

**CONSTANTINE AS COMMON BISHOP (ΚΟΙΝΟΣ
ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ) AND AS COMMON PROTECTOR OF THE
WORLD (ΚΟΙΝΟΣ ΤΩΝ ΑΠΑΝΤΑΧΟΥ ΚΗΛΕΜΩΝ)**

By the beginning of the 4th century, Christianity, as a social movement and ideological current of the first centuries A.D., had expanded significantly and had penetrated into wide strata of the Roman empire, thus creating new dynamics aspiring to the universal political and spiritual unification of the peoples and “nations” of the time¹. It had been made clear that it would soon constitute the axis around which all aspects of the political, ideological and cultural life of the empire would evolve. The great reactions, which were certainly caused by the innovations of this “peaceful revolution”, mainly within the ranks of the theorists of the Roman Empire, required a convincing response as possible.

The task of responding to these reactions was entrusted by history to the bishop of Caesarea Eusebius, the biographer of Constantine the Great, who inspired and established the theory of divine monarchy, which predetermined the policy of Byzantium throughout its millennium-long history until its fall². With a powerful, elaborately structured and politically nuanced theological language,

¹ In the 4th century this new perception of politico-ideological unification through the worldwide spread of the new religion had found warm supporters, such as Diodorus, bishop of Tarsus, who contrasted the universality of Christianity to the fragmentation of the idolatrous nations. With its broad dissemination, the abolition of the various kingdoms of the empire would be possible on one hand and on the other the universal political unity could be achieved (see G. Dagron, *L'oecumenicité politique: droit sur l'espace, droit sur le temps*, in *Το Βυζάντιο ως Οικουμένη*, ed. Ev. Chrysos, Athens 2005, 50). The first monotheistic pagan perceptions, such as e.g. the cult of the Sun-God (identical to Mithra of the Persians), as the supreme and sole pagan deity (henotheism) also contributed to this climate in favor of universal political unity (see about this issue the volume, *Pagan monotheism in Late Antiquity*, ed. P. Athanassiadis - M. Fremde, Oxford 1999).

² For the life, work and political theory of Eusebius there is extensive bibliography. I mention the following selected titles: F. Winkelmann, ‘Zur Geschichte des Authentizitätsproblems der „Vita Constantini“’, *Klio* 40 (1962), 187-243; A. Dempf, *Eusebios als Historiker* (Sitzungsberichte Bayer. Akad. d. Wiss. Philosoph.-histor. Klasse 11), München 1964; J.-M. Sansterre, *Eusèbe de Césarée et la naissance de la théorie „césaropapiste“*, *Byzantion* 42 (1972), 131-195; R. M. Grant, *Eusebius as Church Historian*, Oxford 1980; T. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, London 1981; F. Winkelmann, *Euseb von Kaisareia, der Vater der Kirchengeschichte*, Berlin 1991.

he presents Constantine as the light-giver of the universe.³ Constantine himself uses the word *Oikoumene* very often in his letters, which he reportedly sent to bishops of the East, and refers to the need for the salvation of humanity, through the dissemination of the faith.⁴

Among the numerous titles, attributes and epithets attached by Eusebius to his emperor,⁵ mainly two summarize the new political theory regarding divine monarchy and capture the Christian universal dimension of imperial authority: *κοινός επίσκοπος* (common bishop)⁶ and *κοινός των απανταχού κηδεμών* (universal common protector)⁷. These were the main two attributes that distinguished Constantine from the previous Roman emperors and that added a new dimension to his ecumenical authority.

The first title reflects, as implied by Eusebius, the firm belief of Constantine that the unity and well-being of the Roman Commonwealth depended to a large extent on the common faith of the Christians in the one and only God.⁸ Therefore, his objective was to achieve and safeguard the unity of all the Christian communities, in order to strengthen the unity of the state, which

³ Eusebius, *Βίος Κωνσταντίνου* II, 19.1-2, ed. F. Winkelmann, *Über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantin* (GCS, Eusebius Werke I/1), Berlin 1975, 55-56 (συνήπτετό τε πᾶσα ὄση τις ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίους ἐτύγχανε μοῖρα, τῶν κατὰ τὴν ἑώραν ἐθνῶν ἐνουμένων θατέρῳ μέρει, μὴ τετὴ τοῦ παντός ἀρχὴ ὡσπερ τινὶ κεφαλῇ τὸ πᾶν κατεκοσμεῖτο σῶμα, μοναρχικῆς ἐξουσίας διὰ πάντων ἡκούσης λαμπραὶ τε φωτὸς εὐσεβείας μαρμαρυγαὶ τοῖς πρὶν καθημένοις ἐν σκότῳ καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου φαιδρᾶς παρέχον ἡμέρας ...).

