

BOOK 1

Everyone Should Believe as His Heart Wishes



Conference

EVERLASTING VALUE AND PERMANENT ACTUALITY OF THE EDICT OF MILAN

On the Way to the Great Jubilee in 2013

Niš, Serbia, February 24th -26th 2011



Peace and Crises
Management Foundation



Conference

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ACTUALITY OF THE EDICT OF MILAN

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Everyone Should Believe as His Heart Wishes

Belgrade, September 2011

Under the auspices of His Holiness Mr. Irinej, the Serbian Patriarch

EVERLASTING VALUE AND PERMANENT ACTUALITY OF THE EDICT OF MILAN
ON THE WAY TO THE GREAT JUBILEE IN 2013
BOOK 1 - EVERYONE SHOULD BELIEVE AS HIS HEART WISHES

Publisher

Association of Nongovernmental Organizations in SEE – CIVIS
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“Edict of Milan” by Nebojša Ozimić
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Design & Prepress

Marko ZAKOVSKI

Printed by

Graphic, Novi Sad

Press run: 500 pcs

ISBN 978-86-908103-2-1

The publishing of this book was supported by
German Foundation Renovabis



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(ut daremus et Christianis et omnibus liberam potestatem sequendi religionem, quam quisque voluisset)
Flavius Valerius Constantinus

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ORGANIZATION OF THE CONFERENCE AND PUBLISHING OF THIS BOOK
HELPED:

THE EMBASSY OF SWITZERLAND IN SERBIA

COMPANY ALPINE, AUSTRIA – REPRESENTATIVE OFFICE IN BELGRADE

COMPANY SWIETELSKY LINC, AUSTRIA – REPRESENTATIVE OFFICE IN
BELGRADE

COMPANY PORR, AUSTRIA - REPRESENTATIVE OFFICE IN BELGRADE

KONRAD ADENAUER FOUNDATION

RENOVABIS FOUNDATION

THE CITY OF NIŠ

PRODUCTION “BESEDA” - RADIO-TELEVISION OF THE ORTHODOX DIOCESE
OF BAČKA

BOARD FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE COMPLEX OF EMPEROR
CONSTANTINE - NIŠ, SERBIA

ORGANIZERS WOULD LIKE TO THANK ESPECIALLY TO:

HIS EXCELLENCY, MR. CLEMENS KOJA, AMBASSADOR OF AUSTRIA IN SERBIA

HIS EXCELLENCY, MR. STANISLAV HOČEVAR, ARCHBISHOP OF BELGRADE AND
METROPOLITAN

NEBOJŠA OZIMIĆ, HISTORIAN

ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF NIŠ

INTRODUCTION

Thank you all who are here with us today, especially to Excellencies present, Bishop of Bachka Mr. Irinej, our host here in Niš today, Mr. Archbishop Hocevar, Dr Martić and all representatives of PRO ORIENTE Foundation, CIVIS Association, all Churches and religious communities present in Serbia and guests from Niš. Thank you for being together here today.

Looking back at the period from the first initiative for organizing such a conference, we can freely say, an unusual three-year conference, which every year starting from 2011 with its conclusions and recommendations should lead to coronal moment in 2013, and proper celebration of 1700 years of the *Edict of Milan*, that great jubilee for all Christians in the world, I am most delighted by the synergy of all contacted sides so the conference could even be held. Just today the conference is, first in a row, maybe the most inspiring, since we have to put directions for other topics which press us today in life: questions of respecting human rights of every citizen for religious preference and co-existence in a community, as well as the difficulties which that choice carries, questions of qualitative relations among Church, government and citizen, questions of religious freedoms and media attention, and a lot of other things that a contemporary society gives to its citizens.

I was especially delighted by the shown energy and desire of all of us to live one day, day a little bit different than others. Different, because only to hear in one place so many qualitative thoughts and historical facts on the subject of life, work and heritage of Emperor Constantine is worth every attention. Deep in thoughts over the words that left deep impression on me, and which are taken as a motto of this conference, I am sure that they hide layers of the message that one emperor, most certainly, the true statesman of his, and of our time (whose works are even studied today, questioned and analyzed) wished to send: "Everyone should believe as his heart wishes!" How much wisdom is hidden in these words, in message that you are free to believe in anything you want and not to be limited by that freedom in everyday life, to have full strength to live your life by your choice, but at the same time to be aware of the responsibility of the choice, power of every your step on that road. Words which we in Foundation for peace and management crises stick to are: There is no road to peace, peace is road! Today I would also like to underline that every individual's choice to believe, to hope and to work by his personal, not imposed choices, can be right only in a peaceful society. Society which is not imposed to war-instigation calls that something can be solved by war (because it is a big mistake), but that prosperity of an individual, and the whole society, can be reached throughout, by and only with peace. With peace in your soul, in society, in politics, in economy, because only the citizen who believes, and carries his religion with peace in his soul, will not use the same to fight with others.

That is why these words of Emperor Constantine affect me deeply thought-over and with clear message, and I honestly believe that all participants today in their presentations will light up even one layer of this wise truth. In that name I wish all the best to today participants wishing that the conclusions from this conference will be heard by as many people in the world as possible.



Boris Vukobrat
Peace and Crises Management Foundation

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE CONFERENCE, NIŠ 2011.

The international conference *Everlasting Value and Permanent Actuality of the Edict of Milan - On the Way to the Great Jubilee in 2013* was held in Niš from 24th to 26th February 2011. The conference, as the first manifestation of this kind, was organised in Niš, the birthplace of Constantine the Great thus meeting the celebration of 1700 years of the *Edict of Milan*.

Different aspects of epochal and permanent historical and civilisation significance of the Edict were considered at the Conference, by which for the first time the principle of full religious freedom and equality of all religious beliefs and creative dialogue of Christianity with the Greek-Roman culture were affirmed.

Following the letter and the spirit of the *Edict of Milan*, the participants of the Conference have devoted special attention to perceive and to emphasize the everlasting value of this document in the light of the challenges that the contemporary world is facing. It has been concluded uniquely that correct understanding of the ideas of the *Edict of Milan* could significantly contribute to resolve some of the most complex issues of the contemporary man, such as:

- » Absence of unrestricted right to religious freedom;
- » Jeopardizing or insufficient protection of human rights;
- » Lack of social justice;
- » Permanent devastation of peace in the world.

Having in mind the importance and scope of the questions raised, the participants of the Conference appeal that all subjects of social life act responsibly in the future integral dialogue: state institutions, churches and religious communities, as well as organizations of the civil society. For the members of Christian Churches special inspiration in recognizing original unity of the Church represents the fact that the *Edict of Milan* had been a path to the organization of the first Ecumenical Council in Nicaea.

In this spirit, the participants of the conference, which in the following great jubilee of Christianity see a unique opportunity for the improvement of inter-Christian and inter-religious dialogue as well as the dialogue with the contemporary world, appeal to do everything in order to have this great possibility vivacious in the best possible way and in the common interest.

Participants of the Conference

Niš, 25.02.2011

His Grace Orthodox Bishop of Bačka, Mr. Irinej

Opening speech

Your Excellencies, Mr. Archbishop of Belgrade, Mr. Nuncio, Mr. Bishop of Zrenjanin, other respected brothers priests, respected Mr. Mufti, respected Mayor and President of the Assembly of the City of Niš, esteemed gentlemen Ambassadors, Ministers, Your Excellencies, respected representatives of others important institutions, as well as media, here present, ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters, it is my great honor and joy

and at the same time pleasant obligation to greet you all in this city and on this honorable place, in the Church hall of the Orthodox Diocese of Niš, and to welcome you all cordially and wish you a pleasant stay in this city and in Serbia, as well as the fruitful work of our conference, dedicated to the great and important date in the Christian Church history, the European history and the spiritual and cultural history, 1700 anniversary of the *Edict of Milan*, announced by Emperor Constantine the Great who is respected in the Orthodox Church as a saint and who was certainly a turning point or milestone in the up-to-then history of Europe – and wider, as I said.

Especially, I am happy that I could greet you here and welcome you on behalf of His Holiness Archbishop of Peć, the Metropolitan of Belgrade and Karlovci, and the Serbian Patriarch Mr. Irinej, in two contexts, in his two capacities – from one side as the Bishop Administrator or *locum tenens* of this Diocese (since local Bishop has always the spiritual priority in his local Church), therefore on behalf of him as the Bishop of the City of Niš but also on behalf of him as the Patriarch of our local Orthodox Church as a whole.

At the same time, it is an honor to greet you on behalf of the the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which I am the member of and from which I was directly appointed, with the blessing of His Holiness the Patriarch, to participate in the preparation of this Conference and in its work. Naturally, in the same context, I greet you on behalf of the direct partner from the Serbian Orthodox Church with other organizers of this Conference, which I am also the member of, and that is the Committee of the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, especially established to prepare the festal marking the 1700 anniversary of the *Edict of Milan*. Finally, let me personally express joy that we are all gathered here from different countries and from different Christian Churches and confessions, but in the presence of our friends Muslims in the face of Serbian Mufti.

I am also happy that important institutions and eminent persons are participating in Conference whose importance does not lay in the fact that it is the first one – there were other conferences in Niš regarding this subject; there will be in the future as well, in our Church and in other places, on different levels, local and regional and international – but the importance of the Conference lays, I would say, in the fact that this is the first conference of international character which is taking place in the birthplace of Emperor Constantine and that its convocation, participants and method of work, indicates the all-Christian and all-European



character of the celebration of this jubilee. We could have organized this first Conference differently, but we all, all partners in the organization of this Conference, have consciously chosen to have it exactly like this, to have it as a place of meeting, dialogue, closeness and understanding and to return our memory back to the basics of the spiritual values of that Europe which was created as a result of historical event that gathers us all here, and that is the *Edict of Milan*.

The history of the Church up to that date and the history of the Church after that date are two very different realities, hence the history of Europe as well as the history of whole cultural world runs new course. For this reason I am happy that the Conference was envisaged like this and that it will be implemented in this spirit, with God blessing, and so that we will hear different findings and different historical opinions because each participant will enlighten one of important parts of this worldwide relevant historical event.

One more thing before I pass the floor to other partners - coorganizers of the Conference, I would like to express hope that the conclusions and messages from this gathering will contribute effectively to rapprochement among Christians, understanding among people, and in spreading the idea of unity which includes full respect of identity and integrity of each Church, each community, each people and culture, while having clear conscience that self-isolation represents a kind of spiritual suicide and that togetherness and exchange of spiritual values represent true life and progress and true Christian and European path. I would like to thank you for taking time and putting efforts to come to the city of the Emperor Constantine, in this winter weather, so we could talk about such important topics.

Thank you for your attention.

Miloš Simonović The Mayor of Niš

Opening speech

Mr. Vice president, Your Eminences, Honorable Excellencies, I am deeply grateful to all of you who are Town of Niš guests and that Town of Niš, because of the fact that Emperor Constantine was born in Niš, has the privilege to participate in celebrating 1700 years of the *Edict of Milan*.



Primarily, I expect this gathering to send a message about tolerance, the message about the significance of respecting differences among us. The true tolerance should be understood as an advantage and a virtue of the whole society and all individuals. I think that tolerance is a big power of a society and that this gathering will show that we together are ready to respect and accept differences among us.

Therefore, the Town of Niš, I wish to underline once again, is very grateful to all of you for being here today and that we have an opportunity to be the hosts of this gathering. What is also very important is the fact that the organizer of this gathering is a non-governmental organization with the support of some big and very influential non-governmental organizations from Austria and Switzerland, and that is really important to include non-governmental sector, civil society in celebrating 2013. That is practically another good sign that we will celebrate 2013 in a right way.

Thank you all once again for being here today.

Archpriest Vitalij Tarasjev Elder of the Moscow Patriarchate Compound in Belgrade

Opening speech

Your Eminences, honourable Vice-president of the Serbian Government, honourable Mayor of Niš, Your Excellencies, Your High Eminences, honourable Mr. Archbishop, in the name of the Russian Orthodox Church and in the name of Metropolitan Ilarion of Volokolamsk, President of the Synod Department of Church External Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, it is honour and pleasure to greet this high gathering, and to send His Holiness Moscow Patriarch and all Russia Kirill wishes and this scientific-theological conference about the *Edict of Milan*, which jubilee is very close, be inspired by God and successful. Thank you for your attention.



H.E. Mons. Orlando Antonini Apostolic Nuncio of the Holy See in Serbia

Message of Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of The Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Unity of Christians to the International Conference on Edict of Milan in Niš



I wish to express my gratitude for the invitation to the International Conference *Everlasting Value and Permanent Actuality of the Edict of Milan - on the Way to the Great Jubilee in 2013*, which is taking place in the city where the Emperor Constantine was born. Sadly, as I have already told you, I am not able to participate, but I am happy to be able to send my greetings and a brief message through my representative.

There are many elements of this Jubilee that engage our attention. Without denying other aspects, however, I would like to dwell upon the importance of liberty granted to the Christian faithful and to those of other religions to be able to practise their own faith, to profess it publicly, and so to live out in all its aspects. Thinking of the persecutions of Christians in the first three centuries, we can understand what a great gift this was for the Christians of that era. We know, however, that the persecution of Christians-and of members of the religions-continued in later centuries and, as we are discovering, continues even in our times with considerable violence. In this light, it becomes clear that the spirit of the *Edict of Constantine* still remains relevant today, even as it requires further examination.

It is unfortunate that Christians have not always remained faithful to the central message of Constantine, which is no less than an unfolding of the teaching of their Master, Jesus Christ. Sadly we have to recognise that throughout the ages, under the influence of many external forces, Christians have themselves often curtailed the religious liberty of others, even of other Christians. In the twentieth century, however, Christian insight has thought more deeply about the basis of this important ideal, seeing it as an essential element of the divine image impressed by the Creator in every man and woman. With the Second Vatican Council, in particular with the *Decree on Religious Liberty (Dignitatis Humanae)*, the Catholic Church reaffirmed: "The Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. Freedom of this kind means that all men should be immune from coercion on the part of individuals, social groups and every human in power to so that, within due limits, no one is forced to act against his convictions nor is anyone to be restrained from acting in accordance with his convictions in religious matters in private or in public, alone or in associations with others." (DH 2)

Your meeting, which gathers together representatives of many Churches and Christian communities, together with representatives of different religions, is a good opportunity to exchange different points of view on this subject, and to discuss together how we can realise in the twenty-first century the real intention of the *Edict of Constantine*, which can still inspire all people or goodwill today.

Dr Johann Marte President of PRO ORIENTE Foundation

Opening speech

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Christ's message is so strong and resistant to any form of discrimination and even to the worst persecution, that it could be convincing even for such a powerful ruler as Emperor Constantine was!



Celebrating the *Edict of Milan* should not be limited to the mere memory of this decisive date in church history - said His Holiness Patriarch Irinej during his official visit in Austria last year. That means, he added, we should interpret anew the issues of religious freedom and equal human rights in the current historical context, thus actualizing the *Edict of Milan*. Let us actualize the Constantine's courage and decision by strengthening the togetherness of Christians and to undertake joint efforts to make our faith more visible and raise its credibility.

It is, indeed, of great merit that the Serbian Orthodox Church has given proper attention to examine closer the *Edict of Milan*, this eminent historical event of everlasting value and permanent actuality for both the ecclesiastical as well as the secular history of the East and of the West. Our foundation PRO ORIENTE gladly and gratefully accepted the invitation from the Serbian Orthodox Church to participate in this conference On the way to the great Jubilee in 2013 together with CIVIS - Association of Non-Governmental Organizations of Southeast Europe and Peace and Crisis Management Foundation. PRO ORIENTE's main support will be given by the assistance of experts from the Institute for Byzantine Studies which is part of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Particular thanks to Mrs. Mirjana Prljević, General Secretary of CIVIS Association. She took the main burden in organizing not only this conference but also successfully raising the funds needed.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The *Edict of Milan* was not only liberation from centuries of discrimination and persecution. It was at the same time the beginning of a mingling up of ecclesiastical with secular power, a real temptation which the church succumbed to very often in history, in the long run not to the church's advantage! The mingling up of state and religion – as it took place for the first time under Emperor Theodosius in 391 – is intrinsically contradictory to the Christian differentiation between state and religion.

From the Holy Scriptures of Christianity can be deduced neither a legal order nor a political system. The claim for total symbiosis: religion, state and society are alien to Christianity. It is exactly for that reason that it could create the essential requirements for the liberal, democratic, pluralistic constitutional state. And for that very reason the *Edict of Milan* remains a constant challenge and owns a dimension reaching far beyond the bounds of Christianity. May the memory of Emperor Constantine, equally dear to the West as well as to the East, give us a new impetus to continue confidently our work for unity and peace in Europe.

I sincerely wish our conference all the best in preparing the Great Jubilee in 2013!

Ms. Mirjana Prljević International Secretary General of the Association CIVIS

Opening speech

Your Excellencies, Your Eminences, Mr. Vice premier, Mr. Mayor, Professors, respected guests “*The happiness of the world is built up from each human soul*”, said our Nobel Prize winner Ivo Andrić. In my opinion, the success of early Christianity is based exactly on these words and that unique moment of enlightenment of the soul of each individual, citizen. Moreover, we are aware of the fact that today, in the time when the pace of living, the wideness of the scope of every-day information that we receive, as well as complexity of the system which we live in, we as citizens have an obligation to, mutually and by joint forces, point out to all these values which could make our life more valuable and meaningful. The values that the *Edict of Milan* indicates are, in our opinion, true foundation for this. Today, we would like to thank to our partners, Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church and Committee for the Celebration of the Great Jubilee in 2013 which accepted the co-organization along with the PRO ORIENTE foundation and Swiss Peace and Crises Management Foundation, for creating the opportunity, together and by joint forces with all of you, our donors, respected participants and media representatives, to point out the fact that only wise, steady and realistic citizen makes one society strong and resistant to all challenges and causes of today’s instability.

