Constantine the Reader.
Exegesis and Empire in the Oration to the Assembly of the Saints

On Constantinian authenticity:

(Some) hypotheses on place and date of delivery:
Trier, 314 (Girardet 2013)
Rome, 315 (Edwards 2003, xxix)
Serdica, 317 (Barnes 1976)
Thessalonica, 323 (Piganiol 1932)
Nicomedia, 325 (Barnes 2001)
Antioch, 325 (Lane Fox 1986)
Nicomedia, 325 (Lenski 2016, 35)
Nicomedia, 328 (Bleckmann 1997)
OC as draft to be adapted for specific occasions (Drake 2000, 292-305)
OC as draft, but Eusebius preserves an actual version delivered before Nicaea, in the East (Cristofoli 2005, 12-28)

Structure of OC:
Ch. 1-2 Preface (Passion of Christ, redemption of humankind)
Ch. 3-11 Elements of theology: unity and eternity of God, Uncaused Cause (3); critique of polytheism (4); God establishing cosmic principles and the notion of justice (5-8); critique of pagan philosophers (esp. Socrates, Protagoras, Plato), strengths and weaknesses of Plato’s idea of demiurge (9-10); repentance and salvation in Christ (11); criticism of detractors of Christianity, praise of free will (12-4).
Ch. 15 Predicament and life of Jesus (Matthew); faith in Christ as source of protection.
Ch. 16-17 Ruin of pagan cities (Memphis, Babylon). *[Prophets anticipating the coming of Christ (Moses; Daniel)]
Ch. 18-21 ‘Foreign witnesses to the coming of Christ’: prophecy of the Erythraen Sibyl; Virgil’s Eclogue 4]
Ch. 22-25 God’s benevolence as source of Constantine’s success (22); faithful rewarded with eternal life (23); analysis of recent history; criticism of past emperors who persecuted Christianity, doom of their reign, triumph of Providence (24-5)
Ch. 26 Constantine’s celebration of God’s support and of the power of prayer.

* [interpretive digression]

T1 Daniel in the lions’ den (OC 17)
And Daniel, after the dissolution of the Assyrian state (...) went over to Cambyses, the king of the Persians, by the providence of God. But there too was envy and with envy the pernicious attacks of the magi, great and numerous dangers in succession, from all of which the was easily saved with the help of Christ’s providence, and easily excelled in the trial of every kind of virtue. Δανιὴλ δὲ μετὰ τὴν κατάλυσιν τῆς Ασσυρίων βασιλείας (...) ἐπὶ Καμβύσην τῶν Περσῶν βασιλέα μετήλθεν ἐκ θείας προνοίας, φόνος δὲ κάνταυθα, καὶ πρὸς γε τῷ φθόνῳ ὀλέθριοι μάγων ἐπιβουλαῖ, διαδοχαὶ τε κινδύνων μεγάλων τε καὶ πολλῶν, ἐξ ὧν πάντων συναρμομένης τῆς Χριστοῦ προνοίας σωθεὶς εὐχέρως παντοῖας ἑτέρης πείρας διέπρεψεν.
For when the man prayed three times a day [Dan. 6.3-9] (...) the magi (...) persuaded him (= the king) to sentence Daniel to be a sacrifice to savage lions (...). But Daniel’s sentence and imprisonment led not to his doom but to his eternal renown. And set in the midst of beasts, he found the beasts milder than his jailers. For his prayer, assisting the virtue of rectitude and discretion, rendered docile those who were mad by nature. And when this was made known to Cambyses (...) he himself was staggered by the marvellous nature of what was reported, and regretted the easy credence that he had given to the slanders of the magi. [Dan. 6.9-23]. None the less, he dared to become an observer of this spectacle, and to see the man who was hymning Christ by the raising of both hands.

[all translations of the OC from Edwards 2003]

T2 The Erythaean Sibyl (OC 18)

But it rests with me also to commemorate foreign witnesses to the divinity of Christ. (...) Now the Erythaean Sibyl, saying that she was born in the sixth generation after the flood, was a priestess of Apollo (...) and once, having been led into the sanctuaries of untimely superstition and become full of truly divine inspiration, she foretold in words what was to happen with respect to God, plainly revealing by the prefiguring of the initial letters, which is called an acrostic, the history of Jesus’ descent:

In sign of coming judgment earth shall sweat; Eternal monarchy shall come from heaven Straightway to judge the flesh and all the world. Outcasts and the elect shall look on God, Uplifted at time’s end with all the saints, Set on his throne to judge all flesh ensouled.