⁴ εἰρηνεύειν σου τὸν λαὸν καὶ ὁστασίαστον μένειν ἐπιθυμῶ ὑπὲρ τοῦ κοινοῦ τῆς οἰκουμένης καὶ τοῦ πάντων ἀνθρώπων χρησίμου, ... and in another passage: ἅπασαν ὁμοῦ τὴν οἰκουμένην ἱερῶ λαμπτήρι κατήστραψεν ... (Eusebius, *Βίος Κωνσταντίνου* II, 56.1, 59, 67, Winkelmann, 70-71, 74).

⁵ The Roman imperial titles, such as *dominus noster*, *maximus*, *beneficus*, *pacificus*, *victor*, *invictus*, *triumphator omnium gentium* etc. were consolidated in the imperial ideology and preserved their validity in Byzantium, since they were used with the same spirit and the same logic in their new Christian dimension. To the above Latin titles and to those preserved in their Greek form (*αυτοκράτωρ γης καὶ θαλάσσης* – *emperor of land and sea*, *κοσμοκράτωρ* – *ruler of the world*, *δεσπότης* – *despot*, *κύριος* – *master*, *σεβαστός* – *revered*, *ευσεβής* – *pious*, *ἀήττητος* – *invincible*, *τροπαιούχος* – *trophy bearer*, *θριαμβευτής* – *triumphant*, etc.) were added, during the Early Byzantine period, the Christian ones, such as: *φιλόχριστος* (*Christ-loving*), *πιστός ἐν Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ βασιλεύς* (*loyal to Jesus Christ king*), *θεῖος* (*divine*), *θεοφιλέστατος* (*God-loving*), *θεοστεφής* (*crowned by God*), *θεόστεπτος*, (*crowned by God*) *θεοψήφιστος*, (*chosen by God*) *φωστήρ* (*light-giver*), *κήρυξ τῆς απλανούς θεοσεβείας* (*preacher of the blessed divine reverence*), *ολετήρ θεομάχων γιγάντων* (*eliminator of god-fighting giants*), *τρισμακάριος* (*blessed*) etc. (G. Rosch, *Όνομα Βασιλείας. Studien zum offiziellen Gebrauch der Kaisertitel in Spätantiker und Frühbyzantinischer Zeit* [BV 10], Wien 1978, 30-32; 62-75; 76-116 and Eusebius, *Βίος Κωνσταντίνου* I, 4-5, 6, Winkelmann, 17).

⁶ Eusebius, *Βίος Κωνσταντίνου* I, 44.1, Winkelmann, 38; J. Straub, Constantine as *κοινός επίσκοπος*. Tradition and innovation in the representation of the first christian emperors majesty, *DOP* 21 (1967), 37-55.

⁷ Eusebius, *Βίος Κωνσταντίνου* IV, 8, Winkelmann, 122-123.

⁸ Sophia Patoura-Spanou, *Χριστιανισμός και Παγκοσμιότητα στο Πρώιμο Βυζάντιο: από τη Θεωρία στην Πράξη*, Athens 2008, 68. About the attribute „bishop“ and its meaning, the Claudia Rapp's approach, (Imperial Ideology in the Making: Eusebius of Caesarea on Constantine as 'Bishop', *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS, 49 [1998], 687-695), is very interesting. She proposes a reading which sheds new light on the references to Constantine as 'bishop', by showing that an important *leitmotiv* in the *Life of Constantine* is Eusebius' representation of Constantine in comparison to Moses.

was often compromised by serious disagreements and dissensions that broke out within the ranks of the Church. For example, the following rhetorical question, that Constantine addressed to the Church in the form of a declaration, is characteristic: “what else is my supreme duty, in the name of the imperial office and my imperial policy, than to dissolve the errors, to eliminate the misunderstandings and to summon everyone to offer to the almighty God the true religion, the honest harmony and the reverence owed to Him?”⁹

The cautious attitude of Constantine towards the first christological disputes and dogmatic conflicts, gradually developed into direct and dynamic intervention, which the emperor himself justified as his duty towards the God in heaven.¹⁰ Eusebius, referring to the procedure followed by his emperor when he meddled in serious ecclesiastical issues, introduces us to these novelties with the following phrase: “attributing special importance to the issues that concerned the Church of God and because certain people from various lands had differences between them, as a common bishop, ordained by God, he convened Councils of the ministers of God. He presented himself at the assembly and took part in the deliberations”.¹¹

Therefore, Constantine, apart from being the almighty leader of the world, also appears as the supreme supervisor of ecclesiastical affairs, while at the same time submitting himself to the decisions of the bishops. His intervention consists of facilitation of the work of the bishops and of securing the unity and peace within the Church as well as within the State. He places the mechanism of the State to the disposal of the representatives of the Church, in order to serve needs, such as the convocation of Ecumenical Councils, bishops’ journeys etc, and accepts their decisions, which however he ratifies and reinforces with laws of the State.¹²