CIVIS - in Latin citizen, the name of our association which mission is exactly the strengthening of the citizen’s position in the society is completely satisfied with the chosen topics and participants believing that our citizens, as well as citizens in Europe, will hear our messages which will be formulated in the conference’s conclusions.

Thank you all for being together today and for sharing such an important historical legacy which should make our every day life happier, because only a happy individual makes a happy society.



Mr Božidar Delić Vicepresident of the Government of the Republic Serbia

Opening speech

Your Eminences, respected religious leaders, respected organizers, respected Mr. Mayer, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, I would like to greet and thank to all organizations which got this great idea. I see this conference as an overture for very important year 2013, the year when we will celebrate one of the most important dates for Christianity, Europe and the world.



Almost 1700 years ago, the *Edict of Milan* began a new era for Christianity. The history of Europe is deeply related to this religion, which had priceless role in building up of our continent, as well as Serbian Orthodox Church had priceless role in the development of Serbia and preservation of Serbian character at the moment when there was no state. The importance of religion is exactly one of those reasons for which Europe reminded as well, when preparing its Constitution, on Christian nature of this continent. However, in Serbia and in Europe there are not only Christians; their history was in the same time the history of certain conflicts, in which religion and national identity were many times misused. The *Edict of Milan* was not only the end of Christians' prosecutions but also sort of appeal for tolerance. I believe that the topic that we will be discussing today and which will be the key topic of the year 2013 is actually the spirit of tolerance which was introduced by the *Edict of Milan*. In this world, when religious conflicts aren't vanished, debate about the *Edict of Milan* has a huge importance, political as well as geo-political. For this reason the Government of the Republic of Serbia will give full support to the Town of Niš, firstly for the construction of the Emperor Constantine the First's complex, and secondly for the organization of different events by which will be celebrated this important date. We will establish appropriate organisation committee and we'll cooperate with others religious leaders in our country, as well as with partners in Italy. Probably the Town of Milan will mark the year and this jubilee properly, just like Trier, the city from which the Emperor Constantine led the Roman Empire most of the years of his reign. In this triangle, I am sure that Niš, and therefore Serbia will play an important role and that we will prepare ourselves, as a country, for 21st century where we will not deny our own religion and our own national identity which we want to embed in large European construction. We will appreciate and in the same time improve the spirit of tolerance which is the only possible for this century, for our country and for our continent.

Thank you for your attention.

I SESSION



MODERATORS



Henri Giscard Bohnet

Henri Giscard Bohnet got his master's degree in political sciences. From 2002 to 2005 he worked at OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) as a long term election observer in Ukraine. From 2002 to 2004 he worked as a First Secretary of Political department at German Embassy in Ukraine. From 2005 to 2007 he was a Project assistant at Konrad-Adenauer Foundation in Moscow. In 2008 he became an office director of the same foundation in Macedonia, and from 2010 he is the Belgrade office director.



Jelena Jablanov Maksimović

Jelena Jablanov Maksimović was born in 1973 in Bor, Serbia. She graduated at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, at the department for German language and literature. Since 2001 she has been working in Konrad Adenauer Foundation as a project manager in the field of inter-religious dialogue. She specialized herself at Studies of Christianity within the Christian Cultural Centre in Belgrade from 2003 -2005. She gain her MA in Religious Studies at the Institute for Orthodox Christianity at the University of Erfurt. From 2007 she has been working for KAS on the position of Project coordinator in the fields of inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue. MA degree at the Department of Germanic Philology at the University of Belgrade gained in 2009. In the same year she enrolled PhD in religious studies at the Institute for Orthodox Christianity, Philosophical Faculty at the University of Erfurt.



Dr Christian Gastgeber, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Byzantine Studies

Christian Gastgeber was born in 1970 in Vienna. He studied Classical Philology at the University of Vienna, with complementary studies in Mediaeval and New Latin, Theology and History and Social Studies. He completed his postgraduate studies at the Institute of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies at the University Vienna in 2001. He was collaborator in the Commission for Editing the Corpus of the Latin Church Fathers (CSEL) of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (1992–1994). He has been engaged at the Commission of Byzantine Studies of the Austrian Academy of Sciences since 2001 in the research fields: text edition, diplomatics, palaeography and codicology. He was appointed in 2006 as vice director of the Institute for Byzantine

Studies of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (uniting the former Commission of Byzantine Studies and the Tabula Imperii Byzantini). He has been member of the managing presidium of the foundation Pro Oriente since 2009.

Constantine the Great and His Bible Order

Constantine's life and policy are marked by a gradual approach to Christianity and to Christian faith. This took part in the years 310 to 312 when he waged war against his rival Maxentius in Rome and when the former system of four emperors broke down by the very human ambitions of the candidates.

To go into details of this presentation some words are necessary about the Christians' situation and their support by Constantine, then one may apprehend the situation of the Bible production more clearly. At the time of Constantine the quantity of Christians was not so superior or overwhelming that only and absolutely this religion should have been accepted and raised to the rank of an official religion. In recent research it is assumed that about five to ten percent of the population then were Christians. However, late antiquity was the time of a religious crisis, the traditional belief in the gods was shaken; other religious trends came up or were imported – but never exclusively. The traditional Olympic polytheism was replaced by pantheistic and sorts of monotheistic tendencies. In summary, we recognize a situation similar to recent times - the situation of crisis caused a search for new ideological authorities, the traditional ones seem no longer to satisfy.

In this regard a lot of questions arise leading: How could a small religious group, from the position of social and religious outsiders now become the representatives of an official and licit religion, manage the imperial religious organisation and administration? Let us focus on the basis of the religion - on its written text. In comparison to pagan cults, we are confronted here with a new kind of religious tradition - the "book religion", whose text is available for everybody and open to all, either by interpreters, preachers, or be self-reading, if educated. But every written text was and is dependent of its correct master copy – it is specifically emphasized here because one has to be aware of the fact that we are in a time of manual tran-

scription of texts by scribes who make mistakes and often care more about the calligraphic design than about the correct text version. If texts are not compared anew with the master copy and controlled mistakes slip in, and these copies becoming themselves master copies for the next transcription are duplicating the mistakes and more or less mistakes change the context. In this way the text transmission by manuscripts could easily lead to copies with different readings; enough samples from the existing witnesses on papyrus and parchment show variant readings or even losses of text passages; the more these readings differ, the more the content and dogmatic basis is threatened and opens a wide field for heretic or – from the side of Christian adversaries – polemic interpretations.

The problem of ancient (and medieval) text transmission is a fact our modern time is not aware of when we speak of “book production” in ancient and medieval times or of the survival of a text from antiquity till the first printed versions; we have to realize how difficult it was to “publish” a work and to disseminate it by scribes who sometimes did not carefully copy the text and altered it by inattention. By the way texts could so easily be adulterated. Such examples can be found e.g. in the critical edition of the New Testament prepared at Münster. The context differ if a scribe e.g. omits a negation or if a question is presented as affirmation, if names are confused or words are inverted. So it was until now not studied if some heretical tendencies in early Christianity are co-influenced by corrupted versions of the Bible.

On the other hand, a book religion needs its “material support” - the texts itself. Such a religion slides into an existential crisis if the basis is withdrawn, or it runs the risk to impart its dogmas by hearsay, which very easily may be intermingled with heretic tendencies if the interpreters do not overlook the whole system and pick out only a part by over-interpreting.

On this occasion a fact has to be pointed out: the persecution of the Christians was accompanied by the destruction of their meeting rooms and – which is besides the material also an ideological loss of the books - they were burnt. The burning of papyrus scrolls or parchment codices is the loss of a weeks or months work.

Constantine – himself a cultivated Roman – seems to have been aware of this problem; this may be inferred from an order to his bishop of confidence, Eusebius of Caesarea (before 264/265–339/340), who reports on this aspect in his biography of Constantine. He inserts a letter of the emperor addressed to him which is to be dated after the inauguration of the new city Constantinople, the old Byzantium, 330 (chapter 4.36).

The letter reads as follows: “In Constantinople there is a very great group dedicating themselves to the Christian religion, so new churches have to be built to manage this rush for Christianity”. Eusebius should organize the material support as described above - the textual basis; fifty codices on best parchment should be prepared, i.e. copied by calligraphers; they should be well readable and easily portable. Eusebius should make the choice of the Bible books – this passage seems odd, but has to be regarded from the point of apocryphal works included in some Bible corpora; Constantine also informs Eusebius that a letter was written to the governor of the diocese to prepare all Eusebius needs for the fulfilment of the order, because the emperor wants to have these books very quickly in Constantinople, so he allows also the transport by the official mail carriage.

Eusebius than adds a short note that the order was subsequently executed, in this much disputed addition on the appearance of these Bible books the text is unfortunately damaged and a

passage is missing in the text transmission. However, the remains of the sentence make it clear that the mentioned fifty Bible books – Old and New Testament collected – were arranged in three and four volumes editions, the rest of the sentence refers to luxurious book covers.

At the first moment, this appears to be a simple order of the emperor to a bishop with whom he is in contact to very quickly get into possession of Bibles in need of the new churches. Shall we believe that the new city Constantinople or the other imperial cities do not have scriptoria to execute this? The order seems to reflect the above mentioned problems of carefully written copies. Caesarea in Palestine was well known for the activity of the church father Origenes (ca. 185–253) and his Bible studies, as described in Eusebius' ecclesiastical history. The latter, himself a disciple of an Origenist, Pamphilus, praises the fundamental importance of Origenes for the text transmission with his "Hexapla", the sextuple edition of the Septuagint with all current translations. Eusebius holds up this tradition and high reputation of his metropolis; so it becomes evident that the emperor ordered a perfectly corrected version and that he did this in one of the centres famous for the critical interpretation - Caesarea.

The letter to Eusebius points out two additional aspects in the Bible production: on the one hand its form; from the beginning of the tradition Christians used a new book form, the codex; and mainly parchment (sometimes also papyrus in leaves put together in a codex, not in scroll). Beside economic factors, this seems to be a specific Christian characteristic to distinguish their holy books from the Jewish religious scroll, in this way manifesting also a symbolic secession.

On the other hand the letter and the remark of Eusebius speak of the beautiful decoration of the codices – another development we can observe in manuscripts from the 4th century - onwards when Christianity got the status of a licit religion. The whole texts of the Bible began to be collected in huge parchment codices containing all the books of the Old and New Testament; the earliest examples date exactly from the century of Constantine, the so called *Codex Vaticanus* and the *Codex Sinaiticus*. However, both differ in its appearance from the description given by Eusebius so that we cannot identify them with the books ordered by the emperor.

To give an impression of the preparation of such gigantic manuscripts containing about 400 parchment pages - the skin of approximately 200 sheep was necessary to get folios for one manuscript which than had to be prepared in a very laborious procedure, as ordered here by the emperor from Eusebius. We have no witness for a "full edition" of the whole Bible from the time before Constantine, only of parts. Certainly, it seems comprehensible that in times of persecutions large volumes could not easily be safeguarded. So it makes sense to have smaller parts of the Bible to handle them better. The gigantic volumes on the contrary reflect a church that can leave the volumes in safety at its place without being afraid of a rapid storage caused by adversaries of the religion.

Finally, we observe in this text a new tendency in the decoration of Bible books; the most important books of Christianity, the basis of the faith, should appear in brilliant design, in some cases written even on purple parchment with gold ink and artificially illustrated as well as illuminated.

To sum up: the order of Constantine allows insight in the emperor's support of the new religion and shows his care about the maintenance of the religion's basis in a corrected text version from a centre of Bible studies.



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Constantine the Great and his Importance:
Seen by the Historiography of the 7th Century (Chronicon Paschale)

The Chronicon Paschale, also known as *Easter Chronicle*, is a masterpiece of early Byzantine historiography. It was named after its foreword, in which the unknown author pays special attention to the calculation of the exact date of Easter. The identity of the author cannot be deduced from any reference within the text. On the basis of his liturgical, theological and local knowledge he was previously thought to have belonged to the circles of Sergios, patriarch of Constantinople from 610 to 638. However, this supposition was convincingly disproved by James-Howard Johnston in his book *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* in 2010.

The Easter Chronicle follows the tradition of annalistic historiography. It discusses the history of the world from the creation to the author's age putting the emphasis on the more significant events. It is objective; the subjectivity of the author is reduced to his choice of the relevant events. His great merit lays in his ability of presenting the numerous data derived from various sources in a relatively clear arrangement.

On the basis of the title that came down to us in the only existing manuscript of the Chronicle (in the *Codex Vaticanus Graecus* 1941) we can assume that the author discussed the events up to 630 AD. The text of the intact *folia* ends with the events of 627 to 628 AD, but the damaged *folium* 290 at the end of the codex probably contains the turning points of the missing two years as well. The author of the Chronicle took great pains to date the events of 6100 years of world history as accurately as possible and to relate them to certain periods of time. Due to this fact and to his thoroughness in calculating the date of Easter as well as to his methods the Chronicle is considered to be a crucially important source of early Byzantine historiography.

In spite of the above mentioned fact the text of the *Easter Chronicle* emerged only by accident in Messina and it still has no modern critical edition answering the scientific require-

ments. Plans for a new edition of the Chronicle within the *Series Vindobonensis* of the *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* were made and in 1978 Otto Mazal was commissioned to edit it. Mazal had failed to complete the edition for thirty years and in 2008 he unexpectedly passed away. After his death Michael Featherstone claimed the task, but after receiving the material he withdrew from it. The editor-in-chief of the series, Wolfram Hörandner gave the task to Hungarian researchers. As a preliminary I am studying – among other things – the sources of the Chronicle and the way the author treats them. Generally speaking we can count among his sources the works of Sextus Iulius Africanus and Eusebios of Caesarea (the father of church history), the *Fasti consulares*, the Easter-tablets of Alexandria and Antioch, the accounts of the trial and death of the martyrs and the *Peri metrón kai stathmón* by Epiphanius of Salamis. Several parts seem to be identical with passages from the Chronicle of Malalas. He also quotes the Old Testament and the New Testament, especially the Gospel of Luke. The text preserved a number of documents, for example the 25-page long decree about true faith by the Emperor Justinian.

It also contains lists, for example the list of the 12 cities bearing the name of Alexander or the list of the Sybil priestesses. According to the tradition of chronicles we can find descriptions of brutal executions and spicy episodes as well, all meant to put some flesh on the dry skeleton of chronological data. However, his interest in the questions of chronology and the calendar prevails all along.

The Chronicle is based on a chronological framework starting from the Creation of the world, the 21st of March 5509, which is close to the date used later for centuries in Byzantium, i.e. the 1st of September 5509. It lists every single year and attempts to relate them to events.

He occasionally fails to render any events to a certain year. He groups the years employing different methods: within the four-year Olympiads he also specifies the place of the year within the fifteen-year period of the indiction. He adds which year it is in the reign of the current ruler and he gives the names of the consuls of the year as well. In the case of the rulers he does not only state the duration of their rule, but also their place in the dynasty, and when giving the date of their ascendance to the throne he usually states which year in relation to the Creation of the world it is.

The Chronicle discusses Constantine's reign in great length, on seventeen pages. The period before his ascendance to the throne is covered in a short summary. In connection with the year 304 the author attempted to summarise the struggles of the tetrarchs and pretenders for the throne. He occasionally made mistakes, though. He was not well informed regarding the complicated struggles for power, and many of his data concerning Constantine are erroneous: "And so there existed four emperors, Constantine of the Celts, of Rome Maxentius son of Herculus Maximianus, of the East Licinius, and Maximinus who still remained Caesar. But Constantine killed Maxentius in battle, and thus he was sole emperor of the West. And Maximinus, after campaigning against Licinius, made a truce with him so that Licinius retired from the empire. And thus Constantine, on becoming sole emperor, founded Byzantium, after receiving an oracle that the Empire of Rome was about to perish, and became a Christian. He was emperor for 31 years, 10 months."¹

¹ Translations from Michael Whitby – Mary Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale, 284-628 AD*, Liverpool, 1989

After these he gives us one-sentence summaries of the succession of Constantine's sons. At the end of the summaries, still about the year 304, he makes the following remark: "The most sacred and faithful Constantine the Great, the son of Constantius, was 34th Roman emperor from day 8 before Kalends of August (25th July), for 31 years and 10 months. In total 5864."

The quoted text contains several inaccuracies. Its claim that Constantine killed Maxentius in battle contradicts the tradition of historiography concerning the death of Maxentius. His source might have been wrong, or he might have misunderstood the text. Later, when he discusses the battle at the Milvian bridge over the Tiber in 311 (which actually took place on October 28th 312 AD) he gives us the version accepted by the historians of the modern age, i.e. that Maxentius drowned in the river. Even this short example can illustrate the chronicler's method: he does not always compare the pieces of information gained from different sources, or even if he does, he does not favour one single version. What is more, he often quotes his sources verbatim. In the present case in the course of the lengthy discussion he obviously uses the works of Eusebios of Caesarea, who belonged to the circles of Constantine, several times. We can find parallels mostly with his *Church History* and the *Life of Constantine*.

Another problematic place of the short quotation is the prophecy preceding the founding of Constantinople. Other sources explain the search for a new seat with utterly different causes, with the failure of the Roman *vicennalia* and with the memory of family tragedies. This version, however, leaves the above mentioned events untold and attempts to show the already overpraised emperor in an even more positive light.