Chaff now and earth shall all the world become; Riches and all their idols men shall break; Earth, sky and sea shall be consumed in flames; Invading fire shall breach the gates of hell. Sinner and saint shall rise to day’s free light; Their flesh the fire shall test eternally Of secret deeds none shall remain unknown, Since God’s torch shall unlock the heart’s recess.

Then shall all people wail and grasp their teeth; Eclipse shall hide the sun and dancing stars, Uplifting hollows, casting down high peaks. Huge sorrow then shall fall on humankind. In peak and plain there shall be no distinction; Ocean shall bear no ships, as thunderbolts Strip the burnt land of springs and sounding rivers.

Sounds of lament shall trumpet forth from heaven, Omen of squalor, grief and cosmic pain. Then yawning earth shall open Tartarus; Emperors all shall come before God’s throne; Rivers of holy flame shall pour from heaven.

οἱ γὰρ τοῦ μάγου, τρίς τῆς ἡμέρας εὐχομένου τοῦ ἄνδρος (...) ἔπεσαν αὐτῶν (...) λευτῶν ἁγίων θοιῆ κατακριθῆναι. καθεύρκτῳ δὲ κατακριθήκειν οὐκ εἰς ἀλεθρὸν ἄλλοι αἰώνων εὐδοξεῖν ὁ Δανιήλ, καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θησάντος ἐξεταζόμενος ἱππῶν καὶ ἡμεροτέρων τῶν θηρῶν τῶν καθεβεβηκότων ἐπειράτοπαντάς γὰρ εὐχή κοσμητότος καὶ σωφροσύνης ἀρετῆς συναιρεμένη τίθεσις ἀπευραγέτετο τούς λουσῶδες τῆς φύσεις, γνωσθέντων δὲ τούτων τῆς Καμβριάς (...) ὑπερεκπέληκτο μὲν αὐτὸς τῷ θεάματί τῶν ἀγγέλλομεν, μετεγίνωσκε δὲ ἐπὶ τῷ πεισθήναι ταῖς διαμορφαῖς τῶν μάγων εὐχερῶς-διῳ γοῦν ἐτόλμησε τῆς θέας ἐκείνης ἐπότις γενέθαι καὶ ἰδεῖ τὸν ἄνδρα ἑκάτερος τῆς χειρὸς ψώματι τὸν Χριστὸν ὑμεύναται.

Παρίσταται δὲ μοι καὶ τῶν ἀλλοδαπῶν τι μαρτυριῶν τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ θεότητος ἀπομνημονεύοντος (...) ἢ τούτων Ἕρωθραία Σίβυλλα, φασάσκουσα εὐαίτην ἐκτῇ γενέα μετά τὸν κατακυλημὸν γενέσθαι, ίερεία ἢ τοῦ Απόλλωνος (...) αὕτη τούτων εἶχεν τῶν ἄδων ποτὲ τῆς ἀκαίρου δεσιδιαμοιώσεως προσηθεῖσα καὶ θείας ἐπιπυκναίται ἄνωτος γενομένη μετοχὶ, δι’ ἐπόν περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ τὰ μέλλοντα ρηθέσεσθαι, σαφῶς ταῖς προτάσεις τῶν πρώτων γραμμάτων, ἥτις ἀκροστίτης λέγεται, δηλούσα τὴν ιστορίαν τῆς τοῦ Ἰησοῦ κατελεύσεως.

Ιδρύεσαι γὰρ χθῶν, κρίσεως σημειῶν δ’ ἔσται. Ἡξει δ’ ὀρισκότεροι βασιλεὺς αἰώνιον ὡς μέλλων Σάρκα παρὼν πᾶσιν κρίνει καὶ κόσμον ἀπαντά. Ὀφειλότα δὲ θεον μέρους πιστοὶ καὶ ἀπαντά. Υψιστον μετὰ τῶν ἁγίων ἐπὶ τέρμα χρόνου, Σαρκοφόρων ψυχῶς δ’ ἀνδρῶν ἐπ’ ἄρματα κρίνει. Χέρσος δ’ ὅταν ποτε κόσμου ὁλος καὶ ἀκανθα γένηται, Ρήψωιν τ’ εἶδῶλα βροτοί καὶ πλοῦτον ἀπαντά. Εκατόν δ’ τ’ πόρο γῆν ὄφρεων ήδε θάλασσαν, ἰχνεον μῆνι τις πόλεως εἰκρήτικης ἀδιάκο. Σάρκ’ τότε πᾶσα νεκρῶν ἐς ξελουθρίων φάος ἢμι, Τοὺς ἁγίους ἀνόμους τ’ ε’ πόρο αἰώνων ἐλέγχει. Οπότας τ’ ύπαρξεις ἀλαθενεί, τότε πάντα λαλήσει Στήθεα γὰρ ζωοφύτευτοι θέος φωστήρων ἀνοίγει, Θρήσκος τ’ ἐς πάντων ἔσται καὶ βρωχίου ὀδόντων. Εκλεισθείη σέλας ἡλίου ἀστρῶν τε χερείαν, ὄρουαν εἶλεν, μήνης δ’ τοις φεγγοῖς ἀλείπατ. Υψιστεί δ’ φάραγγας, ὄλει δ’ υψίματα βουνῶν.