In his Letters towards the bishops of various Churches, he presents himself as the prudent counselor and judge of their activity, but mainly as protector and great guardian of the institution of the Church, to which he clearly alludes in a letter towards the participants of the Council of Antioch (327).¹³ Constantine’s intention, as J. Straub rightly believes, was to incorporate the

⁹ A. H. Jones, *Constantine and the Conversion of Europe*, London 1948, 120. Also, in a Letter to the vicar of Africa Aelafius, he expresses exactly the same view and declares intensely his determination to deal with ecclesiastical problems through the following statement: “I consider it an absolute violation of the divine law to overlook such disputes and dissensions, which can possibly enrage the supreme Divinity, not only against the human race, but also against me, to whom by his heavenly will he entrusted the government of all the creatures on earth. Only then will I feel truly and absolutely safe and only then will I have faith in the well-being and happiness originating from the goodness of the Almighty, when everyone shall worship the holy God with the appropriate honor of the catholic religion and with harmonic brotherly reverence” (Jones, *Ibid.*, 111).

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, 47. An excellent study of Byzantine imperial ideology is G. Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre. Étude sur le ‘césaropapisme’ byzantin*, Paris 1996.

¹¹ Eusebius, *Βίος Κωνσταντίνου* I, 44.1-3, Winkelmann, 38-39.

¹² P. -P. Joannou, *La législation et la christianisation de l’empire romain (311-476)* [OCA 192], Rome 1972, 26-27; Patoura-Spanou, *Χριστιανισμός και Παγκοσμιότητα*, 44o45.

¹³ *Τά γε μὴν Εύσεβίου γράμματα, ἃ τὸν θεσμὸν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μάλιστα φυλάττοντα ἐφαίνετο* (Eusebius, *Βίος Κωνσταντίνου*, 62.2, Winkelmann, 116).

ecclesiastical community into the ecumenical community of the Roman empire, i.e. to transform the empire into a Church. In this new pattern, the special theological and ceremonial functions were destined for the class of the clergy, whereas the supervision (*επισκοπή*) of the Christian laity was to be assigned to the emperor, who governed on earth as the representative of God and therefore as common bishop.¹⁴

The ultimate act of Constantine's involvement with the matters of the Church was undoubtedly the convocation of the First Ecumenical Council in 325 in Nicaea of Bithynia and indeed in the imperial palace (*ἐν αὐτῷ δὴ τῷ μεσαιάτῳ οἴκῳ τῶν βασιλείων*).¹⁵ The description of the Council's ceremonial protocol is indicative of the intentions of Eusebius to attribute the participation and preeminence of Constantine at the Council to divine intervention. At the inauguration of the Council, the emperor "walked in the middle of the hall like a heavenly angel of God, wearing a bright dress like the shimmering of light and adorning the body with gold and precious stones, and his soul with divine awe and devoutness."¹⁶

Constantine's participation in the First Ecumenical Council, which he convened himself and over which he presided in person, constitutes, without doubt, a revolutionary action. And it was revolutionary for two reasons: a) because until then only representatives of the Church participated in synodical procedures, and b) because he himself had not yet been baptized at the time.¹⁷ From the point of view of semiotics, this constitutes a supreme historic moment, because it actively implies the official reversal of Constantine towards the Church and his strong will to constitute it an ally and participant in the founding of the new empire.

On the other hand, the Church itself, despite the continuous signs it received of the rapid favorable developments at the highest level of secular authority, seems to have remained cautious and suspicious towards the imminent religious conversion of Constantine. For this reason, various written sources (Acts of the First Ecumenical Council, Letter to bishops and the Church),¹⁸ the

¹⁴ Straub, Constantine as *κοινός επίσκοπος*, 55. Constantine's objective found its complete realization later, mainly during the time of Justinian, who indeed incorporated the Church into the mechanisms of the State, by in fact using the representatives of the Church as official bearers of his external policy. However, at this early stage, it seems that the Church and orthodoxy forced the emperor to submit himself to their system, since the Roman idea during this transitional period had been significantly weakened and the state did not have serious ideological foundations, apart from the survival and revival of certain models of the Hellenistic period (Patoura-Spanou, *Χριστιανισμός και Παγκοσμιότητα*, 46-47). See, also, Rapp, *Imperial Ideology in the Making*, 687, who examines the case of Moses as the model of the perfect bishop.

¹⁵ Eusebius, *Βίος Κωνσταντίνου* III, 10.1, Winkelmann, 87.

¹⁶ Eusebius, *Βίος Κωνσταντίνου* III, 10.3-5, Winkelmann, 86.