The third problem in the quotation is the date of Constantine's proclamation. The English translators explain his use of the date 304 instead of the correct 306 with the fact that later on the author omitted a consular year and swapped two other dates, which, counting backwards, lead to his error. In my opinion, though, it is nothing but a repetition characteristic of the author. Earlier in his summary he wrote: "Constantius died after being Celtic emperor for 13 years, and his son Constantine, the bastard whom he had by Helena, succeeded him; for the children borne to him by Theodora were infants". Later, at the year 306, he writes that: "Constantius, father of Constantine the great emperor, died after being emperor for 13 years." These two short remarks show that the author knew that Constantine became a ruler (*augustus* exactly) in 306. He was correct about the number of the years of his reign as well, and the date of his death is also given accurately. Consequently, at the year 304 he mentions his rise into power only to emphasize the fact that he was the one to win the struggle.

What is even more interesting is the fact that according to the Easter Chronicle Diocletian, who ascended the throne as the 33rd Roman emperor was succeeded by Constantine as the 34th. The author does not consider the other *augusti* and *caesares* at all.

These passages are followed by the discussion of the early struggles of Constantine's reign, and at the years 307-311 we notice some confusion in the sequence of the events. The monumental enterprise of Roger S. Bagnall, Alan Cameron, Seth R. Schwarz and Klaas A. Worp of establishing the order of the consuls of the late Roman Empire shows that due to the great number of sources contradictory to each other it is not an easy task to tell the correct sequence. The author of the *Easter Chronicle* added his own errors to the difficulties.

The errors in question are partly the causes of the swapping of the events as well. That is why the author does not mention the persecutions of the Christians at the right year but only because of his reference to the *consul Galerius*, although the martyrs mentioned by him gained the crown of martyrdom under the reign of Diocletian or later, during the persecution under Maximinus Daia.

Further on the events are grouped according to the consular years of Constantine the Great. The sign seen before the battle against Maxentius is especially interesting. Of the two traditions (the different accounts of Lactantius and Eusebios) it is closer to the *Vita Constantini* by Eusebios. The inscription on the cross lighting up in the sky is given by Eusebios as *touto nika* (that is “*conquer in this*”), while the author of the Chronicle also remarks that the inscription *en touto nika* appeared in Latin characters.

After the battle at the Milvian bridge Constantine marched into Rome, where he was greeted by the Christians as their saviour. In memory of his victory he had his own statue holding the sign of the Saviour in his right erected at the busiest place in Rome. Although the Chronicle rarely gives inscriptions, it quotes the entire text – already translated into Greek – from Eusebios: “By this saving sign, true proof of courage, I have liberated your city which is saved from the yoke of slavery of the usurper Maxentius. And furthermore, after liberating the senate and Roman people, I restored them to their ancient distinction and splendour”.

Only once did he alter the text: in reference to the “tyrannical slavery” in Eusebios he wanted to make it clear that the phrase refers to the tyranny of Maxentius.

The year 312 is of crucial importance for the chronicler since “from here is the start of Constantinian indictions”. Besides the Olympiads and the Lists of consuls it is these fifteen-year periods that make up the three constant elements of the chronological framework of late Roman history. Similarly to other sources the number of indictions is not marked. *The Chronicle*, however, used a kind of indiction - based reckoning even before Constantine. Using the later practice in a totally fictive way it reckons in indictions from as early as Julius Caesar’s time. He considered, though erroneously, Caesar to be the first Roman emperor, and starting from him he defined the years using the above system.

From 312 to 325 we cannot read about any significant historical events. Although he mentions the defeat of Licinius, he does so without giving details and in an obscure manner. However, 325 is of crucial importance in Constantine’s life and reign from several points of view. The account starts with the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea:

“In year 295 from the Ascension to heaven of the Lord and year 20 of the reign of Constantine the pious, the same celebrated emperor, supremely entrusted by God with piety, in the present year 20 of his reign, on day 19 in the month Daisius (June) prepared for a Synod of 318 holy fathers to take place in Nicaea and for the symbol of the blameless faith to be defined. Wherefore, God the lord of the universe also made him victorious over all by the prayers of the holy and blessed fathers who were assembled in the same Synod. For Arius with perverted mind did not shudder, the accursed man, to separate and distinguish the ineffable and indivisible unity of the Godhead of the Father and Son.”

He says no more about the council, which is all the more surprising as in Nicaea the date of Easter was among the issues to be settled, which was rather important for the author of the *Easter Chronicle*. Although earlier in his work he added some chronological remarks concerning the celebration of Easter to the description of the sufferings and resurrection of the Lord, he did not refer to the Nicaean council there. He did not even mention the decrees of the council. In fact, the description of the council seems to be nothing more than yet another pretext for the glorification of Constantine.

The author of the *Easter Chronicle* crams even more anachronistic events into the rest of the year, which is followed by a chronological summary in which he presents the eras through which mankind reached the year 5833.

The author does not fail to mention the fact that Constantine named the city of Drepanon Helenopolis in honour of his mother, Helene, but in his discussion of the emperor's reign he pays the greatest attention to the new imperial seat. This is the place where the author's local knowledge is the most obvious, which can make us assume that he spent a long time in Constantinople. He describes the construction work, the memorials and the statues glorifying Constantine in detail. He gives us a lengthy description of the inauguration ceremonies in the city as well. While his data concerning the construction work are usually supported by other sources, about the ceremonies he provides several inaccurate data.

"...after building a very great, illustrious, and blessed city, and honouring it with a senate, named it Constantinople, on day five before Ides of May (May), on the second day of the week, in the third indiction, and he proclaimed that the city, formerly named Byzantium, be called second Rome." I quote the text in the translation of Mary and Michael Whitby, where the term *in the third indiction* is wrong. On the basis of the Greek text as well as logically the correct translation would be *in the third year of the indiction*.

He is surprisingly elaborate when writes about the procession of Constantine's wonderful gilt statue. He even depicts the attire of the soldiers escorting the statue and describes the ceremony which even the emperors of later times were supposed to observe when they adored the statue.

After a short reference to the celebration of the finding of the true cross, the distribution of bread and the *tricennalia* he reaches the year 337, when Constantine went to war against the Persians. When he arrived in Nicomedia "he gloriously and piously quitted life in a suburb of the same city, on 11th in the month Artemisius (May), having been vouchsafed the saving baptism by Eusebius bishop of Constantinople, after a reign of 31 years and 10 months." Constantine was actually baptised by Eusebios, the Arian Bishop of Nicomedia, but this fact was suppressed by most of the sources, which omitted the name of the bishop.

The author of the *Easter Chronicle* chose to compromise - he placed the seat of the baptising bishop into Constantinople, where the body of the emperor was taken after his death. He was buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles, where he was taken with great pageantry, because as the unknown author of the *Easter Chronicle* writes: "Everyone was in such great grief that it never happened that any emperor before him was so glorified in life and after death".



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Constantine the Great and the Renewal of his Image (14th century, Ecclesiastical History by Nikephoros Xanthopoulos)

This presentation focuses on the image of the Emperor Constantine in the late Byzantine period, at the beginning of the XIV century, a thousand years after his time. One of the most interesting examples of the refurbishing of Constantine's image at that time can be found in the work of Nikephoros Xanthopoulos, a prolific writer on religious matters then living in Constantinople. He is now perhaps best remembered for his *Ecclesiastical History*, which is the last work of the Greek East exclusively concerned with *Church history*.²

The exact dates of the birth and death of Nikephoros are not known. However, it is certain that the greater portion of his life coincided with the reign of Andronicus II Palaiologos, who ruled between 1282 and 1328. As will become apparent, the former of these dates played a crucial role in the historical perspective Nikephoros came to adopt. We know very little about him and those facts which can be recovered, to partially reconstruct his life, derive from his principal work in *Ecclesiastical history*.³

In the prologue he says: "we have compiled the material for this history, with much trouble, at the great Church of the Holy Wisdom of God Logos, which I frequented assiduously while still young, and from whose books I have collected most. How could I thank that church ...?"⁴

² This work is accessible in NICEPHORI CALLISTI XANTHOPULI Ecclesiasticæ historiæ libri XVIII ... Accurante et denuo recognoscante J.-P. MIGNE ..., Lutetiae Parisiorum 1865 (Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca 145 (coll. 560–1332), 146 (coll. 9–1273), 147 (coll. 9–448)). A new edition of books VII–XII is in preparation for the series Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae (Series Vindobonensis), as part of a project financed by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF, Project Number P20868-G02; (www.oeaw.ac.at/byzanz/nkx.htm)). The first six books are edited for the same series by Albrecht Berger (Munich)

³ Z For a general account of Xanthopoulos' life and the Ecclesiastical History see Die Kirchengeschichte des Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos, Ostkirchliche Studien 581 (2009), 248–266 (with bibliography); for the history of the reception of this work, see C. GASTGBER, Die Kirchengeschichte des Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos. Ihre Entdeckung und Verwendung in der Zeit der Reformation, ibid. 237–247. A deeper impression of Xanthopoulos' approach to his work may be gained from the monograph Die Kirchengeschichte des Nicephorus Callisti Xanthopulus und ihre Quellen. Nachgelassene Untersuchungen von G. GENTZ †, überarbeitet und erweitert von F. WINKELMANN (Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, Bd. 98), Berlin 1966.

⁴ Hist. eccl. I 1 (PG 145, 604 A–620 C10)

Nikephoros was a very learned priest, and as a member of the clergy of the Patriarchate had access to the rich treasures of the Hagia Sophia library. Most significantly, this gave him access, for the composition of his *Ecclesiastical History*, to sources which have not come down to us in any other form.

The question must be asked as to why Nikephoros wrote an *Ecclesiastical History* and what his intentions were, since the genre of strictly ecclesiastical history had essentially been dead for seven hundred years. The last important writer in the field had been the 6th century historian Evagrius Scholastikus. Thus at first glance Nikephoros' undertaking may seem artificial.

I believe that an examination of the motives behind his work will demonstrate that this is not the case. He lays out his motives clearly in the prologue to his history.⁵ However, a closer study of the way in which he presents the image of Constantine reveals deeper and far more reaching intentions. The key to why he engaged in this unexpected comeback of ecclesiastical history may be found in his treatment of this image.

Nikephoros may initially have also been driven by practical considerations. He comments in his prologue that scholars seeking information in *Ecclesiastical history* have to consult many different sources. He also remarks that even once the various books are located difficulties persist, since ecclesiastical events are related by many authors in many different styles.

Thus Nikephoros decided to embark on a compilation of the works of the ancient ecclesiastical historians. Each had covered a particular period of time between the origins of Christianity and the end of the VI century, and it was his intention to provide a continuous narrative and to harmonise the various styles they had employed to achieve a uniform voice.

Xanthopulos was also motivated by another concern. The views of some of the ancient ecclesiastical historians were not in accordance with the teaching of the Universal Church, or were considered suspect. For example, Eusebius of Caesarea, the most famous biographer of Constantine and the father of Church history as an historical genre, may have subscribed to the Nicene Creed at the council that established it, but Nikephoros says of his work, "the wickedness of his heresy (i.e. the Arian heresy) shines through".

To return to the content of Nikephoros' history: its eighteen books cover the period from the birth of Jesus Christ to the year 610. There is only one extant exemplar of this manuscript, which is held by the Austrian National Library and is presumed to be the copy dedicated to the Emperor Andronicus II.⁶

Occurring in the middle of this monumental account, the eighth book deals exclusively with Constantine the Great and the events of his reign. No other figure, either emperor or saint, is accorded so much space. The circumstances of his birth and his achievements before he established himself as a sole Emperor are already covered in the second part of the seventh book. Thus Nikephoros comments at the beginning of the eighth book:

⁵ Hist. eccl. I 1 (PG 145, 604 A–620 C10)

⁶ Cod. Vind. Hist. gr. 8, on which Katalog der Griechischen Handschriften der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek. Teil 1. Codices Historici, Codices Philosophici et Philologici. Von H. Hunger (Museion, Veröffentlichungen der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek. N. F. IV 1, 1), Wien 1961, 14; see further Gentz – Winkkelmann, Die Kirchengeschichte des Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopulos (as at n. 2), 1–3, 196–206.

“Since I consider it absurd to allow this splendid Kingdom, which one might describe as the foundation and crown of piety, to appear among a catalogue of very impious tyrants – as may have happened under the stress of circumstances – I will not fail to treat it as accurately as possible and to include it in a separate book, in recognition of its splendour and outstanding achievements.”⁷

It is also Nikephoros’ intention to separate the story of Constantine’s advancement and adoption of Christianity from the book in which he deals with Diocletian’s persecutions, the struggles against Maxentius, Maximinus and Licinius, and with their anti-Christian activities.

The only picture in the whole manuscript is the bust of Constantine the Great which appears at the top of the page containing the passage quoted above. The caption above the picture reads “the Holy Constantine”.⁸

It should be noted that in the eyes of a pious Byzantine man such as Nikephoros, Constantine was not only the first Christian emperor but also the first defender of the true faith, of Orthodoxy. This is a crucial point in understanding why Nikephoros conceived the idea of reviving the genre of ecclesiastical history.

The religious and political background must first be taken into account. For nearly sixty years – from 1204 until 1261 – Constantinople had been under foreign domination: the Crusaders. They were able to interfere with the freedom of the Orthodox Church. This period was brought to an end by Michael VIII – the father of Nikephoros’ contemporary Andronicus II – who managed to recover Constantinople. However, after the restoration of the Byzantine Empire, with its centre at Constantinople, new problems arose within the body of the Orthodox Church. West European powers, and their ambitions to restore Latin domination, had continued to be a threat to the Byzantine Empire. Michael VIII regarded the union of the Latin and Greek churches as the only diplomatically effective way to resolve the problem, since only the Pope wielded enough influence to discourage the Western powers from their plans for re-conquest. However, since the Crusades, the distance between the Catholic and Orthodox worlds was insurmountable: each regarded the other as schismatic. After protracted negotiations, the Union of the Churches was finally adopted under Pope Gregory X. But the decisions taken at the Council of Lyon (1274) were disastrous for the Church in the East, and divided the Orthodox world into warring parties. After the death of Michael VIII (1282), the first act of his son, Andronicus, was to repudiate the Union of the Churches. This marked a new beginning for the Orthodox faith and Andronicus II was celebrated as a hero for his actions.⁹

These historical events – foreign domination, the recovery of Constantinople and the restoration of the Orthodox Church – are referred to by Nikephoros, as a representative of that faction within Orthodoxy which rejected Church Union, in the dedication which precedes the beginning of the *Ecclesiastical History*. This extended allocution is dedicated to the Emperor Andronicus, whose reign is given such effusive praise one might surmise even a Byz-

⁷ Hist. eccl. VIII 1 (PG 146, 9 A 8–15)

⁸ Fol. 158r.

⁹ See G. Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des Byzantinischen Staates*. Dritte, durchgearbeitete Auflage (HdA XII 1/2 Byz. Handbuch I 2). München 1963, 382 (et passim); H.-G. Beck, *Geschichte der orthodoxen Kirche im byzantinischen Reich* (Die Kirche in ihrer Geschichte. Bd. 1, Lieferung D 1). Göttingen 1980, D183–D207.

antine reader would have found it excessive: an example will be given later. But the main motif, on which the entire structure of the speech rests, is the piety of Andronicus¹⁰, and alongside it the piety of Constantine, in the sense of his commitment to the true faith as explicated in the eighth book, describing his religious activities.

In the most meaningful moment of the whole passage, Nikephoros states that he knows of no ruler with whom Andronicus can be compared other than Constantine the Great, in terms of piety, statesmanship and moral qualities.¹¹ As regards piety, the parallels between the two emperors concern their efforts for the true faith in relation to the persons of the Trinity. Constantine, at the Council of Nicaea, had affirmed the divinity of Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, that he was not a creation of the Father but was co-eternal. Andronicus, according to Nikephoros, had done a similar service for the Holy Ghost, explaining that he proceeds from God the Father and not from Father and Son, as the supporters of the Union of the Churches had asserted.

It is interesting to note the degree of the hyperbole Nikephoros employs: “not even a mirror could offer so faithful an image as do you (i.e. Andronicus), by modelling yourself as a shining reflection of the God-like image of that soul (i.e. Constantine’s) ...” Some of the Greek terms Nikephoros uses here are repeated in an adjacent passage in which he explains dogma concerning the equality in substance of God the Father and his Son.¹² Beyond Byzantine encomiastic exaggerations, we can see that in the *Ecclesiastical History* Nikephoros presents the figure of Constantine as the archetype of the Byzantine emperor, whose actions are founded on piety. Eusebius of Caesarea, the father of *Ecclesiastical history*, narrated the history of Christianity down to his own time and celebrated the reign of Constantine as its crown. It was the intention of Nikephoros to celebrate Andronicus as the ruler who had brought Orthodoxy to its completion. As he says, Constantine can be compared to the foundations of true Church dogma. Andronicus, on the other hand, can be compared to the roof and the key to the Church building. Both are viewed as custodians of a great wealth of piety accumulated in accordance with the decrees of the Church Fathers.¹³

In assessing Nikephoros as a historian, it is interesting to examine the way in which he harmonises the image of Constantine, as presented in his work, with the actual religious behavior of the Emperor as related by the ancient Church historians. Rather than offering a detailed investigation, this discussion restricts itself to the moment of Constantine’s baptism. In the eighth book, Nikephoros must discuss this momentous event while narrating the last days of the Emperor. To quote:

“The Emperor, feeling weak, travelled across the sea to Helenopolis in Bithynia, in order to make use of the natural baths which are near that city. Feeling that his condition was deteriorating, he deferred visiting the baths and went to Nicomedia, and there, staying in a suburb of that city, received holy baptism, according to Sozomenus, Socrates and Theodoretus, who have composed writings on ecclesiastical matters. I will expose the very syllables of those historians ...”¹⁴

¹⁰ See Die Kirchengeschichte des Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos (as at note 2), 260, n. 43.