Υψεσ’ δ’ οὐκ ἔτι λυγρὸν ἐν ἀνθρώπωσι φανεῖται, Ἰς’ τ’ ὁρι διεῖς ἐσται, καὶ πάσας θάλασσας Ὀυκ’ εἰς πλοῦν εἴη γ’ γάρ ἄρφον ἄρφεθ’ κεραυνῷ, Σημεῖα τοιαύτα τε καθάλαξοντες λείψουσιν, Σάλλημεν εὐρανόθεν φωνῇ πολύβουθον ἀφήσει, Ομόσωμα μέσος μέλεν καὶ μήτα κόσμου. Ταρταρόν δ’ ἔχει δ’ ἔκει δόχει τότε γαῖα χανοῦσα,
Signs manifest to all men there shall be:  
True men shall crave the branches of the Cross.  
As men grow pious Christ will shock the world,  
Unveiling the elect with his twelve springs.  
Rod shall be shepherd, ruling as with iron.  
Our God is this, set forth now in acrostics,  
Saviour immortal, king who died for us.

**T3 Virgil’s Fourth Eclogue (OC 19-21)**

There a new race of people was established, of which I think the most eminent of the Italian poets spoke:

*Whence then appeared a novel race of men*

And again, in another passage of the Bucolics:

*Si
cilian Muses, let our theme be great*

What could be plainer than this? For he adds:

*The oracle of Cumaе is fulfilled*

Obviously, the expression ‘of Cumaе’ refers enigmatically to the Sibyl. (...) And the poet adds:

*Worship the newborn child, light-bearing moon,  
Who gives the age of gold for that of iron;  
For when he rules all human wounds are healed  
And all the groans of sin are put to death.*

Now we understand that these things have been said through allegories, at the same time manifestly and obscurely, the divinity of Christ leading to vision those who examine the force of the words more deeply. In order that none of those who held power in the royal city shall have grounds to reproach the poet as one who writes in defiance of paternal laws and repudiates the customary practices of his ancestors with regard to the gods, it conceals the truth. For he knew, as I believe, the blessed and laudable end of the Saviour, but in order to avert the rage of savagery, he directed the mind of his audience towards their own tradition, and says that it is necessary to establish altars, build temples and perform sacrifices to the newborn one. And for wise readers the rest of his composition is in keeping with this, for he says:

*He shall receive God’s deathless life and see  
Heroes his massed companions –*

Obviously the righteous (...)
Thy swaddling-clothes shall bring forth fragrant grass; The venomed snake shall perish, perish too. Plague; and in vales the Assyrian herb shall thrive.

No one could say anything truer than this, or more germane to the virtue of the Saviour; for his very swaddling-clothes, the power of the Holy Spirit, engendered as it were a fragrant flower in freshness. And the snake perishes, and the venom of that snake, who deceased the first creation, leading their minds away from the <discretion> planted in them to the enjoyment of pleasures, so that they might know the destruction appointed for them. For before the descent of the Saviour, he used to break the souls of humans, who, not knowing the immortality of the righteous, were supported by no good hope. (…)

But when the hour and fruit of manhood come

(that is, when having come to manhood, he eradicates the troubles that beset human life and brings a peaceful order to the whole world),