¹⁷ Eusebius, referring to the end of his emperor's life, mentions his wish to be baptized, which he is reported to have expressed with the following words: *ὥρα καὶ ἡμᾶς ἀπολαῦσαι τῆς ἀθανατοποιοῦ σφραγίδος, ὥρα τοῦ σωτηρίου σφραγίσματος, οὗ μετασχέιν ἐπὶ ῥείθρων Ἰορδάνου ποταμοῦ ἐνενόουν ποτέ, ἐφ' ὧν καὶ ὁ σωτὴρ εἰς ἡμέτερον τύπον τοῦ λουτροῦ μετασχέιν μνημονεύεται ...*(*Βίος Κωνσταντίνου* IV, 62.1-3, Winkelmann, 145-146).

¹⁸ Gelasius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* II 7, ed. L. G. Loeschke - M. Heinemann (GCS

emperor is reported, at least in words, not as trying to use the Church to consolidate his authority, but on the contrary, as placing himself at its service and with a series of decrees and laws¹⁹ to be helping it accomplish its mission. However, he himself, the almighty ruler of the world and common bishop, appears as the supreme supervisor of ecclesiastical affairs, by evidently submitting himself to the bishops.

Therefore, with his deeds, Constantine was rightfully characterized not only as „common bishop“, but also „bishop of the outside“, in accordance with the precise description of Eusebius. The “architect” of Byzantine political theology and biographer of the first Christian emperor attributes this title to Constantine himself, by maintaining that he was an ear-witness of the specific self-proclamation, when he addressed the members of the Council and told them: “you will be the bishops within the Church on one hand, whereas I, on the other hand, have been appointed by God to be the bishop outside the Church”.²⁰ He continues by clarifying the above phrase with the following interpretation: “with the thought that his deeds must be consistent with his words, the emperor supervised all of his subjects with episcopal care (*επεσκόπει*) and he encouraged them with all of his power to follow a pious life”.²¹

In recent historiography the title „bishop of the outside“ has caused much discussion and various interpretations have been proposed for its content.²² However, this title is inevitably linked to other titles ascribed by the political theology of the time to Constantine, such as, for example, “guardian” and “protector” of the world, and its content acquires a universal dimension, at least at a spiritual level. As a result, the “bishop of the outside” had at least the spiritual duty to oversee and guide all humans, within or beyond the empire, to the true faith, *κοινήν πρὸς ἅπαντας ἐνδεικνύμενος πατρικὴν κηδεμονίαν*.²³

All of the above constitute, without doubt, basic elements on which Eusebius and his theological environment based the foundations of the new

28), Leipzig 1918, 40; Eusebius, *Βίος Κωνσταντίνου* II, 46, 47· III 17, 62, Winkelmann, 67, 74, 89-90, 116-117.

¹⁹ For a classification of the religious decrees and laws of Constantine and his successors in chronological order, see Joannou, *Legislation et christianisation*. Three letters (one addressed to the bishop of Carthage Caecilian and two to the proconsul of Africa Anylinus) are the earliest testimonies concerning the attitude of Constantine at a very early stage towards the Church, thanks to which he took favorable measures with his legislation (A. Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοὶ ιστορικοὶ καὶ χρονολόγοι 4ος - 7ος αι.*, vol. I, Athens 1997, 69-70).

²⁰ Ἐνθεν εἰκότως αὐτὸς ἐν ἐστίασει ποτὲ δεξιούμενος ἐπισκόπους λόγον ἀφῆκεν, ὡς ἦρα καὶ αὐτὸς εἶη ἐπίσκοπος, ὡδὲ πη αὐτοῖς εἰπὼν ῥήμασιν ἐφ’ ἡμετέραις ἀκοαῖς, „ἀλλ’ ὑμεῖς μὲν τῶν εἴσω τῆς ἐκκλησίας, ἐγὼ δὲ τῶν ἐκτὸς ὑπὸ θεοῦ καθεσταμένους ἐπίσκοπος ἂν εἶην“ (Eusebius, *Βίος Κωνσταντίνου* IV, 24, Winkelmann, 128).

²¹ Eusebius, *Βίος Κωνσταντίνου* IV, 24, Winkelmann, 128.

²² For example, J. Straub (Kaiser Konstantin als ἐπίσκοπος τῶν ἐκτός, *Studia Patristica* I [Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 63], Berlin 1957, 678 κ. ε.) claims that with the specific title Constantine implies the overseeing (*ἐπισκοπήν*) of all humans within the empire, both Christians and non-Christians. P.-P. Ioannou (*Legislation*, 32-33) limits the extent of the term “outside” and believes that it implies those outside the Church, i.e. the pagans.