¹¹ Allocutio encomiastica (PG 145, 589 B14–593 B10)

¹² PG 145, 589 C8–D6, cf. with PG 145, 592 B9–12

¹³ Allocutio encomiastica (PG 145, 592 C15–593 A1)

¹⁴ For the entire context see Hist. eccl. VIII 54 (PG 146, 217 B1–D1).

After this statement Nikephoros quotes word for word from the writings of the three ancient Church historians, who all testify to the same order of events and conclude that Constantine received baptism at Nicomedia. But such an account of the last days of the Emperor implies that he chose the bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia to baptize him, who was close to the party of Arius. It goes without saying that Nikephoros categorically rejected this version of events, which is in fact accepted by modern historians as correct, since how could Constantine, the champion of Orthodoxy, be baptized by an Arianizing bishop? And so Nikephoros concludes the whole passage as follows:

“I don’t know how those historians can say such things: but we have stated, in agreement with the Universal Church, that Constantine received the grace of divine baptism in Rome, as Sylvester laid his holy hands upon him.”

Nikephoros refers at this point to the seventh book of his *Ecclesiastical History*, in which he had described at length the circumstances of the baptism of Constantine by Pope Sylvester, based on the version of an older *Constantine Vita*, apparently reinforcing the truth of statements contained there with words of his own.¹⁵

In conclusion, it should be evident that Nikephoros was a scrupulous and honest compiler, ready to give a voice even to those sources which contradicted his own convictions. However, his Orthodox point of view dominates his work as a historian when he is confronted with incompatible material. Moreover, if Andronicus is the exact image of Constantine, in no way differing in his imperial stature, it is conversely, for Nikephoros, inconceivable to find even the smallest blemish in the archetype, which is so perfectly reflected by the late Byzantine emperor.

¹⁵ Hist. eccl. VII 33 (PG 145, 1280 D7–1284 C2). The *Constantine Vita* (BHG 364) was edited by M. Guidi, *Un βίος di Costantino*, in *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei ... Serie V* 16, Roma 1907 (see especially 324, l. 27–327, l. 14/25–329, l. 20).



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Emperor Constantine's Aureole

Gathered together here today, in ancient Nais, nowadays Niš, the place that Emperor Constantine gave celebrated value by his birth around 274, we wish to decorate nowadays Niš with the jubilee glory of 1700 years since the *Edict of Milan*. Not only in the history of Niš, of Europe but also in the world history Emperor Constantine represents a unique figure that directs time to before and after Constantine. He saw the light of God's day on that exact spot and carried in his being silent

inside contemplation, patience and persistence of his mother Helena, who was a Christian from Drepanum (Bithynia, Asia Minor) a woman of modest origin, maybe even a servant, but with magnificent dimensions of a man inside her, and he also had a warrior like and masterful determination of his father Constantius Chlorus, the governor from Britannia and Gallia, Constantine was developing into a man who directs the course of history. I would like to add that he grew up in a court of one of the biggest emperors – Diocletian in Nicomedia, where he learned military and governing skills and all other things which were available to him in the court. His mother's influence should not be ignored since it was later manifested by his belief in one God. At the same time he was the witness of Christians' persecutions because Diocletian brought a decree of Church destructions and persecutions in 296. That was happening endemically. Some historians claim that even Diocletian's wife Prisca (some say Alexandra)¹⁶ and his daughter Valeria were secret Christians.

Different authors have different reasons for Christians' persecutions which I will not cite now. Announcing Christians' persecution command was on February 24th 303 in Nicomedia which was the center of Emperors Diocletian and Galerius in the East, and then in the whole empire.

Emperors in the West accepted persecution differently. Maximian (Hercules) eagerly got into persecution, but Constantius Chlorus only demolished Churches in Britannia and Gallia provinces, while in his courts in Trier and York he kept Christians and did not take away their ranks.¹⁷ In other parts of the Empire persecutions were done cruelly and by the worst people without feelings. Many Christians showed such a courage, firmness and endurance up to an incredible scale which many hagiographers of saint martyrs of that time tell us. When Diocletian abdicated on May 1st 305 certain relief began, except in the Southeast Empire's areas which were governed by Maximinus Daia where persecution converted into a war until the Christians were exterminated. At the same time Maximian Hercules abdicated in Milan. As Constantius Chlorus died on July 25th 306 in York, Constantine took over the

¹⁶ Bishop Nikolai, Ohridski prolog, Nis, 1998, April 23th

¹⁷ J. Burkhart, Doba Konstantina Velikog, Novi Sad, 2006, p.298

government certainly by his father wish and military acclamation. Ex-Augustus Maximian helped Constantine to strengthen his power and since he did not get along with his son Maxentius, he asked Constantine to help him so that he could restore the empire's purple color. Using this opportunity he assigned Constantine the title of Augustus and gave his younger daughter Fausta to be his wife.¹⁸ Galerius got seriously ill in 311 and before he died he announced the *Edict of Toleration* for Christians asking those he had pursued to pray to their God for his health. Galerius died in the same year. The Roman Empire was ruled by Constantine in the West, Maxentius in Rome, Licinius and Maximinus Daia in the East. As early as 312, Constantine threw out Maxentius from governing by winning the battle on Milvian Bridge, while Licinius winning at Adrianopolus threw Maximinus Daia out in 313. Entering Nicomedia he announced the edict that "everyone should believe as his heart wishes". This edict Constantine and Licinius signed at the meeting in Milan during the first part of 313. This edict was a milestone in history, fresh air of history, the departure of the old world, but the birth of the new one. Nothing will ever be the same. Edict is the reason why we are here today.

Now is the time to ask the crucial question and that would be the focus of this work. Considering different historians' and researchers' evaluations of Constantine's life from XVIII to XX century, which are often very negative, does Constantine deserve the saint aureole as the Orthodox Church respects him? The following are some opinions of Emperor Constantine.

Edward Gibbon (1737-1794), an English historian, in his work *The history of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire* says that his Christianity is wrapped in the "darkness of superstition" and that "he used Church altars as a convenient step towards the throne of the empire".¹⁹ Similar to him thinks Trevor Ling, professor of comparative religion in Manchester. He has an opinion that Constantine "stayed pagan in his heart, a superstitious man prone to add to his collection every new religious talisman".²⁰ The historian of the Roman civilization at a French college, Andre Piganiol, in his book *Emperor Constantine* from 1938 showed him as less of a ruler and more as a victim of that time superstition.²¹ The ancient history professor at University of Aix-en-Provence, Z.R. Palank (1898), said that "engraving emblem", on the eve of the decisive battle, "was definitely shown as an act of some superstitious gambler who wishes to examine a mysterious force".²² An English Byzantologist, Philip Sherrard, puts everything under suspicion. In 312 Constantine "allegedly experienced a revelation which should represent a milestone in European history".²³ Using the word alleged he depreciates the whole sequence of events shortly before the Milvian Bridge battle as well as he says that Helena allegedly found and dug up Christ's cross in Palestine.²⁴

The most consistent qualifier of Constantine's work and historical material was Jacob Burckhardt (1818-1897), a Swiss historian of art and culture. In his work *The age of Constantine the Great* (translated by Dušan Janjić, Zoran Stojanović edition, Sremski Karlovci – Novi Sad, 2006), he presented his point of view of Constantine as a man and as an emperor.

¹⁸ J. Burkhart, *Doba Konstantina Velikog*, Novi Sad, 2006, p. 310.

¹⁹ Nebojša Ozimić, *Leader, saint, selection of texts about the character and work of Constantine the Great*, Niš, 1997, p. 138.

²⁰ Ibid, 68.

²¹ Ibid, 139.

²² Ibid, 66.

²³ Ibid, 74.

²⁴ Ibid, 70.

We do not deny these Burckhardt's evaluation of Constantine who he considered to be a great and significant historical figure, but he showed him as a bad man, with abominable character, an unscrupulous power-hungry man, unthankful and with no moral considerations. We shall cite several qualifications of Constantine's character as well as some misdeeds he did according to Burckhardt's book.

When he got permission from Galerius to leave Nicomedia, on several calls by his father Chlorus, Constantine prematurely left and "on the first station he ordered to disable horses of imperial post so that they could not chase him". When he got to York after his father's death he became an emperor at 32, and not some child from the marriage of Chlorus and Theodora (stepdaughter of Maximian) since the oldest son from his second marriage was 13 years old.

"Constantine was a usurper"²⁵, Burckhardt was categorical. After he defeated Maxentius on Milvian Bridge "the whole West got a ruler, and Africa and islands fell into the hands of an invader".²⁶ "Christians were still a minority that should not be spared. How could tolerance for them be a tool for power or at least a useful thing for an ambitious man as Constantine was?"²⁷ Roman people called Maxentius a tyrant and the meaning of that expression in that time was "appropriator", "usurper"! "That term would be appropriate for Constantine",²⁸ says Burckhardt. It is interesting that in Burckhardt's book Diocletian is considered to be a tolerant man who "had an honor to be counted as a God by the Senate's decision and that was done for the last time according to the ancient pagan customs. What would be the rulers of that period without him?"²⁹ Burckhardt says that "Prisca and Valeria, Diocletian's widow and daughter, were caught in Thessaloniki where they were beheaded. In Diocletian's system those brutalities would be useless, moreover impossible."³⁰ Although Licinius was the signatory of the *Edict of Milan*, the Christians' persecution nevertheless started in 314 and it was very serious. Burckhardt wonders: "What led Licinius to that desperate and irrational step? It seemed that patience and prudence disappeared when he was convinced in the malice of his opponent. Then he regretted his charity for the Christians whose leader was such a cruel man."³¹ That man "right after the Council of Nicaea ordered (326) to murder his loving son Crispus from his first marriage, who was a student of Lactantius in Pula, in Istria." Shortly after that he ordered to draw his wife Fausta, daughter of Maximian, in the bathroom. Here we will not consider whether Fausta was some kind of Phaedra for her stepson, or if she in a way "disgraced him in his father", or "she only took care of her own sons' rise" or Helena's laments about her grandchildren "encouraged Constantine to kill his wife".³²

It seemed that Constantine's clever, empirical mind said that Christians were good subjects, that there were many of them, that persecutions had no more sense in a state which was reasonably governed, he made his decision. From the political point of view, implementation of his decision into action deserves admiration. "In his victorial hands Labarum represents at

²⁵ J.Burckhardt, *The age of Constantine the Great*, Novi Sad, 2006, p.298

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 317.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 318.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 320.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 321.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 326.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 328.

³² *Ibid.*, 332.

the same time a government, a military power and a new religion.”³³ But “in a genius who is always moved by his ambitious and thirst for power there is no way we can talk about Christianity and paganism... such a man is not essentially religious, even if he imagines to be in the centre of the Church community.”³⁴

Burckhardt also says: “Sad, but very understandable fact is that no Church proponent, as far as we know, did not reveal the true Constantine’s attitude, that none of them said a word of dissatisfaction against this selfish man and a murderer, who still deserves a credit for understanding that Christianity can rule the world, as he acted accordingly.”³⁵

Burckhardt also qualifies this emperor like this: “Constantine ordered to loot many (pagan) temples, perhaps he wished prey or needed money.” Here Eusebius hid the real reason and the true scale of those robberies but inadvertently he gave away himself. “Valuable parts were melted and formless parts were left to pagans as a memory of their shame”³⁶ “He could have left gold and silver statues intact, but they were too convenient and the temptation was too big comparing it to his need for money, and that had an advantage among all other considerations at those kinds of rulers as he was.”³⁷ On the same page he says: “Constantine certainly did not make laws which ordered general destruction of temples”, but “what he did or let other people do was happening occasionally from an ordinary desire for robbing and under the influence of clergy, there is inconsistency in all that. There is no sense for looking a consistency in a man who consciously did not want it.”³⁸

And at the end there is one more Burckhardt’s qualification of Emperor Constantine: “For a moment look away from that selfish man in a purple robe, who had done everything and accepted everything, if that strengthened his power...”³⁹ On the other side we have “an infinite commitment and renunciation of many people who during their lives shared their properties so they could commit to God and here are kindness and asceticism closely connected”⁴⁰

I shall cite Burckhardt one more time: “It should not be forgotten that beside this Church distorted by victory there was faith. Good moral consequences of Christianity introduction melt and make space for dogmatic and hierarchical things. Great people of this and the next few decades Athanasius, Vasilus, Gregorius of Nazianzenus, Jeronimo, Chrysostomos – beside their religiosity wear more or less the seal of outdoor church so they look unilateral and less attractive than the great and consistent people from the period of antiquity. Still the principles they were governed by in life were high and could hardly be compared to anything.”⁴¹

With no desire to enter a discussion or challenge these clever people’s qualifications about Emperor Constantine, no matter how difficult they are, I shall try for my sake and I would

³³ J.Burckhardt, *The age of Constantine the Great*, Novi Sad, 2006, p. 346-347.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 342.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 343.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 346-347.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 342.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 343.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 358.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 359.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 379.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 380.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 374-375.

like to share some of my thoughts with you. Starting from Neron the Roman Empire began its terror and bloody feast over innocent Christians. They were guilty only for having a different faith than the Roman emperors and the majority of Roman subjects. They did not impose their faith to others but they did not hide it. When they were in front of the investigators they did not have any problems for Christians to admit that they are Christians, which is their "guilt". On the contrary, the courts asked Christians to deny their "guilt" so that they would not be convicted. Some Roman emperors persecuted their subjects - Christians with less ambition, and some did it with all their heart. One of them was Diocletian with his co-emperors Galerius and Maximinus Daia. That was the bloodiest persecution from all the persecutions including Neron's. Constantine was the witness of these persecutions since he lived in Diocletian's court in Nicomedia. We do not know what happened in the soul of this young man in front of the scenes of horror he definitely heard of or perhaps even had seen. Maybe he had already felt the historical need for changes, because his soul nursed with rays of Christianity through his mother's milk could not reconcile with the real situation. After all, the Roman Empire darkened the whole pantheon of its gods underlining the cult of the invisible Sun, which Emperor Aurelian in the middle of III century made the state religion. It was as if some invisible hand prepared the Roman Empire for an encounter something new that was unstoppable coming. Our people have a proverb which says that you freeze before dawn, so with the appearance of new changes Diocletian with his co-rulers began the worst persecution of Christians. "As much as the Roman Empire's fight with Christianity was a "destiny" phenomenon, so much the truce between them was the merit of one person, one desire, one initiative", says Alexander Schmemmann.⁴² This Constantine's role no one denies, but evaluations of it are different even diametrically opposite. For the Orthodox Church Constantine was called by Christ himself just like apostle Paul was called to Christianity. He responded building inside him the desire for Christ to install inside him, on that journey there were rises and falls, achievements and declines so that all previous historians' opinions of him can remain, but nevertheless that will not reduce the ingenuity and historical size that everybody accepts, but also the holiness that the Orthodox Church crowns Emperor Constantine.

The Church, as the community based on the relation of God and man, founded by the son of God Christ, is a carrier of lifesaving road for every man and every God's creation. It is a secret of secrets which appears in "a great secret of piety": God appears in a body... (1.Tim.3, 16) "A tiny human body placed the whole God with all His innumerable infinities, and so God stayed God and the body stayed body always in one person - person of the son of God Christ: perfect God and perfect man – the perfect son of God."⁴³ "He became and for all time and eternity stayed the head of Church, which is His body, the fullness of one who fulfills everything in everything." (Ef. 1, 17) All of the son of God became hers, all divine forces became hers. In the Church which is Christ's body "we grow in everything in one who is the head of Christ, until we reach to a perfect man, to reach the growth of Christ's fullness." (Ef. 4, 13) Since the Church is perfect and has every form of perfection, treats and heals everything, every form of sin made by soul or body, it "cleans human being from everything that is unholy, sinful, devilish with that perfect and mighty divine light". And now every man can be cleaned and sanctified by baptism in the water by word (Ef. 5, 26), because "who ever baptize in Christ,

⁴² Nebojša Ozimić: Leader, saint, selection of texts about the character and work of Constantine the Great, p. 126

⁴³ Dr Justin Popović: Orthodox Church and Ecumenism, Thessaloniki, p. 9

Christ you wear.” (Gal. 3, 27) The Second Ecumenical Council in 381 established: “I confess a baptism for sin forgiveness” (The symbol of faith). This is also accurate: “The Church is full and overfull with sinners but that does not reduce, does not violate its inside holiness but invokes them to remorse and spiritual recovery and transformation.”⁴⁴ We should not forget that the first inhabitant of paradise was a remorse robber. (Lk. 23, 43) The decision is always personal. Therefore, on the basis of all that I think that Constantine the Great was also a great penitent and as such he transformed himself into a man who grew in holy virtues. They ascribed him many sins even murders, maybe crimes, but we should not be unjust. The Roman Emperor is a state – an institution. Do not the most democratic states commit murders even today? The Emperor showed calmness as a beginning of all virtues. Today there is no person in the world who can be compared to the Roman Emperor by his power. In his calmness he did not want to sit down until the Fathers told him to do so during the Council of Nicaea. In the name of the Empire he humbly asked for forgiveness from the Fathers of the Council who carried wounds from earlier persecutions under different emperors. People talk that every day he went to Laburama’s tent to pray, to have conversation with his God. We do not have time to cite other Christian writers’ notes which reveal the beauty of his soul. He obeyed God’s will because he knew it was the only criterion of what is right and wrong, moral and immoral. “It is immoral what God orders us to do and we do not do it, or what God forbids and we do it...” Because God exists moral good exists, since it originates by word from Him: “No one is good except one God”. (Mt. 19, 17)⁴⁵ “For accepting obedience the authority of orderer is more important than the benefit of a doer”, because the Chrysostom says: “deeds are good or evil not by themselves but by God’s determination”.⁴⁶ Emperor Constantine as a man pointed out to condescension and understanding but on behalf of the Empire he worked as an institution as his relation with his father-in-law Maximian Herchules showed.

