates even more strongly its ultimate inspiration by that of Eusebius: Constantine sees a richly decorated spear adorned with crosses descending from heaven, accompanied by a divine voice instructing him to "take this spear and vanquish thy enemy and become Christian." As in al-Yaʿqūbī, Constantine is portrayed here as entirely ignorant of Christianity at the time of his conversion, with the explicit pretext for the Council of Nicaea explained as his desire to survey the different branches of the faith in order to determine which should become established in the empire. While al-Masʿūdī evinces no interest in the Christological issues at stake, he is aware of different sects such as the Arians, the Melkites, the Nestorians, and the Jacobites, though his mention of them in the context of his discussion of Nicaea does seem to indicate some confusion on his part between this council and Chalcedon (451 CE).

Constantine was of far greater import to Muslim authors writing in the specific fields of apologetic and polemic. Presumably because of Christian polemicists' denigrations of Islam as a faith spread by the sword, Muslim apologists sometimes cast Constantine as a political opportunist who exploited the message of the prophet Jesus, already corrupted by Paul, and twisted it into the creed of an aggressively expansionist empire.

The most widely discussed of these accounts by far is that found in the *Tathbīt dalāʾil al-nubuwwa*, or "Validation of the Proofs of Prophecy," of the Muʿtazilite ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 1025). This work has become extremely well-known through an acrimonious debate over the nature of the account of Christian origins found therein that broke out in the 1960s. Shlomo Pines argued repeatedly that the section on Christianity in the *Tathbīt* came from a lost Jewish Christian source and thus constituted solid evidence for the survival of Jewish Christianity practically to the time of the rise of Islam. Pines' former friend and colleague S. M. Stern severely criticized Pines' conclusions, and for the most part, subsequent scholarship has tended to support Stern's position. It is the account in the *Tathbīt* of Paul as a wicked Jew who distorts the teachings of Jesus that is most central to Pines' Jewish Christian thesis; he interprets the claim that Jesus had only come to confirm the law of Moses as a polemic against Pauline Christianity that could only have come from a Jewish believer in Christ. The portrayal of Constantine is important in this connection as well inasmuch as it furthers the depiction of Roman Christianity as a complete deviation from the religion of Jesus himself.

Overall, far more attention is paid to the circumstances of Constantine's conversion in the *Tathbīt* than in the accounts of the historians mentioned above. The underlying motives for his conversion are essentially the same: formerly the Romans used astronomy to discern advantageous oracles before going into battle and put images of astral bodies on their standards, but after his mother Helena had a dream in which she saw a cross and heard a voice telling her to "conquer with this," Constantine persuaded the Romans to adopt the cross as their *Führersymbol* instead. Thus, in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's account, Constantine's acceptance of Christianity is little more than the substitution of the worship of the cross for the worship of stars and planets. (This specific claim also appears in another work of al-Masʿūdī, the *Tanbīh wa-l-ishrāf*.) Following this exchange, Constantine and his mother despoiled the pagan temples and purveyors of Greek learning in the empire, replacing them with monks and commoners. Shortly afterwards, Constantine convened the Council of Nicaea, the dogmatic results of which he imposed upon his subjects by force. Notably, ʿAbd al-Jabbār is able to quote the Nicene Creed at length (technically the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, according to Reynolds).

Besides the correspondences with the account of al-Masʿūdī, significant parallels to ʿAbd al-Jabbār's portrayal of Constantine emerge in the works of al-Khātib Iskāfī and Miskawayh (both d. 1030), contemporaries of ʿAbd al-Jabbār, who also lived in the city of Rayy in Iran. These connections Stern had already observed; notably, he posits a common source for these Muslim authors in a polemical account originating among the pagans of Ḥarrān, whom Constantine allegedly persecuted. However, more recently, Reynolds has convincingly argued that ʿAbd al-Jabbār's view of the imperial establishment of Christianity need not be attributed to a prior Jewish Christian source (or any external source at all) but rather represents an original contribution to Islamic polemical literature that reflects the author's particular viewpoint. Whereas al-Masʿūdī's account is more objective and "scientific," those of Iskāfī, Miskawayh, and ʿAbd al-Jabbār all seem to have been heavily shaped by Muʿtazilite polemical priorities, and Reynolds emphasizes the *Tathbīt*'s goal of promoting effective refutation of Christian claims instead of its direct dependence upon texts and traditions external to the discourse of the Muʿtazila.