²³ Eusebius, *Βίος Κωνσταντίνου* IV, 1.1, Winkelmann, 120; Patoura-Spanou, *Χριστιανισμός και Παγκοσμότητα*, 70-71.

political theory of the christianized empire. At a practical level, Constantine, as a *homo politicus* par excellence, who, as it turned out, was distinguished by realism and prudence, realized from the beginning of his religious reversal the obligation to respect the traditions and the need for compromise between Christians and pagans, with mutual tolerance, to which he himself contributed with his ambivalent attitude. Compromise and consensus were sought after in various ways, through the speeches, letters, ceremonies, symbols and finally the exact political decisions and practices of the emperor. In the domain of cult, a characteristic example of compromise is the acceptance by the Christians of the supreme sacred symbol of the Roman pagans, the Sun-god.²⁴ The Christians adopted this symbolism through the depiction of Christ as the “Sun of Justice” and visualized, like Constantine himself, Christ the Savior in the form of the Sun.²⁵ Another example of the policy of compromise and of the sensitive equilibrium that Constantine maintained towards the Christians and the pagans- in their ceremonial practices this time- is the emperor’s refusal to perform the traditional sacrifices to Zeus on the Capitol, during his triumphal reception by the people and the senators,²⁶ and at the same time the assignment of a Roman pagan orator to pronounce the panegyric to the Emperor, upon his arrival to the eternal city, after his victory on the Milvian bridge.²⁷ It is noteworthy that in his speech the pagan orator spoke freely of the supreme God who judged Constantine worthy of his heavenly revelation, without however naming any of the known ancient Gods.²⁸ Likewise, Constantine intentionally avoided mentioning Christ the Savior in these ambiguous ceremonies, in order not to align himself with one or the other side.²⁹

It is true that during this crucial transitional period, neither the senate and the traditional political forces of the Roman empire, or the Church were ready to come into accord with an emperor with ambiguous religious beliefs. On the other hand, Constantine realized very soon that in order for his risky experiments to succeed, he was obliged to secure the agreement and the mutual tolerance of both sides.

In the field of foreign policy, Constantine did not conduct wars of aggression (apart from some brief interventions, as in the case of the civil war of the Sarmatians),³⁰ but as a bishop of the outside, according to his own term

²⁴ For the cult of the sun in the greco-roman world and its identification with the God Mithra of the Persians, see R. Turcan, *Les dieux et le divin dans les mystères de Mithra*, in R. van den Broek - T. Baarda - J. Mansfeld (ed.), *Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman World*, Leiden 1988, 243-261; idem, *Les cultes orientaux dans le monde romain*, Paris 1989, 193-241, where the author approaches the subject of the cult of the god Mithra-Sun from the standpoint of monotheism as well.

²⁵ For the sun as a Christian symbol, see M. Feuillet, *Λεξικό χριστιανικών συμβόλων* (transl. Alexandra Lappa, ed. Antouanetta Kallegia), Athens 2007.

²⁶ Eusebius, *Βίος Κωνσταντίνου* I, 39.1-3, Winkelmann, 36; cf. G. S. Aldrete, *Gestures and Acclamations in Ancient Rome*, Baltimore - London 1999, mainly 89-114.

²⁷ *Panegyricus dictus Constantino filio Constantii*, ed. R. A. B. Mynors, Oxford 1964, 271-290.

²⁸ J. Straub, *Konstantins Verzicht auf den Ganz zum Kapitol*, *Historia* 4 (1955), 297f.

²⁹ Patoura-Spanou, *Χριστιανισμός και Παγκοσμιοότητα*, 42-43.

³⁰ *Excerpta Valesiana* I, 32, ed. J. Moreau, Leipzig 1968, 6.

recorded by his biographer, he focused his attention on the protection of the Christians throughout the world. Sensing the importance of the new religion and the role it was bound to play, he dynamically intervened in Persia in order to stop the persecutions launched by the king Shapur against the Christians of the Persian empire.³¹ As Sozomenos characteristically mentions, “Constantine, in the capacity of guardian of Christians worldwide –Romans and foreigners- sent a letter to the Persian king, trying to convince him to treat the Christians and the Christian religion with lenience.³² Invested with the virtues and attributes of the savior, of the persecutor of all tyrants, of the liberator of the universe,³³ he intervened, as common bishop, to the Persian monarch demanding to be treated as τὸν τῶν ὄλων δεσπότην [i.e. himself] προῖον, ἴλεω and εὐμενῆ.³⁴

He appeared as the leader of all the Christians worldwide, demanding this role based on the identification “according to divine will” of the ecumenical Church with the ecumenical empire. Thus, in addition to its political character, the universality of his authority also acquired a religious content, which assigned to him the task of disseminating the faith throughout the world. In other words, Constantine inaugurated, through his ideological, political and diplomatic interventions, the implementation of a Christian foreign policy, which he incorporated into the “international affairs” of the time. Ecclesiastical authors of the 5th century mention christianizations of a limited scale during his reign (Iberians, Indians=Ethiopians, Saracens) at a time when –it must be noted– the population of the empire itself remained to a great extent pagan.³⁵

Thus, it seems that the great theorist of 4th-century political theology and biographer of Constantine, Eusebius, who lived and was active concurrently with the emperor, shaped the specific imperial ideology through the experience of the first Christian emperor’s administration. As theologian, but mainly as political philosopher and propagandist of the new politico-philosophical system that was slowly being established within the ranks of the new empire, he aspired to its long-term perspective, with its implementation at least during the

³¹ H. Delehay, Les versions grecques des Actes des martyrs persans sous Sapor II, *PO* 2 (1907), 401-560; P. Devos, Les martyrs persans à travers leurs actes syriaques, in *La Persia e il mondo greco-romano*, Rome 1966, 213-225.