Burckhardt says the following about Constantine’s biographer: “Eusebius is not an enthusiast at all; he knows that Constantine is completely secularly minded, that he is calculated and power lustful, he also knows the true causes of war. But still Eusebius is the first completely dishonest historian of Antiquity.” And that is how we were left without a true picture of a man of genius who in politics did not take moral into account and who religious question considered only from the aspect of beneficial politics.⁴⁷ Burckhardt also says that Eusebius made up some things regarding the piety of Emperor Constantine. “Famous miracle that Eusebius and those who imitated him showed that what happened during the campaign against Maxentius, finally had to be erased from history... Later Constantine said that to Eusebius who wrote that in unclear pompous words on purpose...”⁴⁸ The Emperor really swore to the Bishop that he did not make it up but that he really saw a cross in the sky with a title: “In this sign you will win”, that Christ came in his sleep etc. Still, history can not consider Constantine’s oath seriously because he murdered his son-in-law despite his promise given under an oath. And Eusebius made up two-thirds of the story.

Burckhardt asked that Eusebius’s works should be “erased” and forgotten because he was a completely “dishonest historian of Antiquity”, he also called him “dishonest and meagre” when he talked about his argument with Arius. Later the truth lessened this attitude towards

⁴⁴ Dr Justin Popović: *Orthodox Church and Ecumenism*, Thessaloniki, p. 67

⁴⁵ Patriarch Pavle: *Da nam budu jasinja neka pitanja nase vere*, Beograd, 1998, p.17

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*,18

⁴⁷ J. Burckhardt: *The age of Constantine the Great*, Novi Sad, 2006, p.331

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*,347.

him and said: "It is difficult to believe that Eusebius of Caesarea, a significant theologian not too critical, but a very worthy observer of that time was capable to repeat the same untruth in four books."⁴⁹ We must accept Eusebius's reports as he was the witness of some events that he wrote about. We certainly cannot dismiss them but we can not trust them. Who shall we trust when he was closer to the historical event than we are or those who dismissed him? After all, the whole history relies on trust. Even the whole science relies on trust because without any evidence in our childhood we believed that Greek, Latin and old Slavic letters meant exactly what we have been told. We base our whole knowledge and science on that. In that light, the light of trust, we will look back at Constantine's battle with Maxentius in 312 which he led with fewer soldiers than his opponent had. Once more he "dared to go against the City – and the City beside Maxentius was protected by ancient Gods, all force of tradition, all glory of the past".⁵⁰ With this victory Constantine terminated with the past and under the sign he saw in his sleep or in reality he got free *Urbi et urbi* from militant and decadent paganism.

Still remains to see whether Christian priests made Constantine a robber as we mentioned a while ago, that he melted statues of old Gods made of worthy materials. Christianity preaches that no material value is bigger than a human soul, so if those statues were a stumbling block for some people they were removed in this way. That also happened inside the Christian community that liturgical subjects from expensive materials were melted and used for philanthropic purposes. A good example of that happened during the time of Pope Sixtus and deacon Lavrentius.

It should not be regretted that according to Burckhardt's great and consistent people of Antiquity were more likeable than Christian fathers of Church who were not denied the high principles in life and hardly could be compared to anything. It is true that man cannot be better than the God he believes in. Gods of Antiquity are in the shades of Olympus, and the Christian God became a man so that he could be the right man in everything, in pain, suffering, and humiliation, death for man's sake and for our salvation. And all that only for the love for man. We should look like our God and that requires the effort of climbing, an achievement. However, all that should be within the Church, as a community of God and man which cannot be "distorted" but as holy as her holy head is Lord Jesus Christ. There is no problem of Church as an institution for us nor do we separate moral from faith. So we do not consider his word to be insulting when he talks about ecclesiasticism of Church's Fathers. On the contrary, only with the Church and in the Church as a community we can best accomplish our rising in good and gain salvation. There was no need that "Church's proponent" blames Constantine who in his calmness received baptism and it is said that after that he never wore emperor's robe again.

To conclude, Emperor Constantine is a great man of history. As every man is called from "non-being into being" and God gives him to complete his mission in life by the example of Saint John the Forerunner (Lk. 1), and so Emperor Constantine was called just in his time and he justified his existence. In his life there were rises and falls, slips and lifting, sin and remorse, but he accomplished his tasks that were set to him. He released all men, because with Christ's birth man is no longer a slave but a son and a successor of an eternal empire now. Emperor Constantine is a holy person with a shiny aureole, but in accordance to the *Edict of Milan* everyone should believe as his heart wishes!

⁴⁹ J. J. Burckhardt: The age of Constantine the Great, Novi Sad, 2006, p.331

⁵⁰ Nebojša Ozimić: Leader, saint, selection of texts about the character and work of Constantine the Great, Niš, 1997, p.127



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From 1995 to 1999 he was accredited Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to Turkey and from 1998 till 1999 to Azerbaijan. From 2002 till 2008 he was nominated Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the Holy See and the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. Pope John Paul II awarded Mr. Tanasković the Grand Cross of the Order of Pius IX, and in 2005, the Grand Master of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta awarded him the Grand Cross of the Order for Military Merits.

Christianity Dialectics of Freedom and Compulsion

Respected ladies and gentlemen, considering the idea that inspires our gathering, and considering the time we have, I will present my exposure through several theses. Theme “Christianity dialectics of freedom and compulsion” I will try to place in a coordinate system of three binary oppositions. *Text-context, tolerance-pluralism and division-wholeness*. Before I start talking about them, I believe it is my duty to give recognition to people who in the past several years gave huge effort to, what is usually said, time, character and achievement of Emperor Constantine be better presented in our environment. I refer to Mr. Nebojša Ozimić efforts, especially in Niš. Then, there is his book that he wrote with Zoran Simonović and Dejan Stojiljković *Constantine the Great, legend and reality*. It is worth mentioning an interesting novel by Dejan Stojiljković *Constantine's Crossroad*, as well as other worthy contributions. I think that is for our wider public of great and permanent importance that we recently have an extraordinary, scientifically based, balanced, nicely and clearly written book *Constantine the Great* by our colleague Radivoj Radić, who we will have an opportunity to hear here soon. Those are stimulating works that in a right way represent time and characters who were of far-reaching significance to history and not only to Christianity, but to civilization in general. However, I would like to use this opportunity to draw attention that regarding the *Edict of Milan* all research and analytic attention has disproportionately paid by now to the context than to the text. Of course, studying the whole context of the *Edict of Milan* origination, where I refer to historic, social and spiritual context, is necessary for understanding all text dimensions, but in certain circumstances carries a certain danger, temptation for text to be practically pushed out of the sight of live attention and spiritual curiosity.

I am thankful to Professor Milutin Timotijević for just pointing out here excessive dealings with all sorts of the *Edict of Milan* contextual aspects, so there is no need for repeating it.

Something that I would conditionally call excessive contextual wisdom may bring up hypercritical, not always proper and well intentional disputes. Questions that are the purpose for them have been asked; sometimes hide other intentions and purposes as well. Why celebrate exactly 1700 years? Why in Niš? Why suddenly all out church “mystifications” regarding to the *Edict of Milan*? Was the cross Constantine’s symbol at all? Was the *Edict* published in Milan? Wasn’t it actually the *Edict of Nicomedia*, as well known Byzantinist Paul Lemerle says? And the questions are repeated and swarmed. Their common sense is: why all that now regarding to the *Edict of Milan*? Why are we here today? In the horizon of those questions, not rarely disclamations, I would emphasize something that can sound as a paradox, even as sacrilegious, that for permanent significance of the *Edict of Milan* Emperor Constantine is basically irrelevant. Live text, as the *Edict of Milan* is, should be considered in the context of its time, but primarily in the context of our time. Only in that case it can have and produce effective meaning. For Christianity and humanity one historic Jesus Christ who once and for all atoned and saved us with his own sacrifice is not enough. We need Jesus who constantly appears over and over again and saves us through ritual Eucharistic repetition and fulfilling the testament of his love. The Letter generally, Scriptura, doesn’t close in itself and doesn’t limit the Text meaning and shine considered as Logos and that is why great texts are always open. They are “open works”, as Umberto Eco expressed and they inexhaustible shine forever with restored and renovating sense.

So, the *Edict of Milan* should be observed and understood first as a response to time requests but at the same time as big time sign. Correct and timely reading and sign interpretation are not normally our stronger side. Not rarely for failure consequences and for being late in that micro hermeneutic plan are we ready to blame others. What does the *Edict of Milan* offer to our time? Why is it considered to be timelessly worthy and permanently actual, as stands in this conference title? In the *Edict of Milan* we read: “*Ut daremus et Christianis et omnibus liberam potestatem sequendi religionem quam quisque voluisset*”. Or, as it is translated in one version of our gathering, and later left out, “everyone should believe as his heart wishes”, by formulation from Emperor Constantine’s letter addressed to Eastern provinces. As his heart wishes. We read that and don’t think much about what we read, we don’t deal with the text. We are more interested in the context, sometimes scandal, sometimes something ugly, sometimes something that put shadow. We are prone to neglect the text. And I ask you, which contemporary potentate (today we call them citizens – that’s why CIVIS organization is here today), would use word heart and call them to follow their heart? Heart significance and wisdom is crucial. Pope John Paul II often said that Europe, if wants to be Europe, should breathe with both lobes of lung. That thought was actually taken from sophisticated Russian poet Vyacheslav Ivanov who, among other things, in 1907 published a book of poems *Cor Ardens*, “Flaming heart”. The Pope of course thought of Catholic and Orthodox churches, to be precise on Catholic and Orthodox Europe, as their two lobes of lung. But there is a step further. Cardinal Tomas Spidlik did it, true Christian soul, who I have honor and pleasure to meet and whose memory I mention here with honest respect. Recently passed away theologian, one of the best minds of Eastern Church spirituality, for his cardinal motto chose biblical ritual addressed to Israeli (from Moseys Fifth book): “So kiss your God from the bottom of your heart”. *Ex toto corde*. What Cardinal Spidlik had to add to the Pope’s message about both lobes of lung? He said: “Yes, both lobes of lungs are important, but for an organism to live, it is necessary one heart to beat”. He also mentioned something that is very edifying. He

pointed out the difference in the way of accepting religion in the East and in the West. In the West it is the possibility of recognizing what is good and wrong in single deeds. In the East, however, confessor's ideal is *cardiognosya*. The difference between the right and the wrong is not established through single deeds, but through penitent heart condition. Heart doesn't send on organism unity only in physical sense, but in spiritual and moral sense, and Christianity today, maybe more than ever, in front of time challenges, needs that inside unity and peace, as Roman Empire needed in Constantine's time. The Edict of Milan, as mighty landmark, sign of time, witnesses deep understanding of that time need, therefore Constantine the Great had strength to talk about heart and his servant's hearts. I quote again: "All that is allowed for them is also considered for others and all people have the right to choose their own cult by their own will, under condition to respect other religion convictions, so it would lead to the peace of the kingdom". If we exempt contextually, historically conditioned fact that it is about emperor's decision, as there was an emperor, that allows Christians their free confession, and allowing tolerance, it means that it is tolerated, it is allowed from the position of the absolute government which is not the state of complete freedom, doesn't the spirit of this text send to overcome tolerance itself, to respect every cult, to true pluralism? From this point of view where is the world really today? In reality level of tolerance is not everywhere ensured. There are many examples and they are well known, so it is unnecessary to cite them. After all, when they gained power and identify with the state, after AD 380, the Christians were the first who forgot this wide range of the *Edict of Milan* message. They start to pursue others. Wasn't the Emperor Constantine in the battle around 316 with his the *Edict of Milan* cosigning Licinius? That their significant moment, which takes off over history, was one time sign. It was regardless both of them, which I think is very important to understand, except for those who deal with historiography and other similar scientific disciplines of course, and who should as objectively as possible do their useful job in the future.

We should absolutely start from tolerance towards pluralism. In Islam, for example, tolerance is formed and exactly normed. In Christianity isn't, maybe that's why Islam never succeeded to rise to accepting pluralism, because God Word assigns very precise tolerance. And tolerance can be very dangerous. Christians, as we can see, 17 centuries ago were given an opportunity and path, but they even among themselves can't show honest and equal respect. How then face the others and achieve "peace in kingdom", as today can be considered as peace in the world. Roman Empire in the horizon of people who the *Edict of Milan* was dedicated to was the whole world then. An attempt in a contemporary empire (emphasize that I don't think of any specific state, as can be assumed) through the process of globalization worldwide forever be constituted, put Christians, and the whole mankind, in front of challenge without historic precedent. Is there an inside strength to give a successful civilizational answer? Does Christianity have anything useful to offer to the mankind on the crossroad? How to make spirit of modern globalization to be noble and human which is, in the dimension of wide understood technology and communication with following uniformed cultural models, as it seems, unstoppable. That spirit, for now, doesn't offer answers that human heart requires. The heart that Emperor Constantine referred to. Rationality brought down to technical mind's tyranny isn't wholly mind like and can't permanently satisfy man's moral and spiritual needs. That is why in front of the world, beside all impressive material growth and development, maybe in the middle of that badly thought material growth and development, bigger and more dangerous, unsolved temptations are being opened. Are we maybe in

a lobby of new axial age, in a period of one mighty field cleaning up to make a complete new model between man and God, and circumstantially by that, between man and man? Are we entering the time of complete uncertainty? It is highly hypothetical, probably premature, and maybe even groundless question. But, how many destiny important answers were late because of questions that were asked when it was too late? Let's try to evade afterthought? Modernism (postmodernism is a separate problem!), with all ideological globalism, has become a new civilization which is more and more without a birthplace and with whom with different temporary outcomes deal all traditional civilizations including its mainland, European, that is Christian. This modernism indicates that the man's heart is finally excluded from the field of social attention. Must it be that way? We are afraid it must, but we hope it won't. If we don't want that to happen something must be done. Shall we accept freedom or a new compulsion that is falsely represented to us as final freedom and liberation? Italian Nobel prize winner, writer Dario Fo, in one interesting interview, recently published in Belgrade *Politika*, concluded his conversation with the following words: "I am against the word hope. We should use that word less. The word hope should be changed by the word will. I support will, wanting, but not hope." As hope transforms into will, teaches us, permanently, the *Edict of Milan*. That is why this open text should be over and over again, in new contexts read, interpreted and applied.



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Constantine The Great in The Serbian Medieval Hagiographies

For Serbian hagiographic literature, whose beginnings reach to the first years of XIII century, it can be emphasized that it presents a representative sample of the Serbian medieval literature with reason. The Serbian hagiographies originated under the Byzantine model influence and during their development, which lasted more than four centuries – somewhere to the middle of XVII century, they passed through different phases. We should be aware of the fact that hagiographic literature for a long time, more than a millennium, was developing on a wide territory that Christianity covered.⁵¹

As it was cleverly noticed, a hagiography stands on the idea of the Bible continuity, it is, actually a kind of extended Bible, continued apostle's works.⁵² Unlike historians, who usually intend to last on desire to save the truth about historical events for future generations, hagiographers write, and their works are read, with clear intention to teach, to encourage believers to live in a religious way which is worth of saints.⁵³ According to words of a Russian scientist V. Ključevski, a hagiography stands versus a historical biography as an icon illustration versus a portrait.⁵⁴

Besides, hagiographies are “medieval religious interpretation of the world”,⁵⁵ so it can be said that they are the first class source in a wider sense, before everything source for studying spiritual climate of the age in which they appeared.⁵⁶ The Serbian hagiographic literature

⁵¹ D. Bogdanović, *Rečnik književnih termina*, Beograd 1985, 895; Đ. Trifunović, *Azbučnik srpskih srednjovekovnih književnih pojmova*, Beograd 19902, 47–77 (with detailed bibliography); *Leksikon srpskog srednjeg veka*, priredili S. Ćirković – R. Mihaljčić, Beograd 1999, 192–194 (R. Mihaljčić) / further in the text: LSSV/

⁵² D. Bogdanović, *Istorija stare srpske književnosti*, Beograd 1980, 72 (further in the text: Bogdanović, *Istorija*); Also in, *Studije iz srpske srednjovekovne književnosti*, Beograd 1997, 29–31.

⁵³ LSSV, 193 (R. Mihaljčić)

⁵⁴ В. О. Ключевский, *Древнерусския жития святых как исторический источник*, Москва 1871 (репринт: Farnborough 1969), 431–438 (посебно 436) / further in the text: Ключевский, *Древнерусския жития*./

⁵⁵ D. Bogdanović, *Stare srpske biografije*, Beograd 1968, 6.

⁵⁶ LSSV, 193 (R. Mihaljčić)

represented a part of a huge corpus of hagiographic literature of the Eastern Christianity in the Middle Age.⁵⁷

Considering that hagiographies of saints, according to hagiographic literature principles, are more open to saints' ascetic achievements, miracles they had done and, in general, to spiritual zeal, and less the facts of a wider historical significance, in them the Christian message surpasses the historical truth. However, besides their primary goal to teach and to be a proper indicator for believers, the saints' hagiographies contain a certain number of important data from the past and they are a valuable support for studying many historical themes.⁵⁸ It is not without significance to emphasize the fact that in hagiographic works there are common, general spots, and in these writings Biblical quotes are incrustated.⁵⁹ For a better understanding of hagiographic texts it should not lose out of sight the circumstances that monks – writers closed up in a shell of complete anonymity, which means that a compiler was only the instrument of God's will, and as such completely irrelevant, and that his individuality and originality were suffocated.⁶⁰

It would be interesting to see data about Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor and the Orthodox Church saint, kept in Serbian medieval hagiographies.