No sinful crews shall then profane the sea, The fruitful earth shall yield abundant growth, (…) (24) I put the question to you now, Decius, you who trampled upon the toils of the just in hatred of the church and appointed retribution for those who lived a holy life: how do you fare now after your life? What kind of state are you in, what miseries surround you? The time between life and death showed your good fortune, when, falling with all your army on the Scythian fields, you led the renowned power of Rome to contempt against the Getae. But you Valerian, who showed the same murder-lust toward those who heeded God, you made the holy judgment manifest when you were caught and led as a prisoner in bonds with your very purple and all your royal pomp, and finally, flayed and pickled at the behest of the King of the Persians (…) (25) And Diocletian after the murder-lust of his persecution, having voted himself down, unwittingly renounced himself as one unworthy of power, and confessed the harmfulness of his folly in the confines of one contemptible dwelling! What good did it bring to this man to have kindled war against our God? I suppose that of passing the rest of his life in fear of the thunderbolt. Nicomedia tells it, and the witnesses are not silent, of whom I happen to be one. For I saw him cry out, when he was mentally enfeebled to the thunderbolt. Nicomedia tells it, and the witnesses are not silent, of whom I happen to be one. For I saw him cry out, when he was mentally enfeebled.

Φύσει δ’ ευώδη τά σπάργανα σεόι γένοι ὁλλυταί ιαβόλου φώςις ἐρπτευότα, ὁλλυταί …
Λοίγος, Ἀσσύριουν θάλλει κατά τέμπε· ἀμωμον.

τούτων ὁυδὲν ἀλλήσετερον ὁυδὲ τῆς τοῦ σωτήρος ἄρετής ὁικεύτερον ἔποτις τις ἄν· ἀπέλαμψα τά τοῦ θεοῦ σπάργανα, πνεύματος ἄγιον δύναμις, εὐώδη τινὰ ἀθνή νεολαία ὡπασε γέννα, ὁ δὲ διας ἄπολλυται, καὶ ὁ ἱδος τοῦ ὅφεως ἐκείνου, δς τους πρωτοπλαστος πρῶτος ἐξηπάτηε, παράγια τας διανοιας αυτων ἀπό της ἐμφύτου <σωμαρσην> ἐπι της των ηδονων ἀπόλαμαι, ὅπως γνοίν τους ἐπιρημένου αυτως διεθνο. πρὸ γας τος της κατελεύσεως του σωτήρος της ἀθανασίας των δικαιων ἀγνας της ψυχας των ἀνθρώπων ἐπι μηδεμι χριστη Ελπιδι, ἐρειδιμενας Εθρας (…)
and in fear of every sight and sound, that the cause of the evils surrounding him had been his own folly when he invoked against himself God's protection of the just. Nevertheless the palace and his house were destroyed, after the dispensation of the thunderbolt and the fire from heaven. The outcome of these actions had indeed been foretold by people of intelligence.

ὡν καὶ αὐτὸς ὡν τυχόν, ἠδον γὰρ ἰδίκα εὐτυλία τὸ φρόνημα καὶ πάσης μὲν πρόσοψις παντοῦν δὲ ψύχον δεδομένος ἐποτυπώτατοι περιεπώτων κακῶν αἰτίαν γεγενηθαι τὴν ἀφοσιωθήνῃ ἐκατόν προκαλεσάμενοι καθ᾽ ἐκατόν τὴν θείαν τὰς δικαίους ἐπικυρίαν. ἐδήμωτο μέντοι τὰ βασιλεῖα καὶ ὁ ἰός αὐτοῦ, ἐπενεμομένου σκηνοῦ νεομενής τε οὐρανίας φλογὸς, καὶ προεῖρητο γε ἡ τούτων ἐκβάσις ύπὸ τῶν εὐ φρονοῦντων.

T5 Cicero, de div. 1.18.34
Eis igitur assentior, qui duo genera divinationum esse dixerunt, unum, quod particeps esset artis, alterum, quod arte careret. Est enim ars in eis qui novas res conjectura persequuntur, vetere observatione didicerunt. Carent autem arte ei qui, non ratione aut conjectura observatis ac notatis signis, sed concitatione quadam animi aut soluto liberoque motu, futura praesentiuat.

I agree, therefore, with those who have said that there are two kinds of divination: one, which is allied with art; the other, which is devoid of art. Those diviners employ art, who, having learned the known by observation, seek the unknown by deduction. On the other hand those do without art who, unaided by reason or deduction or by signs which have been observed and recorded, forecast the future while under the influence of mental excitement, or of some free and unrestrained emotion. [Tr. Falconer]

T6 Correcting Plato (OC 9)
And Plato himself, who excelled all others in gentleness and first accustomed human intellects to revert from the sensible to the intelligible and the things that are always true, the one who taught us to look up to things above, did well when he postulated the god above being, then made a second subordinate to this one, dividing the two essences numerically, while both shared one perception and the essence of the second god received its concrete existence from the first. For the maker and governor of the universe is clearly sublime, while the other after him, in submission to his commandments, refers to him the cause of the constitution of all things (...). So far then Plato was wise; but in what follows he is found to err from the truth, introducing a host of gods and assigning a form to each, which became a pretext for greater error among the most unreasoning people, who did not look towards the providence of the Most High, but worshipped images of [the gods] which had been transformed into human types and those of other creatures. The result is that a nature and discipline which were excellent and worthy of highest praise, mixed with such shortcomings, are in an impure and defective state.