³² Sozomenus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* II, 15.5, J. Bidez - G. C. Hansen, *Sozomenus Kirchengeschichte* (GCS 50), Berlin 1960, 70: Τοιαῦτα Σαβώρη γράμας Κωνσταντίνος Ἐπιρῶτο πείθειν αὐτὸν εὐνοεῖν τῇ θρησκείᾳ. πλείστη γὰρ ἐχρήτο κηδεμονία περὶ τοὺς πανταχοῦ Χριστιανοὺς Ῥωμαίους καὶ ἄλλοφύλους. Cf. J. Vogt, *Constantin der Grosse und sein Jahrhundert*, München 1960, 237-238, 245-246.

³³ ... τούτου τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δύναμιν ἔχων σύμμαχον, ἐκ τῶν περάτων τοῦ Ὀκεανοῦ ἀρξάμενος πᾶσαν ἐφεξῆς τὴν οἰκουμένην βεβαίως σωτηρίας ἐλπίσι διήγειρα, ὡς ἅπαντα ὅσα ὑπὸ τοσούτοις τυράννοις δεδουλωμένα τὰς καθημερινὰς συμφορὰς ἐνδόντα ἐξίτηλα ἐγεγόνει, ταῦτα προσλαβόντα τὴν τῶν κοινῶν ἐκδικίαν ὡσπερ ἕκ τινος θεραπείας ἀναζωπυρηθήναι (Eusebius, *Βίος Κωνσταντίνου* IV, 9, Winkelmann, 123).

³⁴ Eusebius, *Βίος Κωνσταντίνου* IV, 13, Winkelmann, 125. Constantine would have undoubtedly discussed with the bishop of Persia John, who attended the Council of Nicaea, about the situation of the Christians of Persia (see, Marie-Louise Chaumont, *La christianisation de l’empire iranien des origines aux grandes persécutions du IVe siècle*, Louvain 1988, 147-154).

³⁵ Patoura-Spanou, *Χριστιανισμός και Παγκοσμιότητα*, 127-128.

reign of Constantine's successors. In order to support his argumentation and render his words comprehensible and susceptible to a world that, during this transitional period, was justly in confusion, he proceeded from the theoretic and abstract theological patterns to more specific narrations and images, whose credibility he undoubtedly based on the exact political and religious practices of Constantine.

Thus, in his narration Eusebius attempts a comparison between Constantine and two great personalities of history: the king of the Persians Cyrus the elder and the Macedonian king Alexander. Through a brief reference to the former, he downgrades the value preserved by tradition regarding his personality and reign, expressing his reproach for his *ἀσχροὺν καὶ ἐπονειδίστον* death, inflicted by a woman.³⁶ He then continues with Alexander the Great, whose image he stains, and completely deconstructs his profile as conqueror and his reign, with arguments pertaining to the ethics of war.³⁷ Constantine's superiority in comparison to Alexander, at the level of universal domination, that characterizes the reign of both historic personalities, lies, according to Eusebius, in the fact that the former, i.e. his emperor, conquered the world peacefully, whereas the latter through military expansionism. To the abundance of Christian epithets and God-given attributes (victor, non-battled, invincible, god-loving and sublime, pious and prosperous, light-giver and high-sounding missionary of felicitous piety, teacher of all nations, universal bishop, et.al.) he attributed to Constantine,³⁸ he contrasted a series of degrading, humiliating and harsh attributes, which, as Eusebius maintains, characterized the military achievements of Alexander. He did not hesitate to characterize the until then legendary universal ruler an "eliminator of all nations", a „drunkard and murderer of youths“, "ὄτεκνον, ἄρριζον καὶ ἀνέστιον", whose destiny, thankfully, cut the thread of his life and who did not have time to complete the total destruction of the human race.³⁹

It should be remarked, regarding the above, that Eusebius expressed this specific criticism towards the person of the great Macedonian king, in order to construct the new, Christian-inspired, model of the world ruler in the person of Constantine.⁴⁰ In the conscience of the world of the time, but also in that of

³⁶ Eusebius, *Βίος Κωνσταντίνου* I, 7.1, Winkelmann, 17-18. Cf. M. A. Dandamaev, *A Political History of the Achaemenid Empire*, Leiden 1989.

³⁷ Eusebius, *Βίος Κωνσταντίνου* I, 7.1-2; For the creation of the empire and Alexander's conquests, see A. B. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire. The Reign of Alexander the Great*, Cambridge 1988.