Chronologically observed, information about Constantine the Great in Serbian hagiographic literature can be found firstly in the *Hagiography of Saint Simeon*, which is the great district prefect Stefan Nemanja (1166–1196), royal dynasty Nemanjić's founder, which his son and successor of Serbian throne Stefan Nemanjić (1196–1228) compiled.⁶¹ Talking about his father, the first crowned king claims that Nemanja through prior Methodius sent the biggest precious thing he had: a cross made of wood from the cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified. The fact that Nemanja, later monk Simeon carried around his neck and that he considered him as the main assistant in battles against enemies, clearly suggests how much that cross meant to him. He gives it to his son to be “a guardian and shelter, and winner and servant in battles against visible and invisible enemies... and always to help you as it did to David and ancient Emperor Constantine, to chase from you rage regiments in every place.”⁶² Mentioning Emperor Constantine is completely proper and it can be said very nicely because Stefan Nemanjić was aware of how much “cross helped” Constantine the Great. Of course, it is about a well known episode, cross vision around the battle at Mijeovski bridge in October 312, cross with inscription “Win with this,” as in Greek language Constantine's biographer Eusebius of Caesarea wrote, that is “In this sign you will win,” as Lactancius wrote in Latin.⁶³ It is a little bit enigmatic

⁵⁷ H. Birnbaum, *Byzantine Tradition transformed: the old Serbian vita*, Aspects of the Balkans, Paris – Den Haag 1972, 243–284; R. Marinković, *Vladarske biografije iz vremena Nemanjića*, Prilozi za književnost, jezik, istoriju i folklor 44 1–2 (1978) 3–20.

⁵⁸ P. S. Protić, *Žitija srpskih svetaca kao izvor istorijski*, Beograd 1897, 5–182; Е. П. Наумов, *Сербские средневековые биографии как исторические источники* (К анализу проблем феодальной идеологии, терминологии и текстологии сербских житий), *Историография и источниковедение стран Центральной и Юго-Восточной Европы*, Москва 1986, 166–181.

⁵⁹ S. Stanojević, *Sveto pismo u našim starim spomenicima*, Posebna izdanja Srpske kraljevske akademije, knj. 89, Beograd 1932, 1–688.

⁶⁰ Ключевский, *Древнерусския жития*, 431–435.

⁶¹ M. Kašanin, *Srpska književnost u srednjem veku*, Beograd 2002, 117–132 (u daljem tekstu: Kašanin, *Srpska književnost*); Bogdanović, *Istorija*, 153–155; T. Jovanović, *Inventar srpskih ćirilskih rukopisa Narodne biblioteke u Parizu*, *Arheografski prilozi* 3 (1981) 304–306; A. Джурова, *За съдбата на славянските ръкописи*. Предварителни бележки за неизвестен Котленски псалтир од XVIII век и ръкописи и фрагменти (Житие на Стефан Неманя од Стефан Првовенчани и Служба на Стефан Бранкович), *Arheografski prilozi* 25 (2003) 163–195.

⁶² Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*, predgovor, prevod dela i komentari LJ. Juhas–Georgijevska, izdanje na srpskoslovenskom T. Jovanović, Beograd 1999, 62; Up. Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrani spisi*, Stara srpska književnost u 24 knjige, knj. 3, prir. LJ. Juhas–Georgijevska, Beograd 1988, 82 (further in the text: Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrani spisi*).

⁶³ R. Radić, *Konstantin Veliki: nadmoć hrišćanstva*, Beograd 2010, 91–92 (further in the text: Radić, *Konstantin Veliki*).

an unusual mentioning of David since he didn't have anything to do with the cross. However, the fact that God also helped him is important.⁶⁴

The other son of Nemanja, Sava, in a *Hagiography of Saint Simeon Nemanja* doesn't mention Constantine the Great. However, Domentian, one of the best Serbian medieval writers,⁶⁵ in the *Hagiography of Saint Simeon* brings the same episode with prior Methodius and the cross that Stefan Nemanja sends to his son Stefan Nemanjić. It was noted: "To help you against your enemies, as it did to the son of God's father David against Goliath and to loyal Emperor Constantine in all his battles, and on every place to chase from you rage regiments, so they are protected with it's mightiness forever, amen."⁶⁶ This part is very much alike the quoted part from the *Hagiography of Stefan Nemanja* that was written by Stefan the First Crowned. It would be useful to explain mentioning of the Jewish ruler David who defeated Goliath with God's wish, and not with the cross. The same writer, Domentian, in his second hagiographic part, the *Hagiography of Saint Sava*, doesn't mention Constantine the Great, as well as his younger contemporary, monk Theodosius from Mount Athos whose pen wrote two hagiographies: the *Hagiography of Saint Sava* and the *Hagiography of Saint Peter Koriski*.

In a famous hagiographic corpus *Lives of kings and Serbian archbishops*, that Serbian archbishop Danilo II (1324–1337)⁶⁷ and his followers wrote Constantine the Great is mentioned, but in a similar way as it was in a *Hagiography of Stefan Nemanja* that was written by Stefan Nemanja and Domentian. It is about King Milutin's biography where it is said that on call and request by Byzantium Emperor Andronicos II Palaiologos, the Serbian king sent military help that was led by Novak Grebostrek. As archbishop Danilo II wrote, this regiment gained many successes in battles against atheists in Asia Minor territory and returned to its country with great glory.⁶⁸ Then there is one praise to King Milutin: "O kind and glory with God, and similar to saints and great emperors, tamed David and glorious Constantine, worthy of God's help and sheathes in celebrating and elevation of your homeland."⁶⁹ Again a Serbian ruler is compared to Constantine the Great and David.

In the anthology *Lives of kings and Serbian archbishops*, but now from the pen of Danilo's follower emperor Constantine the Great is mentioned again. Anonymous author, among other things, described turbulent and interesting life of Danilo II.⁷⁰ An unknown writer in King Stefan's of Dečani biography writes: "This mighty king was given such blessing of Christ force, as wise Emperor Solomon was given wide sense and depth of wisdom, and force of robustness from God, as faithful Emperor Constantine was given victory over foreign tribes over faith, as

⁶⁴ Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrani spisi*, 173 n. 6.

⁶⁵ Kašanin, *Srpska književnost*, 133–152; Bogdanović, *Istorija*, 156–159

⁶⁶ *Život svetoga Simeona i svetoga Save*, napisao Domentijan, izd. Đ. Daničić, Beograd 1865, 66. Up. Domentian, *Životi svetoga Save i svetoga Simeona*, prev. L. Mirković, predg. V. Corović, Beograd 1938, 276; Domentijan, *Život Svetoga Save i Život Svetoga Simeona*, Stara srpska književnost u 24 knjige, knj. 4, prir. R. Marinković, prev. L. Mirković, Beograd 1988, 287.

⁶⁷ L. Pavlović, *Kultovi lica kod Srba i Makedonaca (Istorijsko-etnografska rasprava)*, Smederevo 1965, 109–110 (further in the text: Pavlović, *Kultovi*); Kašanin, *Srpska književnost*, 177–195; Bogdanović, *Istorija*, 175–179; Arhiepiskop Danilo II i njegovo doba, *Međunarodni naučni skup povodom 650 godina od smrti, Decembar 1987. godine*, urednik V. J. Đurić, Beograd 1991, 7 sl.; S. Hafner, *Srpski srednji vek*, Beograd 2001, 55–63; Sava (Vuković), *episkop šumadijski, Srpski jerarsi od devetog do dvadesetog veka*, Beograd – Podgorica – Kragujevac 1996, 153–154 (further in the text: Sava, *episkop šumadijski, Srpski jerarsi*); G. Podskalski, *Srednjovekovna teološka književnost u Bugarskoj i Srbiji (865–1459)*, Beograd 2010, 463–475.

⁶⁸ K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba, I*, Beograd 1952 (reprint 1978), 152; *Istorija srpskog naroda, I*, Beograd 1981, 461 (S. Ćirković).

⁶⁹ *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, napisao arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, na svijet izdao Đ. Daničić, Zagreb 1866 (= *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, intr. Dj. Trifunović, Variorum Reprints, London 1972), 148 (further in the text: *Životi kraljeva*). Up. Arhiepiskop Danilo, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, prev. L. Mirković, predg. N. Radojčić, Beograd 1935, 112 (further in the text: Mirković, *Životi kraljeva*).

⁷⁰ Kašanin, *Srpska književnost*, 197–210; Bogdanović, *Istorija*, 179–180.

God had given Moses against Amalic.”⁷¹ There was a wider pallet of well known biblical and historical characters that Serbian king was compared to. Instead of David now Solomon and Moses are mentioned, and Constantine the Great, this time was emphasized as a fighter for religion and a winner over foreign tribes, he remained some kind of a common denominator grouping the ideal rulers and notable characters.

In contrast to all mentioned examples by now, where Constantine the Great was cited first as a good ruler and someone who is attached to Christianity, Gregory Tsamblak⁷² mentions the first Christian emperor for livelier and more intriguing in the *Hagiography of Stefan of Dečani*. He writes about Constantine the Great in two occasions, but very concisely. In the introduction, after mentioning “Simeon Triveliki”, that is Stefan Nemanja, for who he says that he is “the founder of the empire”, Tsamblak glorifies Nemanja’s inheritors and writes: “They didn’t troubled the church with heretic waves and Hellenic farces and fables as Constantine’s the Great sons and nephews did, but they ruled the army and other flocks they got with blessing and they had done it wisely and kindly.”⁷³ From this section, where Gregory Tsamblak indirectly compared Stefan Nemanja and Constantine the Great, you can see that he had very solid knowledge about events after Constantine’s death and passionate conflict between supporter of Nicaea’s dogma, adopted at the First Council of Nicaea in 325, and Arian heretic who, for example was supported by his middle son Constantius II (337–361), because that is what Tsamblak’s sintagma “heretic waves” referred to.⁷⁴ On the other hand, expression “Hellenic farces” could be generally referred to pagan culture heritage, in this case concretely, on the pagan reaction attempt that Emperor Julian (361–363) took over, Constantine’s the Great nephew.⁷⁵ From these lines you can indirectly see an outbreak of respect and admiration to Constantine the Great because a rather big remark was sent to his inheritors, sons and nephews. We have to notice that this was very affirmative for Stefan Nemanja because what happened during the decades after death of Constantine the Great didn’t happen here.

In the second part of King Stefan’s of Dečani biography, Gregory Tsamblak, refers to famous, rather dark episode from Constantine’s the Great private life. He wrote: “Even Constantine the Great and the first Christian emperor, as he was, no matter how religious he was and naturally very wise, trusting in false words of a cunning woman, he murdered his son Prispus, who was a good and kind husband, and then when he found out that she had lied to him, he killed her by a just court.”⁷⁶ Then Tsamblak writes about his woman’s trick: “Have you seen, always-loved, the woman’s shrewdness?” Have you heard their betrayal which easily deceives? Why a pious and a very wise Constantine didn’t see her evil trap before he killed his son? If he have had known this, he would not have convicted the most kind, but the woman from whom the devil spoke. But, he realized that when it was too late, when regrets could not help or the

⁷¹ Životi kraljeva, 171. Up. Mirković, Životi kraljeva, 129; Danilovi nastavljajući. Danilov učenik, drugi nastavljajući Danilovog zbornika, Stara srpska književnost u 24 knjige, knj. 7, prir. G. Mak Danijel, prev. L. Mirković, Beograd 1989, 33–34.

⁷² R. Marinković, O mestu Grigorija Camblaka u srpskoj književnosti, Търновска книжовна школа 1371–1971, София 1974, 443–457; Kašanin, Srpska književnost, 272–284; Bogdanović, Istorija, 204–208.

⁷³ J. Šafarik, Život kralja Stefana Dečanskog, Glasnik Društva srpske slovesnosti 11 (1859) 44 (further in the text: Šafarik, Život Stefana Dečanskog); A. Давидов – Г. Данчев – Н. Дончева-Панайотова – П. Ковачева – Т. Генчева, Житие на Стефан Дечански от Григорий Цамблук, София 1983, 64 (further in the text: Цамблук, Житие на Стефан Дечански). Up. Grigorije Camblak, Književni rad u Srbiji, Stara srpska književnost u 24 knjige, knj. 12, prir. D. Petrović, Beograd 1989, 49 (further in the text: Camblak, Književni rad)

⁷⁴ G. Ostrogorski, Istorija Vizantije, Beograd 1959 (reprint 1998), 68–70.

⁷⁵ Oksfordska istorija Vizantije, prir. S. Mango, prev. M. Miloradović – P. J. Marković, Beograd 2004, 45–50.

⁷⁶ Šafarik, Život Stefana Dečanskog, 48; Camblak, Žitie na Stefan Dečanski, 70. Up. Camblak, Književni rad, 52.

possibility of his son resurrection, and he didn't see at once that a reasonable eye was hidden by tricky words of an evil woman, but after the murder he realized what he had done.”⁷⁷

It is obvious that Gregory Tsamblak had great knowledge about a painful episode from the life of Constantine the Great. It is well known that in 326 very dramatic events happened in the private life of Constantine the Great that was terminated with his family tragedy. Although several sources spoke about it, the saved data do not allow being completely precise and determining the historical truth. Beside Constantine's son Crispus (not Prispus as Gregory Tsamblak wrote) was involved, born in 305 in concubinage or maybe marriage with Minervina, as well as emperor's second wife Fausta, a daughter of August Maximilian, who married Emperor in 307. Allegedly a love affair between stepmother and stepson occurred, so Constantine killed Crispus first, and soon after Fausta as well.⁷⁸

Some sources emphasize that Crispus, who was already a great warrior, was actually virgin and that he suffered from love madness which overcome Fausta. He didn't respond to the passion flooding by his stepmother, which in a blink of an eye turned her love into hate, so she slandered her stepson that he was trying to rape her. Furious Constantine, whose family feelings were roughly hurt, ordered his son execution which happened in Pula in 326. Fausta, who in this story had muddy instincts and lowest passions, however didn't get away without punishment. Allegedly she was caught in adultery with some messenger, and by her husband's order her eunuchs drowned her in a hot bathroom the same year - 326. Death of two people very close to Constantine turned into a difficult family tragedy of the ruler's home. Scientists in this episode see one dark side of Constantine's character and mostly are not prone to defend him too much for what he had done.⁷⁹

This unusual story, which can possess a character of a general spot in families with disturbed relations, has its own literature standing in ancient Greek mythology: Theseus on grounds of his wife's Phaedra slander executed his son Hypollutus. First she tried to seduce the young man, but when she didn't succeed, she committed suicide and in a farewell letter slandered Hypollutus who allegedly tried to rape her. Embittered father ordered to execute his son, but later from Goddess Artemis he found out the real truth. Yet, he got in time to reconcile with his son, while he was on a deathbed. As you can see, it is interesting that in the Serbian medieval period similar story circled, and its heroes were King Milutin, his son and a successor Stefan of Dečani and a young Byzantine princess Simonida. It was written, as already was emphasized, by Gregory Tsamblak in the *Hagiography of Stefan of Dečani*.⁸⁰ It is very likely that Tsamblak knew about this episode from the life of Constantine the Great after reading world chronic translation by a Byzantine writer John Zonaras.

⁷⁷ Šafarik, *Život Stefana Dečanskog*, 48; Camblak, *Žitie na Stefan Dečanski*, 72; Up. Camblak, *Književni rad*, 52.

⁷⁸ Radić, *Konstantin Veliki*, 137–138.

⁷⁹ Radić, *Konstantin Veliki*, 137–138.

⁸⁰ A. Popović, *Motiv Fedre i Hipolita u "Žitiju Stefana Dečanskog"* Grigorija Camblaka, *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 37 (1998) 199–212.

⁸¹ S. Stanojević, *Die Biographie Stephan Lazarevič's von Konstantin dem Philosophen als Geschichtsquelle*, *Archiv für slavische Philologie* 18 (1897) 409–472; Kašanin, *Srpska književnost*, 321–343; G. Svanne, *Константин Костенечкий и его биография сербского деспота Стефана Лазаревића*, *Старобългарска литература* 4 (1978) 21–38; Bogdanović, *Istorija*, 214–218.

⁸² Konstantin Filozof i njegov *Život Stefana Lazarevića* despota srpskoga, po dvjema srpsko-slovenskim rukopisima iznove izdao V. Jagić, *Glasnik Srpskog učenog društva* 42 (1875) /reprint: Gornji Milanovac 2004/, 256–257 (further in the text: Jagić, *Konstantin Filozof*); Konstantin Filozof, *Život Stefana Lazarevića*, despota srpskoga, Biblioteka "Izvori srpskog bogoslovlja", knj. 2, prevod i napomene G. Jovanović, Beograd 2009, 26–27 (further in the text: Jovanović, *Život Stefana Lazarevića*).

⁸³ Jagić, *Konstantin Filozof*, 257; Jovanović, *Život Stefana Lazarevića*, 27.