T7 Constantine’s life as his argument (OC 22, 26)
(22) For my part, I ascribe to your goodwill all my good fortune and that of those who are mine. And the evidence is that everything has turned out according to my prayers – acts of courage, victories, trophies over my enemies. Even the great city is conscious of it.
and gives praise with reverence, while the people of the most dear city approve, even if it was deceived by unsafe hopes into choosing a protector unworthy of it (...) (26) but when they praise my service, which commenced with the inspiration of God, do they not confirm that God is the cause of my feats? Absolutely. For it is God’s prerogative to decree the best things, and that of human beings to obey God.

dè καὶ ὁ δήμος τῆς ψυλτάτης πόλεως, εἰ καὶ πρὸς ταῖς σφαλεραῖς ἐλπίσαις ἐξεπαθήσεις ἀνάδον ἑαυτῆς προείλετο προστάτην (...)

T8 Constantine, Against Polytheistic Worship (VC 2.48-9)

Victor Constantinus Maximus Augustus to the Provincials of the East.

(48) Everything embraced by the sovereign laws of nature provides everybody with sufficient evidence of the providence and thoughtfulness of the divine ordering; nor is there any doubt among those whose intellect approaches that topic by a correct scientific method, that accurate apprehension by a healthy mind and by sight itself rises in a single impulse of true virtue to the knowledge of God. Hence no wise man would ever be disturbed at seeing the majority swept along by contrary attitudes. For the merit of virtue would lie unobserved, if vice had not on the other side exposed the life of perverse unreason. That is why a crown is promised for virtue, and judgment is exercised by the most high God. For my part I shall as far as I can try to acknowledge openly to you all what my hopes are.

(49) I held the previous Emperors as exceedingly harsh because of their savage ways, and only my father engaged in gentle deeds, with wonderful reverence calling upon the Saviour God in all his actions. All the rest were mentally sick and embraced savagery rather than gentleness; they cultivated it unremittingly, preventing the truth for their own advantage. Their terrible wickedness reached such intensity that when all divine and human affairs were alike at peace, civil wars were rekindled by them.

[tr. Cameron – Hall 1999]

T9 Eusebius’ Life of Constantine, I 27-28

(27) Knowing well that he (= Constantine) would need more powerful aid than an army can supply because of the mischievous magical devices practiced by the tyrant (= Maxentius), he sought a god to aid him. He regarded the resources of soldiers and military numbers as secondary, for he thought that without the aid of a god these could achieve nothing; and he said that what comes from a god’s assistance is irresistible and invincible. He therefore considered what kind of god he should adopt to aid him, and, while he thought, a clear impression came to him, that of the many who had in the past aspired to government, those who had attached their personal

Εὖ δ’ ἐννοοῦσας ὡς κρείττονος ἢ κατὰ στρατιωτικὴν δέοι αὐτῶν βοήθειας διὰ τὰς κακοτέχνους καὶ γοητευκάς μαγαγείας τὰς παρὰ τῷ τυράννῳ σπουδαζομένας, θεόν ἀνέγιμεν βοηθήν, τὰ μὲν εἶ ὁπλίτων καὶ στρατιωτικῶν πλήθους δεύτερα τιθέμενος (τῆς γὰρ παρὰ θεοῦ βοήθειας ἁπόστος τῷ μητέν ταῦτα δύνασθαι ἤγετο), τὰ δ’ ἐκ θεοῦ συνεργείαις ἁμαρτανεῖ καὶ ἀσφαλεῖα ἑλθόν, ἐννοεῖ δῆτα ὅποιον δέοι θεοῦ βοήθην ἐπιγράφασθαι, ἐξετασάτω δ’ αὐτῶν ἐννοιαὶ τὰς πειρατίδες, ὡς πλεῖον πρὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀποφθέγματος ὁ μὲν πλείον θεοῦ τὰς σφιγκτάς ἁναρτήσαντες ἐπιτιθέται, λοιμαίς τε καὶ θυσίας καὶ ἀναθήμασι τοῦτος.
hopes to many gods, and had cultivated them with drink-offerings, sacrifices, and dedications, had first been deceived by favourable predictions and oracles which promised welcome things, but then met an unwelcome end, nor did any god stand at their side to protect them from divinely directed disaster; only his own father had taken the opposite course to theirs by condemning their error, while he himself had throughout his life honoured the God who transends the universe, and had found him a saviour and guardian of his Empire and a provider of everything good. He judiciously considered these things for himself, and weighed well how those who had confided in a multitude of gods had run into multiple destruction (...) he marshalled these arguments in his mind, and concluded that it was folly to go on with the vanity of the gods which do not exist, and to persist in error in the face of so much evidence, and he decided he should venerate his father's God alone.

