

**Constantine the 'Physician': Sickness and Healing in the Emperor's Rhetoric  
Concerning Ecclesiastical Unity**

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Although a great deal of documentation and scholarly writing exists relating to Constantine's deep interest in unity among Christians, debate still exists concerning its precise nature. Was the ecclesiastical unity Constantine hoped would be achieved better understood in terms of homogeneity or diversity within a somewhat flexible harmony? While previous studies focused on Constantine's explicit statements about unity, this paper analyses the emperor's metaphorical discourse to contribute toward greater understanding of his more overt language. Themes of 'sickness and healing' begin appearing prominently in Constantine's writing in relation to his final victory over Licinius in 324. Using such medicinal language, the paper argues, the emperor – implicitly describing himself as a kind of 'physician' – made his will known that unity among Christians be exemplified by concord in matters of theology and doctrine.