Constantine the Great is mentioned in the *Hagiography of Despot Stefan Lazarević* several times that Constantine the Philosopher made, that is Konstantine Kostenechki.⁸¹ He wrote a genealogy where at the bottom is “Consta the Great”, by a nickname *green*, the father of Constantine the Great. Of course, it is about Constantinus Chlorus. Continuing he said that Constantine the Great had three sons, Constantine, Constantius and Const (that is Constans) and daughter Constatia.⁸² You can with reason say that Constantine the Great didn’t show any special imagination while he was giving names to his children. His daughter, as Constantine the Philosopher wrote, he gave to Licinius to be his wife. Then according to a fantastic genealogy Licinius was a Serb and one of his successors was Stefan Nemanja.⁸³

On the other place Constantine the Philosopher while he was talking about Sultan Bayezid I (1389-1402) mentions first Christian emperor and Bayezid’s relation with Stefan Lazarević who sent his sister Olivera to him. He wrote: “However, a great emperor (Bayezid) from then (didn’t act) as Maximian, who showed Constantine the Great his false love so that he could (easily) execute him, but he behaved to him with true and pure love, as if he was his loving son, that you will find in a certain chapter.”⁸⁴ It is well known that Maximian, Diocletian’s coruler and one of the four tetrarch, was involved in civil war that started in 306, after the death of Constantius Chlorus and rising of Constantine the Great. Although he withdrew from the throne with Diocletian, he was involved in battles, supporting his son Maxentius at first, and then he came to Constantine the Great and failed him twice, so that at the end he was murdered.⁸⁵ It is quite obvious that Constantine the Philosopher knew this episode from Constantine’s the Great life very well.

And finally, Constantine the Great was mentioned by the Serbian Patriarch Pajsije I Janjevac (1614-1647)⁸⁶, in the *Hagiography of Saint Emperor Uroš* that was made in XVII century. It is about, one of the youngest texts of Serbian hagiographic literature. He mostly repeats what can be found in Constantine’s the Philosopher texts. Pajsije wrote: “Then the pious branch shines, first among Christians, great Emperor Constantine.”⁸⁷ Continuing he wrote about Constantine’s sister Constantia marriage to his colleague and co-ruler Licinius, and for the first Christian emperor he said that: “this pious emperor shined through his religion, from the tribe and gentlemen and kinship with Augustus Caesar.”⁸⁸ Then Pajsije, with certain inaccuracy, wrote that Constantine defeated Maxentius. A very important symbol is mentioned and how it helped him, then how he sent his mother to Jerusalem to seek for an honorable cross, and Constantine’s fight with Litinius who was described because he, neglected advice to stop, start pursuing Christians.⁸⁹ On the other place Patriarch Pajsije repeats fantastic genealogy and cites how “pious Emperor Constantine” who was a Serb gave his sister to Litinius, and that successors from that marriage were Serbian medieval rulers from Nemanjić dynasty.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ Jagić, Konstantin Filosof, 263; Jovanović, Život Stefana Lazarevića, 34.

⁸⁵ Radić, Konstantin Veliki, 81-83.

⁸⁶ Sava, episkop šumadijski, Srpski jerarsi, 388–390. O njegovoj spisateljskoj delatnosti v. Bogdanović, Istorija, 267–271.

⁸⁷ Izdanje Pajsijevog Žitije cara Uroša u XIX veku priredio je Ilarion Ruvarac, “otac srpske kritičke istoriografije”. V. I. Ruvarac, Žitije cara Uroša od Pajsija, pečkog patrijarha (1614–1646), Glasnik Srpskog učenog društva 22 (1867) 209–232. Međutim, koristili smo novo izdanje koje je objavio Tomislav Jovanović. V. T. Jovanović, Književno delo patrijarha Pajseja, Beograd 2001, 289–290 (further in the text: Pajsije, Književno delo). Up. Patrijarh Pajsije, Sabrani spisi, Stara srpska književnost u 24 knjige, knj. 16, prev. D. Bogdanović i T. Jovanović, prir. T. Jovanović, Beograd 1993, 87 (further in the text: Bogdanović – Jovanović, Patrijarh Pajsije)

⁸⁸ Pajsije, Književno delo, 289–290; Bogdanović – Jovanović, Patrijarh Pajsije 87.

⁸⁹ Pajsije, Književno delo, 290; Bogdanović – Jovanović, Patrijarh Pajsije 87–88.

⁹⁰ Pajsije, Književno delo, 303; Bogdanović – Jovanović, Patrijarh Pajsije 98.

As it had been mentioned, this construction originated from remodelling the world's chronic translation by Byzantine writer John Zonaras from the XII century.

In Serbian medieval hagiography Constantine the Great is mentioned in regard to Constantinople, a new capital which he built and inaugurated on Bosphorus. This town, Tsargrad as Slavs usually call it, is cited in several ways: "usually Constantine town, then Tsargrad, then "empering town", then "empering Constantine's town", but rarely New Rome, Constantinopolus or "emperor's town". When it is about the name New Rome it should be emphasized that, beside one exception, it is usually called by Byzantine's emperors and Ecumenical's Patriarchs titles. By the name of the Constantine's town if some epithet goes by then it is *glorious*, and rarely *great*.⁹¹

⁹¹ This work was based on a project No. 177015 with the name "Christian culture on Balkan during Middle Ages: Byzantine Empire, Serbs and Bulgarians from IX to XV century" which was financed by the Ministry of Science of the Republic of Serbia

II SESSION

Topic: Everyone Should Believe as His Heart Wishes

Ut daremus et Christianis et omnibus liberam potestatem
sequendi religionem, quam quisque voluisset

Flavius Valerius Constantinus





H.E. Bishop of Bačka Mr Irinej Serbian Orthodox Church

His Eminence Bishop of Bačka Irinej was born on 1947 in the village Stanišić, in Bačka. He graduated at the Serbian Orthodox Church Faculty of Theology in Belgrade in 1969. For near two years he stayed at the Ostrog monastery (1969-1970) and taught at monastery Monk school. He spent a decade in Athens at post-graduate studies at the Faculty of Theology of Athens' University where he defended his doctoral dissertation in 1980. After a short study visit in Paris, at the Russian Theology Saint Sergej Institute (1980-1981), he was chosen for a docent at the New Testament Scripture Department at Faculty of Theology in Belgrade where he teaches at the same department today as a full professor. During the regular session of Serbian Orthodox Church Saint Episcopal Council in 1989 he

was chosen for Bishop of Morava, Serbian Patriarch's Vicar, and then after the consecration in The Patriarchate of Peć he was chosen for Bishop of Bačka in 1990 and enthroned in Novi Sad at the same year. He edits and publishes *Beseda*, theological magazine of Bačka diocese. He is a member of Serbian Orthodox Church Saint Synod translation Commission, Pan-Orthodox commission for dialogue with Roman Catholic Church, Pan-Orthodox commission for dialogue with Lutherans, Serbian Orthodox Church Saint Episcopal Council commission for dialogue with analogue Commission of Croatian and Serbian and Montenegrin Bishop Conferences. He is also a member of Commission for organizing and following religion teaching at the Government of the Republic of Serbia, Association of Greek biblical theologians, Serbian writers association, Movement committee for unity and cooperation spiritually similar Eastern-Christian people and Council of European religious leaders "Religion for peace".

Edict of Milan as a Spiritual Signpost to Contemporary Europe

Your Excellencies and brothers, honourable fathers and brothers, ladies and gentlemen, and brothers and sisters, after the ceremonial meal, organized by the City of Niš, whom we are grateful to, we continue our work in the afternoon session of this conference, which is envisaged, as far as I could see from the Agenda, as a free dialogue and not strictly academic, of course, with certain theoretic assumptions and cognitions. Such a dialogue would not aim at, historically or theologically, to fully enlighten the character and work of the Saint Emperor Constantine but to perceive him in a wider historical context, up to our time and our problems. I will, try if you allow me, at the start to give a motive to the discourse on this topic, by giving a short comment on two important assumptions in relation to Emperor Constantine.

I

1. Our afternoon session begins with the quotation from the *Edict of Milan* where Constantine says: "it gives freedom (free power of decision) to Christians and to all" (*liberam potestatem et christianis et omnibus*) so "everyone could be the follower of the religion he wants" (*sequendi religionem, quam quisque vluisset*) or that everyone, as he expresses himself later in the book, is allowed to believe "as his heart wishes". This Constantine's expression is of

use for me as an incentive to point out the importance of the principle of religious freedom, in other words, the respect of full religious freedom and freedom of conscience. This principle we usually connect to modern times. Most of our contemporaries – even very well informed intellectuals – think that the freedom of belief and the freedom of conscience are the achievements of the French Revolution and time afterwards. However, we can see that it is Emperor Constantine who proclaimed this principle.

In the same vein we should correct one term which we meet very often in colloquial usage and it is not rare in professional discourse. That it is the term of “Constantine’s epoch” in the Church history and in the history of European culture and civilization. Under the term “Constantine’s epoch” we imply, in principle, entire multi-century period in which the idea of symphony of the Empire and Church, more precisely, the idea of Imperial Church and Christian Empire prevails. According to this concept, the Church is a leading state, imperial institution. It supports in every way the imperial policy. And vice versa: the Empire – today we would say the state – gives to the Church certain privileges and specific status in the society but at the same time it calls for favours from it, primarily in the sense of religious legitimacy or metaphysical base for the official ideology of the Empire.

This picture is not entirely true if we relate it to the name and personality of Constantine the Great. As it is known, Christianity is declared the state religion by Theodosius I at the end of 4th century, several decades after Constantine. Constantine himself did create preconditions for the future “symphony” – cooperation between the Church and State – but it doesn’t give us the right to mark him as a responsible person for the consequential model of the Christianity as a state religion. His realistic concept was – free and independent Church in the society, with the benevolent and well-intentional relation of the Empire towards it, which meant a concrete cooperation. The best example of this is the call for the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in 325 as well as many other events from the Church history of that time. In short, I believe that methodologically and historically it is not correct to connect Constantine’s name to the model of the closest cooperation of the Church and the Empire, the model of special identification of these so heterogeneous grandeurs. This model represents the product of another period and later development.

2. We all are today, certainly, aware of the concept of the state Church – and even more of the concept of the Church state or especially, any form of theocratic social order – is in Europe, as well as in the Christian cultural circle in general, long ago exceeded. I would say, in addition, that it is today more unacceptable for us, Christians, then probably for certain politicians. Deep inside, still exists, at least in a rudimentary form, biblical and early-Christian consciousness about the ontological abyss which the reality of “this century” or “this world” – the historical reality in which the Kingdom of the God, more precisely eschatological fullness of the being, life and salvation, “already is” present through the Church or, if you wish, as a Church, but it “is not yet” present but it is awaited – separates from the reality of the “future century” or the world of palingenesia, eschatological fullness of the Kingdom of the God. In this context, consequently, the church cannot justify everything that is happening in history, or everything that is done on its behalf or in its own history.

If we consider the history through the Christian prism, we have to admit that neither there is Christian state nor there was Christian Empire. It also applies to Western – Roman and East-

ern – Roman Christian Empire, and to ancient Russia and to medieval Serbia, as well to all others medieval states, apart from the fact that all of them, in all aspects of life, were deeply inspired by Christianity and sodden with its content, values, and ideals. Although necessary and useful, the state is, by its nature and structure, the reality of “this century”, the reality of the history of the fallen mankind, and by no means is the reality of the sacred history or the history of salvation, that is the dimension of the historical process which is building into the eschaton.

The idea of the universal Christian Empire, by centuries cherished in Rome, Constantinople, Moscow and Vienna – although pleasant, respect worthy – it is shown to be one of the most continuous pious delusions. In that sense, contemporary Christians are serious and free from illusions. Only the romantic circles among the Christians of monarchical political believes are the exception, legitimate like the republican: these circles dream and daydream of Resurrection of the Christian monarchy and if a new emergence of pious emperors and kings, of which everyone of them should be unique *Constantinus redivivus* and antipode to contemporary ready-made, colourless, and often heartless political “leaders”. These dreams and these day-dreamings do not have, however, real stronghold in today’s social trends nor could we see any sign that something like that could be possible.

3. What is possible, real and topical and what we with great difficulty conquer, that is the area of authentic freedom, at first place religious and spiritual, and then all other. This process we could, with full authority, connect to the deed of Emperor Constantine, the great son of this city and of this region. (By these words I do not intend, of course, to identify him with us, current inhabitants of this region. He is our compatriot, but not a clansman: in his time, except the individuals and the groups, there were no Serbs neither Slavs in this region, furthermore it is similar to Germanic peoples, which were also present only sporadically, and this could be testified by the Gothic translation of the Bible for the purpose of Germanic soldiers in Roman army from the 4th century.)

As it was properly pointed out by Prof Darko Tanasković at the morning session of our conference, full religious and spiritual freedom still represents – for some people and nations, hardly achievable ideal in Europe and especially in other continents. If it is like that, and it is like that, then more evident is the extensiveness or revolutionary of the Constantine’s principle of religious freedom: by the *Edict of Milan* he proclaimed and made it possible in reality, to Christians and to all others to believe and to pray “as your hearts wishes”. New Constantine’s capital of the empire on the coasts of the Bosporus – New Rome, Constantinople – which was from the start structured and built primarily as a Christian city provides the evidence for this. Well known cathedral of the “Holy Wisdom”, Hagia Sophia, originally is Constantine’s construction which was later replaced by the Iustinianus magnificent Saint Sophia, and even today although desacralised and devastated it is the most wonderful Christian temple in the world. From Constantine’s time many other metropolitan temples derive. But it is important to know that Constantine did not forbid building of pagan temples in his city, in the new capital. During a longer period of time, while the paganism had still existed, parallel to Christian temples numerous pagan sanctuaries were built.

Besides, Constantine helped Cristianity, of course, with all possible resources which was one uniting force in the Cosmopolite Empire. We should seriously take into consideration the

statement of historians and the the historians of culture, who proved political and statesmanship motivation of his agreement to Christianity, but equally we should not give way to temptation in trying to explain people from ancient times and their acts based on our method, on the method of today's acting and thinking. Therefore, I personally, could not exclude from the interpretation of Constantine's personality and his time those elements which the Church traditionally attributes to his conversion to Christianity, and that is above all, his personal experience of Jesus' personality, his personal misterious meeting with Jesus. I think that we do not have right to neglect various testimonies of that encounter, no matter how much they could be indirect, confused or understated. Also, we should not underestimate the influence of his mother – today, professor Timotijević was the only one who has pointed out her significance – who was undoubtedly a Christian and for sure she influenced the formation of her son's character. According to my humble opinion, the phenomenon of the Constantine the Great should be understood and explained in the key of the synthesis of different but still complementary incentives: on the one side we have political, statesmanship, imperial, motivational circle, and on the other side we have the impulse of personal spiritual experience and personal conversion. We should take into account both elements, and at least equally.



1. By reaching this point, I will try to answer one question maybe marginal but not uninteresting: why is it Eastern Church, during many centuries, had been respecting Emperor Constantine as a saint, giving him rare epithets to be considered as *Equal-to-the-Apostles* and the emperor married to God, whereas Western Church does not do that? At the same time the whole Church, on the East and on the West, prayerfully celebrates his mother, Empress Helena, as a saint. Here, I'm stressing the fact that many people say incorrectly, roughly speaking: Constantine is a saint for Orthodox believers, and for the Catholics he is not. Because, this situation is not from yesterday – it was such in the first millennium, during full unity of East and West. I believe that Christian West was and still is sceptic in relation to Constantine's sanctity mainly because of his military and statesman's biography which necessarily includes the activities which could be hardly defined as Christian virtues, and also because of the different accents in understanding the virtue and sanctity in the East and in the West.

It is often forgotten or neglected the real experience of the term sanctity. Today, it is frequently considered an individual effort and achievement, even among the spiritually enlightened Christians, and the virtue is interpreted as an individual merit in front of God. In the eyes of many Christians, saint people look like Christianized Antique heroes, like a kind of superhuman, supermen, almost semi-Godlike being. But they are certainly not that. Right now, in our conference, it is said very well that according to the standards of the Church even great sinners when they become great penitent man can be considered the biggest God's people, for the ones that reached the climax of the sanctity. For example, the first inhabitant of the heaven in the New Testament was penitent robber, one of two robbers who were crucified with Jesus at the Golgotha.

Therefore, sanctity does not represent only the final achievement of the human moral behaviour: with its essential dimension it belongs to the ethics based on ontology. Inside of her God-mankind ethos of the Jesus' personality is reflected faithfully: Χριστοθήεια and not

only χρηστοθήθεια. It is not only the pure human achievement, heritage nor virtue, but the participation in life and work of Jesus – participation according to the gift, to the blessing, and not to the human merit. Jesus, the Only Saint, is present with deeds in His Saints and discovers His image through them. If the sanctity is understood in this way, in Church and existential way, then it becomes totally understandable and acceptable that someone who had done much for the salvation of many people by his deeds – moreover significantly contributed to the accomplishment of the mission of the Church in the world, in other words, to the evangelistic enlightening of many nations – becomes seen as a holy God's man, companion of the Saviour in acts of the salvation of the man and the world, and his contribution to the growth of the Church's body should be valued in the way similar to the way of evaluating the contribution of some holy monk whose inner preys, or of some zealous shepherd of the Church, or of some martyr who with his passion confirms his unconditional love towards God and His Church.

2. This love exactly covers – as it is stated in the New Testament – multitude of personal sins, even the biggest. We should not forget that Jesus forgave everything to the sinning woman, according to evangelistic history, because she had shown *great love*, and he had left Pharisees to the judgement of God since they were absolutely convinced in their justice and virtue although they unmistakably saw and zealously emphasised to their fellow humans their sins and vices. Eventually we are all sinners and the Church is still holy. It is the Only Holy (*Una sancta*). Therefore, sanctity is firstly the quality and the attribute of the Church (*nota Ecclesiae*). And the greatest sinner, if he becomes a sincere penitent could be the participant and the witness of the Church's holiness, its apostle and missionary. It is hard to believe that there was no ruler more sinful than Constantine, but it is easy to prove that he was really for the Church of his time *episcopus in externis* and that he obligated it for many centuries ahead.