³⁸ Patoura-Spanou, *Χριστιανισμός και Παγκοσμιοτήτα*, 60-61.

³⁹ ... *ἐχώρει δὲ δι' αἱμάτων ἀνήρ σκηπτοῦ δίκην, ἀφειδῶς ἔθνη καὶ πόλεις ὅλας ἠβηδὸν ἐξανδραποδιζόμενος. ἄρτι δὲ μικρὸν ἀνθούσης αὐτῷ τῆς ὥρας καὶ τὰ παιδικὰ πενθοῦντι δεινῶς τὸ χρεῶν ἐπιστὰν ἄτεκνον ἄρριζον ἀνέστιον ἐπ' ἀλλοδαπῆς καὶ πολεμίας αὐτὸν, ὡς ἂν μὴ εἰς μακρὸν λυμᾶνιτο τὸ θνητὸν γένος ἠφάνιζεν* (Eusebius, *Βίος Κωνσταντίνου* I. 7.2, Winkelmann, 18)

⁴⁰ It must be observed that Eusebius' criticism towards the person of Alexander the Great is an exception and that it contradicts the general image preserved by Byzantium regarding Alexander, with numerous positive references to his name and his historic and fictional activity, see about, G. Galavaris, *Alexander the Great, conqueror and captive of death: his various images in Byzantine Art*, *Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 16/1 (1989), 12-18; S. Gero, *The Alexander legend in Byzantium: some literary gleanings*, *DOP* 46 (1992), 83-87; Maria Kambouri, *Ο μύθος του Μεγάλου Αλεξάνδρου στη χριστιανική*

Eusebius, the perception of the uniqueness of Alexander the Great, as the real until then universal ruler and therefore the only historic personality that could overshadow the brightness of his emperor was well-established and this is proven also by the fact that he ignores the great Roman emperors of the previous centuries and considers the beginning of Constantine's reign as the continuation of that of the Macedonian world ruler: ὁ δ' ἡμέτερος βασιλεὺς ἐξ ἐκείνου μὲν ἦρχετο, ἐξ' οὐπὲρ ὁ Μακεδῶν ἐτελεύτα.⁴¹

By contrasting the violent subjugation of foreign nations to the conqueror Alexander with the spontaneous and almost voluntary submission and surrender to Constantine of several chieftains, satraps and kings of various nations, he aims to underline Constantine's peaceful conquest of the world, which reached τὰ τῆς ὅλης οἰκουμένης τέρματα.⁴²

Although Eusebius, as other Christian writers, enriched the imperial ideology with models and elements of Hellenistic philosophy,⁴³ he wanted to define the essence of the new era through this schematic approach, the comparison of Constantine to Alexander. An era that rose under the light of Christianity and the guidance of the heavenly God, but also under the prudent and merciful administration of his only representative on earth, the Christian emperor.⁴⁴ He returns, with a stubborn, I would say, insistence on the subjugation and taming of savage nations, which praised τὸν καλλίνικον, τὸν θεοσεβῆ, τὸν κοινὸν εὐεργέτην, recognizing with one voice and one mouth the universal brilliance of Constantine, given by the grace of God as general benevolence to all humans (κοινὸν ἀγαθὸν ἀνθρώποις).⁴⁵

It is worth adding to the religious attributes ascribed by the theology of the time to Constantine, the synonyms apostle⁴⁶ (ἀπόστολος) and equal-to-apostles (ἰσαπόστολος) as well.⁴⁷ The content of the title apostle – i.e. continuator of the activity of the Apostles of Christ beyond the frontiers of the empire – partly includes the concepts of both attributes on which the present contribution focuses: those of the common bishop and those of the universal guardian. It is obvious that the title of apostle had greater gravity than that of bishop, whereas

Ανατολή και το Ισλάμ, in the volume *Οργανισμός Πολιτιστικής Πρωτεύουσας της Ευρώπης „Θεσσαλονίκη 1997“*, Thessaloniki 1997, 201-236. The basic medieval source for the life and activity of the great military commander is the variation of the Romance of Alexander by Pseudo-Kallisthenes. The Alexander romance or Pseudo-Kallisthenes (see Maria Kambouri-Bamboukou, Το „Μυθιστόρημα του Αλεξάνδρου“ ή ο Ψευδοκαλλισθένης και οι απεικονίσεις του σε βυζαντινά χειρόγραφα, in *Αφιέρωμα στη μνήμη του Σωτήρη Κίτσα* [Ελληνική Εταιρεία Σλαβικών Μελετών], Thessaloniki 2002, 101-133).

⁴¹ Eusebius, *Βίος Κωνσταντίνου* I, 8.1, Winkelmann, 18.

⁴² Eusebius, *Βίος Κωνσταντίνου* I, 8.3-4, Winkelmann, 18.