(28) This God he began to invoke in prayer, beseeching and imploring him to show him who he was, and to stretch out his right hand to assist him in his plans. As he made these prayers and earnest supplications there appeared to the Emperor a most remarkable divine sign. (...) About the time of the midday sun, when the day was just turning, he said he saw with his own eyes, up in the sky and resting over the sun, a cross-shaped trophy formed from light, and a text attached to it which said, 'by this conquer'.

(28) Ανεκαλεῖτο δέ ηταν εν εικοσι τουτου, αντιβαλον και ποτνιωμενος φημα αυτου εαυτον όστε εη και την εαυτου δεξιαν χερα τοις προκειμενοις επορεξαι. ευχομενο δε τατιν και λιπαρως ικετουντο τοι βασιλει θεοσειμεα τις ευμαθειαι παραδοξειτητη (...) αμφι μεσομισηνα ηλιου ώρας. ἡδη της ημερας ἀποκληυσης, αυτους φωταμοις ιδειν ἐτεν εν αυτω ουρανο τρωπειειν του ηλιου σταιρου τροπαιον ἐκ φωτος συνιστάμενον, γραφην τε αυτω συνημηθαι λέγουσαν τουτω νικα.

T10 Praise of treatise: VC 4.35

Νικητῆς Κωνσταντίνος Μέγιστος Σεβαστὸς Εὐσεβίῳ. (...) ὑπερθαυμάσιας σε της φιλομαθείας τε και φιλοτιμίας, αυτός το τὸ βιβλίον ἀνέγραψε ἀσμένως, και τοῖς πλεόσιν, οἱ γε τῇ προκειμένῳ χρήσει, εὐχομενο δε τατιν και λιπαρως ικετουντο τοι νικος, κατασκευής της ἀκριβείας τε και ἀκριμοτητης της συνοπτικης και ἀργητης ἀποθηκης.

Victor Constantinus Maximus Augustus to Eusebius (...) With great admiration for your learning and endeavour I have gladly read the book myself, and as you desired I have ordered it to be published for the large number who are sincerely attached to the worship of God. Now that you are aware how cordially we enjoy receiving such gifts from your intelligence, do make every effort to give us the pleasure of more frequent literary works.

Commission of the codices: VC 4.36.

Victor Constantinus Maximus Augustus to Eusebius. (...) Be ready therefore to act urgently on the decision which we have reached. It appeared proper to indicate to your Intelligence that you should order fifty volumes with ornamental leather bindings, easily legible and convenient for portable use, to be copied by skilled calligraphists well trained in the art, copies that is of the Divine Scriptures, the provision and use of which you well know to be necessary for reading in church.

Cf. also Constantine's discussion of Eusebius address at VC 4.33.

T 11 VC 4.17

Σκέψασθε δ’ ἂν τις τὰ τούτων σεμνότερα, διαγνοὺς ὡς ἐν αὐτοῖς τοῖς βασιλείοις ἐκκλησίας θεοῦ τρόπον διέθετο, σπουδῆς ἐξάρχοντας εὑρο οὗ τὸν ἑνδον ἐκκλησιασμὸν. μετὰ γε τῆς ήμερας τοις λαμβάνων τὰς βιβλίας τῇ τῶν θεοπνευστῶν λογίων θεορία προσανείχε τὸν νοῦν, εἰτ’ εὐχάς ἐνθέσμους σὺν τοῖς τοῦ βασιλείου οἰκὸν πληροῦσιν ἀπεδίδου.
One might observe the more solemn aspects of these things by noting how he conducted matters even in the imperial quarters in the manner of a church of God, being himself the leader in earnestness of those constituting the church there. He would take the books in his hands and apply his mind to the meaning of the divinely inspired oracles, and would then render up lawful prayers with the members of the imperial household.

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