The themes developed by the Muʿtazila in the polemical milieu of the 9th to 11th centuries recur in later contexts as well. In the 14th century, Constantine features prominently in the *Response to the Letter from the People of Cyprus* of Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī (d. 1327), written as a reply to a Christian polemical document sent to the author. In the same way as the original letter drew upon a range of older documents, so too al-Dimashqī made use of well-established apologetic and polemical tropes. His now-familiar portrayal of Constantine as inspired to accept Christianity after a dream and establishing a creed imposed by coercion and deception is here augmented by another theme: that of the "canonical experts" (*aṣḥāb al-qawānīn*) who deliberately misled Constantine. These nefarious figures had already begun the distortion of Christ's original message and persuaded Constantine to establish Christianity as the official creed of Rome; intriguingly, according to al-Dimashqī, they knew that the coming Paraclete who would confirm Christ's teachings was Muḥammad, but they told Constantine it was the Holy Spirit instead. It was the promulgation of the four Gospels canonized by these "experts," with their false depiction of Jesus' torture and crucifixion, that caused Christianity's manifest errors to spread throughout the world. Al-Dimashqī's emphasis on *taḥrīf* or falsification of Scripture is of course familiar from older Muslim polemic against Jews as well as Christians, though his account is particularly noteworthy for its striking synthesis of this theme with that of imperial politics being the ultimate ruin of the religion of Jesus.

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Constantinople

I. Archaeology

Byzantium before Constantine was a typically Roman city that included a tetrastōon (a porticoed square), administrative buildings, and pagan temples. Most of the city's previous construction – for example, the Baths of Zeuxippos and the fortification walls protecting the city – took place during the reign of Septimius Severus. Nothing remains today of that Roman city. Constantine implemented his transformation of this small outlying city to a capital of the empire in grand scale. He planned the city in the tradition of imperial Rome, but one with a more Christian character. At Rome, the center of the city was dominated by pagan temples and centuries-old imperial monuments and palaces. Christian churches within the city walls of Rome were small, titular churches. Cult centers dedicated to martyrs, such as the tombs of saints Peter and Paul, lay outside the city walls. When Constantine became the emperor of Rome, his patronage of Christian foundations in Rome included a splendid basilica for Saint Peter. The Lateran cathedral was built within the walls of Rome, but was located at the eastern edge of the city on private land, far away from the marble fora and temples. The heart of Rome remained untouched and it appears that Constantine was content to leave the city to the conservative upper classes of Rome who remained traditionally pagan.

The consecration of the new capital occurred in 325. Constantine ordered that massive fortification walls be built to enclose the peninsula, running from the Golden Horn to the Propontis. Though the wall has long since disappeared, the general course has been mapped. Theodosius II expanded the territory less than a century later when settlements had already exceeded the western boundary set by Constantine. The Theodosian walls, as they are known, ran some 6.5 km north-south. Many expanses of the ruined walls still rise at the edge of the old city. Comprised of two parallel walls separated by a terrace 18–20 meters wide, the walls were preceded by a moat and backed by 2,500 barrel-vaulted chambers supporting a parapet. The exterior wall was 8 meters high with a width of 1–2 meters at the base. The interior wall stood 10–13 meters tall and was 5 meters thick at the base. Some 96 towers were placed in regular intervals along the wall. With these fortifications, the city resisted all attacks for a millennium until the Ottomans under Mehmed the Conqueror used newly-invented cannons in the siege of 1453 to breach the walls.

Constantine's city included the building of important civic and public areas. Foremost in his mind was the construction of a large palace that he erected at the southeast of the city. He built his own quarters over the old Roman city center, using the tetrastōon and the porticoed street up to the Old Severan Gate as the entrance to his own palace. The palace was rebuilt in the 6th century CE by Justinian. Adjacent to the palace on the west was a hippodrome, by some estimates capable of seating 100,000 people. The hippodrome served an important function as the place where the emperor, from the kathisma – the imperial box linked directly to the palace – made his public appearances. Important visual evidence of the imperial presentation in the kathisma is carved in relief on the base of the Theodosian obelisk erected on the spina, or central dividing line, of the hippodrome, still *in situ*. Just beyond the hippodrome were the Baths of Zeuxippos, enlarged and embellished by Constantine with statuary and mosaics. Connected to this area at the north was a public square, called the Augusteon, marking the city center. At the entrance to the Augusteon was the Milion, a tetrapylon (four piers) that held aloft a large dome; this marked the point from which all distances of the empire were measured. A single columnar fragment remains standing on the site. Farther north, Constantine constructed a church. The Hagia Eirene served as the Christian worship center until the dedication of a large, new cathedral, planned by Constantine but not completed until 360 CE. This church – later known as the Hagia Sophia – dominated the northern side of the square. Both Hagia Eirene and Hagia Sophia were burned in the Nika riot of 542 CE, and rebuilt by Justinian I. Some of the columns and other architectural elements of a portico dating to the 5th century CE, when the first Hagia Sophia was rebuilt after a fire in 404 CE, were excavated in the 1930s and can be seen just in front of the current church. A large central road lined with covered porticoes, called the mese, ran from the Augusteon to the Golden Gate at edge of the city. Along this progression was a series of fora. The first was dedicated to Constantine and placed at the top of the first hill. It was circular with two storied porticos and was marked in the center by a monumental porphyry column topped by a statue of the emperor in the