⁴³ Patoura-Spanou, *Χριστιανισμός και Παγκοσμιοότητα*, 33-53.

⁴⁴ Patoura-Spanou, *Χριστιανισμός και Παγκοσμιοότητα*, 66.

⁴⁵ Eusebius, *Βίος Κωνσταντίνου* I, 41.2, Winkelmann, 37.

⁴⁶ Ioannis Damaskenos, *Επιστολή εις Θεόφιλον*, PG 95, col. 348 b-c.

⁴⁷ The term equal-to-apostles (ἰσαπόστολος) is not encountered in texts or hymns before the 5th century (see Straub, *Κοινός επίσκοπος*, 45, n. 44). For an interesting approach to the subject, see Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre*, 148-153.

its use created the common acceptance that it was the emperor's apostolic duty to act in the interest of the Christian faith both within and beyond the frontiers of the empire.⁴⁸

To summarize what we presented concerning the two protagonists of this crucial transitional period, whose political activity and philosophical regard changed the course of history, we may conclude the following:

Constantine, who was distinguished by insight and, especially, political realism, succeeded in inaugurating a new historical era with the cooperation of the only organized Church of the time, the Christian one,⁴⁹ without abolishing the existing Roman system, and is justly considered the founder of the great Byzantine empire. Therefore, during the transitional period, in which the new capital coexisted with the old one, Christianity went along with paganism and the Christianization of the empire remained incomplete, Constantine dared to proceed with dangerous innovations and to take risky decisions, which essentially summarize his great "peaceful" revolution. He interfered directly in the matters of the Christian Church, showing at the same time his respect for and great interest in the Roman cult, the institutions and the traditions of the Roman empire. In spite of his oscillating attitude between the old and the new, he appropriated attributes (common bishop, bishop of the outside, universal guardian, etc.) particularly popular among the Christian element of the empire and embraced ideas, whose content transformed the existing Roman ideology.

On the other hand, Eusebius proved to be an efficient inspirer and propagandist of the dominant Christian perception regarding the special mission of the emperor -in this case, of Constantine-, and at the same time a competent interpreter of his exact political intentions and his deeds. With the supreme tripartite doctrine concerning "divine monarchy" as central axis, he proceeded to the idealist-theoretical construction of the political philosophy of the 4th century, painting at the same time the portrait of the ideal Christian ruler, with the addition of new ingredients to those already familiar from previous philosophies.⁵⁰ With the plethora of verbal patterns, flattering characterisms and mainly of divine attributes he ascribed to Constantine, he set the foundations for the Byzantine political theology and introduced the common belief regarding one emperor – a divine man, the sole representative of God on earth, entrusted with the supreme duty to protect and salvage the world.-

⁴⁸ Patoura-Spanou, *Χριστιανισμός και Παγκοσμιότητα*, 72.

⁴⁹ The system of political orthodoxy of the 4th century was undoubtedly shaped through the reciprocal relations between political administration and Church. Of course, during the sole reign of Constantine the ambiguous character of this system appeared from the first stage of its formation. J. Straub (Constantine as *κοινός επίσκοπος*, 40) rightly stresses the dialectic character between Church – State, after the conversion of Constantine, whereas H. Drake, in a relatively recent study goes further; he stresses the identification of the Church and the State in the conscience of Constantine and the people of the time? See H. A. Drake, *The Impact of Constantine on Christianity*, in N. Lenski (ed.), *Age of Constantine*, Cambridge 2006, 112.

⁵⁰ Patoura-Spanou, *Χριστιανισμός και Παγκοσμιότητα*, 36-39.

Софија Патоура-Спану
ΚΟΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝ ΚΑΟ ΖΑЈΕДНΙΧΚΙ ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟС (ΚΟΙΝΟС ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟС) И ΚΑΟ
ΖΑЈΕДНΙΧΚΙ ΖΑШТИТΝΙΚ СВЕТА(ΚΟΙΝΟС ΤΩΝ ΑΠΑΝΤΑΧΟΥ ΚΗΔΕΜΩΝ)

У IV веку, када је хришћанство, као идеолошки и друштвени покрет претходних векова, продрло у широке слојеве римског царства и попримило нову динамику, потреба за универзалним политичким и духовним јединством народа и „нација“ тога времена постала је императив. Две велике личности тога времена одговарале су овој специфичној потреби: епископ Кесарије Јевсевије, утемељивач и творац теорије „божанствене монархије“, и римски цар Константин, оснивач новог хришћанског царства. Две перифрастичне особине најпре приписане Константину од стране његовог биографа, *κοινός ἐπίσκοπος κοινός τῶν ἀπανταχοῦ κηδεμών* (заједнички епископ и заједнички заштитник света) сумирају целокупну политичку филозофију тога времена везано за универзални карактер римског царства на политичком и религиозном нивоу.