The Eastern Church – during the first centuries of Christian history, before the expansion of Islam, undoubtedly more densely populated, more organised and spiritually stronger than the Church on the West – had recognised, right in the spirit of the described traditional understanding the holiness, in Constantine's personality the servant of God's providence and its protector. In fact, he was the biggest protector of the Eastern part of the Empire, therefore, of the Church on the East. The new capital, on the coast of Bosphorus, was truly a new Rome, even up to details (both Romes are “cities on seven hills”) - not only the name and the idea of Rome were transferred but also the system, the institutions, public administration, military organization, part of inhabitants (according to some resources, half of senators, for example, he left in Rome and the other part he moved to the new capital). Thereby Constantine strengthened the Empire far-sightedly and extended its lifetime. The question is, could the Empire last more than a thousand and more years without transferring the focus to the East, until the fall of Constantinople under Turks, tragically on May 29th 1453.

This view should not surprise you. The fall of the ancient Rome was not the fall of the empire. In this history there was no practically Byzantium. Not only formally, by name, but also effectively, by state guiding idea, the Eastern Christian Empire felt and named itself, up to the last minute of its existence, as the Roman Empire, and its emperors proudly carried the title of the Basileus and Emperor of Romans. Terms *Byzantium*, *Byzantine people*, and *Byzantine* were created by contemporary historians in order to terminologically point out the significant difference between pre-Constantine and post-Constantine history of the Greek-Roman world.

II

1. Why am I saying all this? Certainly not for the reason of repeating notorious things, or reproducing it in a slightly different more personal way, but to present – by connecting the Constantine's heritage with us, here and now, in contemporary Europe – after the initial description of the principal message of the *Edict of Milan* about the freedom of religion and conscience – to present in short the other equally important dimension of that text, the one which is related, naturally and regularly, to the actual task of building the European unity. Today we discuss Europe, its “enlargement”, foundations of its already given unity and recently tasked merging, its “values” and “standards”, its culture and the sources of that culture, the relation of general European identity and the identity of the nations-members of the European family, as well as other important topics, and it seems like we forget that the idea of Europe's unity, it seems that we forget that the idea of European unity – the idea of the universality of the Christian world (*oikumene*), cultural world (*orbis terrarum*) versus the unknown world of the barbarian peoples and different cultures, as well as the idea of universal, the unity – historically it is far and away older than the concept reached in the form of modern European Union and than the modern, in other words, trendy vision of a “global village”.

It is, of course, older than emperor Constantine, and even Alexander the Macedon, but these two men were both – by no means accidentally, carriers of the attribute Great – each in his time and each in his own way, had tried to embody and in it partially, but more than anyone before them, succeeded, the latter one on behalf of the Hellenic Universality, and the former on behalf of the Universality of Greek-Roman Empire, irreversibly pervaded by Christianity. Constantine's Empire – though created long ago before him, with the fire and sword – have already been voluntarily accepted as a common home of its diverse population. United by the integral territory, huge even for current concepts, and with one state idea, more coherent and more organic than state ideas of today's unions and federations, was at the same time multinational and multi-religious, and multi-cultural in the full sense of these, now already inflationary and quite ideological, terms.

It stayed like that even after Constantine's radical religious-cultural turn, in other words after the final predominance of the Christianity over paganism, until the tragic death of his namesake, the last Roman emperor. The same was, after all, the Western medieval, Carolingian pseudomorphosis of the Empire, as well as its later, Austrian version of the “Roman Empire of German nation”. Therefore, if not Christianised – but still pluralistic – the Roman Empire was a unique anticipation of modern Europe in the process of reuniting? It could even claim that *oikumene* of that time was, in a certain way, more comprehensive and more successful than today's European Union: it enclosed the whole wider Mediterranean Basin on three continents – the biggest part of the European area, front Asia, and the North Africa – and in spite the existence of many different nations, languages, cults and cultures, it manifested stronger spiritual and civilisational unity than the one that we in Europe at the beginning of the 21st century take as praiseworthy.

2. In this context, it is good to mention, of course, that historical reality of one epoch – in this case ours – neither was nor could be a true copy of some gone time, especially ancient. Moreover, the past should not be idealised. As follows, apart from my utterly positive opinion of the grandeur of Rome, the Old and the New one, and the grandeur of Constantine's

personality, I do not close my eyes in front of the fact that Greek-Roman society was very much imperfect, burdened with injustices, for example institution of the slavery was not abolished even when Christianity had already permeated all its pores. Regardless of certain dark sides of the Christian Empire and the civilisational pattern for which Great and Saint Constantine is considered a founder and a symbol, still there is an indelible impression – at least for me – that from the history and spiritual heritage of that time, originated largely in the letter and spirit of the *Edict of Milan*, we can find even today not only a few precious messages and lessons.

The Empire is, I would say, dead but its spirit is in a new form alive. The letter of the *Edict of Milan* is in a similar way surpassed, but its spirit, in a new interpretation and application is very much present. I am fully in accordance with the opinion of His Holiness the Serbian Patriarch Irinej, expressed at the end of his message to our conference, that the juices of Constantine's deed and time are fresh even today. I would dare to add that they are not only fresh but also nourishing – if we use them properly. The proper application is the same as the diachronic approach: we interpret ancient reality and revive it in the context of our time and our spiritual needs. They however stand in the sign of inevitable integrations of peoples and cultures on the one side, and legitimate desire for preservation of one's own identity in all its determinants and dimensions on the other side. Neither the unity that uniforms and devours originalities is recommended nor it is desirable to cherish characteristics which annul the communion and mutuality. The former is totalitarian levelling and the latter is autistic self-isolation, and both – way of fading and death.

It all also counts for the process of bringing together and cooperation among the Churches: one of two impermissible extremes is a tendency to impose its own – usually partial – interpretations of faith and order, and the other one is a combination of complacent self-sufficiency and non fraternal indifference towards others and different ones. The first one means succumbing to the spirit of proselytism and Uniatism, the other one is lack of love and give way to the temptation of sectarian pseudo-messianism as a surrogate for true, congressional, catholic ecclesiality, and both mean – turning from the path of authentic dialogue, the dialogue of truth and love in the spirit of freedom and responsibility of all for everyone, to the aberration of Pharisees self-justification by all means what and inquisitorial condemnation of all other and the different ones. In order to prevent that happen to us, as one of providential signposts the *Edict of Milan* could be useful.

Thank you for your attention!



His Excellency Mons. Ladislav Nemet Bishop of Zrenjanin, The Roman Catholic Church

Ladislav Nemet was born in town Odzaci in 1956. Philosophy and theology studies he studied in Poland, in Pienieznu. He got his Phd theology degree on the dogmatics topic at Gregorian in Rome. He worked as a missionary on Philippines in 1987 and after that he taught dogmatics in Modling, in Austria. He was the head of Saint Gabriel and a nearby Parish assistant. He taught at the Jesuit Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb. From 2002 to 2004 he was an associate of the Holy See office of the United Nations in Vienna, and until 2007 he was a Provincial of Hungarian verbit provinces. In 2006 he was the secretary of Hungarian Episcopal conference. In 2008 he was ordained as a Bishop of Zrenjanin.

Everyone Should Believe as His Heart Wishes Theological - historical thoughts on freedom of religion

Thank you very much. Excellencies, Your Eminences, ladies and gentlemen, I am glad that I can participate at this conference which is very important for all of us. I would start with my thoughts in a different way than Bishop Bački spoke earlier.

In the text so-called the *Edict of Milan* that was signed by Constantine Augustus and Licinius Augustus we read the following: “For the state stability and for the peace in our time it is very suitable that every individual be allowed to practice his religion by his own choice; and we do not predict to call off this regulation in the honor that we owe to each religion.”

This regulation confirmed some earlier laws, which were - now gathered in a new, complete formula – taken together ensured the freedom of all Christians and to the Christian religion. The same regulation returned the taken property to Christian communities and guaranteed financial help for building temples and for the church life support.

The goal of my introductory thoughts in this afternoon programme is to draw attention to a complex reality of religious freedom, which does not depend only on government institutions and laws, or socio-political surroundings, but very much on dogmatic-theological understanding on how I understand myself, Christian religions and communities – in our case Christian churches, starting from the time before the *Edict of Milan*, through the *Edict of Milan* and up to our time. Of course, as we have already heard, for the first thousand years Christianity – was together. Later we separated and everyone put accents differently which are valid today.

Of course, this is a very superficial presentation of this huge and complex problem, but I think that it will still show or try to show or emphasize a very important fact: freedom is an

⁹² This text is unauthorised. The text is a transcript of the speech held at the conference in Niš 25th of February 2011.

enormous gift and it should be used with responsibility and in belief of God's truth. And there is a borderline, so to say, between responsibility and God's truth which is the source of freedom.

We know that Christianity developed very rapidly after the *Edict of Milan*, so that Emperor Theodosius proclaimed that religion to be the official religion of the Roman Empire in 380. And as we heard this morning from professor Tanasković who said: "now it came to it that Christians started pursue pagans and those who are *not Christians*."

Reasons for that kind of behavior we can find in different socio-political characteristics. But, in my opinion, we can find theological grounds of that phenomenon.

Even before the Edict of Milan, Origen in Alexandria in one of his homelia said: "No one should deceit himself, no one should try to convince himself that outside this house, which means outside this Church (Christian) salvation is possible. If someone leaves this Church, he will convict himself to death." (in: Jos. hom. 3, 4, Baehr. VII, 304–6; hom. 6, 4; ebd. 326)

This idea after the *Edict of Milan* was passed Kiprijan (Cyprian) developed and led it to the famous formula which later found its path in official studies, first at Christian general studies, and later in an even more stricter sense in the science of Catholic church in the West: *Salus extra ecclesiam non est* (*There is no salvation outside the church*). (Ep. 73, 21 – CSEL 3, 795)

The context of this sentence in Kiprijan's idea is the question of Church unity, it is about those who after the baptism left the Church unity, they fell because of their sin or weakness or danger in life, and Kiprijan answers to them and says: "If you do not come back to the Church you are mistaken, you do not have salvation."

Freedom given at the Edict of Milan, and later drastically confirmed under Theodosius, led through socio-theological development to Fulgentius of Ruspe (†533) who for example, and he was the student of Saint Augustine, in his work *De fide ad Petram* wrote that baptism if it had been separated outside one Catholic church as it was in the first thousand years, did not save. All who were baptised that way, even children, and pagans, and Jews, they all would go to hell, because they were the devil's associates and servants. (3, 14; 36, 77; 37, 78; 27, 68)

This work had a huge influence on theological plan (for many years, even centuries, almost until the XVIII century, this work was ascribed to Saint Augustine, and then they found out later that it was written by his student, PL 40, 750–778), and of course on the socio-political plan if we know how Christianity was developing in the East and in the West and which role that religion or confession had in political life of Europe during that period. Because we know that slowly but certainly, Christianity was the only power in the West that held people together when the empire collapsed. In the East that empire was stronger, that means that the world political government was stronger but the church kept pace with that government.

After the big collapse of the Church unity, I would call it that way, in 1054 this idea was tighten up in the West. The Council of Florence in 1442 solemnly declared the teaching (DS 1351 ili NR 381) that: „noone outside the Roman Catholic Church, not even Jews, or atheists, nor those who were separated from the unity, cannot be saved, but they will have the same destiny which is prepared for the devil and his angles.“ We can see how it came to the

narrowing of the freedom of religion in the next thousand years. Freedom of confession. At the beginning it was just so to say freedom, meaning that it can be practised, later freedom was the only possibility for practising it. Here is not only about the freedom of activity and behaviour, but about eschatological salvation that the Bishop also mentioned before.

Until the Second Vatican Council that was held in Rome between 1962 and 1965, those words were understood literally, at least on the official plan. We know that it is something different that the official Church says, magisterium as we call it, and it is something completely different that was developing in the Catholic Church where we have different theological streamings, which lead to the point where some thoughts were elaborated and tried to be explained. At the end of XIX and at the beginning of XX century historically speaking it was very important for the Catholic Church when a deeper study of church fathers and their works started, when there was a clear distinction between Kiprijan's words and his real thoughts and the context he was talking about. Whether he didn't want to say that there was no salvation outside the Church, which means without the baptism, but for those who are baptised and chose another way. This is a completely new dimension of the whole problem, so to say.

Only during the Second Vatican Council period, and after it, the Catholic Church officially and positively claimed total freedom of conscience, as we have heard today, the freedom of confession as a basic rule of every human being, people or community. Of course, I underline again, it is one thing that theologians have already developed it and it is a different thing when it got an official formation, a formula that is valid for the whole Catholic Church. And here I would mention three documents from the Vatican Council which were especially written for those fields and questions that I have mentioned several moments ago. One is freedom of conscience *Dignitatis humanae* (Human dignity), then *Nostra aetate* (Our age) which is the document for developing relations with non-Christian religions, which means Islam and everything else from Islam, and Jewish religion as well, which was like our older brother, and other religions in the world. And there is the third document which was very important, and which in my opinion have not completely developed yet, and that is *Unitatis redignation* (Work on unification), an ecumenical document which is about how to open ourselves towards Christian brothers in the other Church, so to say, the Orthodox Church and other religious communities that originate from Christ.

It is very important to understand, that in one big council that lasted for three years everything that was gained, in a theological sense or thank to laymen for the development of secular society laymanisation and secularisation, the development between the state and the Church in the West and especially where modern forms of statehood came at play, where the Church was less present and less influential in the society, it led to that the Church also understood, I say Catholic Church, that the freedom of confession is a huge gift from God which goes hand in hand with socio-political changes and has to be found within those changes. Because we saw up to what extreme phenomena might come that Christians who were persecuted or murdered because of their religion 100 years later did the same but with other people. It means that in some sense, as Constantine said, everyone practises what suits him and what suits his heart, but Constantine also said very nicely that: "for the peace in the country and that we could live together." It is a complex reality that Constantine realised that not only the state nor one religion can decide about freedom. Freedom as a gift from

God serves to all. And everybody are entitled to freedom. I can enjoy my freedom without wounding a person who is close to me.

The bases of that freedom, as I have said, is in God. God gave us total freedom to choose between the right and wrong, to choose between this form of life or that form of life or title, and he leaves us freedom but also responsibility that goes with it. Greatness of Constantine and Licinius as his pal, so to say, at that time they were allies, was by all means in that they understood, and here I agree with his Eminence Bishop Irinej, whether from political or religion reasons because mother was still under the influence of Christianity, but in any case, he realised and they realised that for peace and for respecting freedom of every citizen of the Roman Empire and every religion, no matter which form, it can only be something positive. I hope that in our time, which is full of many changes, where religion is not always in a positive significance or light part of those happenings, socio-political happenings, that we will succeed through our conversations and that process to come to that reality, which is, in my opinion, one of the best ways to resolve those problems, and these are conversations and dialogues among us. Because the dialogue is one of the key words that was used at the Vatican Council and from that time we have the same as a way of cooperation and exchanging opinions with different religions. Ecumenism, I would say, is a Christian for us.

Thank you for your attention.



H. E. Mons. Stanislav Hočevár Archbishop of Belgrade and Metropolitan, The Roman Catholic Church

Mons. Stanislav Hočevár was born in 1945 in the village Jelendol, near Novo Mesto, archbishopric Ljubljana, Slovenia. He studied theology at Theological faculty in Ljubljana. He was ordained as priest on June 29th 1973. He became a Master of Theology at the Faculty in Ljubljana in 1979. In 1999 during the bombing of Yugoslavia, he started the initiative "Peace to You, Balkans" and during the same year he started a successful foundation for helping families with more children called "Anna's harmony". 2000, Pope Jovan Pavle II named him as archbishop coadjutor in Belgrade. He received the title of bishop on May 2000 in the church of Maria Made of God on Rakovnik, in Ljubljana. He came to Belgrade on Holy Spirits in 2000.

During the plenary session of the Bishop's Conference of Yugoslavia in autumn 2000, he received the duties of referent for catechist and young, for the friar life, s becomes the president of bishop's committee for Caritas. In 2001 the Holy Father Jovan Pavle II accepted the plea from the current Belgrade Achbishop Dr. Franc Perk to call him to duty, and Mons. Stanislav Hocevar took over the service of Belgrade archbishop and metropolitan. In 2001 he was elected for the president Bishop Conference of SR Yugoslavia where he held other functions as well.

The Signs of Time

The Lord of the history offers to all of us remarkably many opportunities. Even every day, in every place, in each moment! It depends from all of us how we "read" present time in the light of the past for the future and how from this "reading" we discover the paths of the future and emanate the power for the future.

For me personally, before my arrival to Belgrade (in 2000), the Town of Niš with such an extraordinary past represented great challenge, and in special way the 1700 anniversary of the *Edict of Milan* is exactly that. And the more I saw into the contents of the jubilee's sense, the more inspiration I received. I can say that each misunderstanding of these opportunities made me impatient and irritable.

In that spirit we, all together, jointly searched for the ways to find by true synergy of different subjects in our country right ways for versatile reflexion upon the messages of the great jubilee. I can say that the title of this first out of three planned conferences (under the leadership of: CIVIS, PRO ORIENTE and Peace and Crises Management Foundation with the Churches and religious communities in Serbia): *"Everlasting Value and Permanent Actuality of the Edict of Milan – on the Way to the Great Jubilee in 2013"* is more than satisfactory.

This title derives innumerable inspirations for all of us, and in special way for all people of faith, and more prominently for all Christians.

Each act, which brings to humanity this consciousness on so many possibilities and wakes up in people historical responsibility, deserves special attention and gratitude. As well as the conference in Niš from 24th to 26th February 2011.

We, Christians, should ask ourselves today, in this time: do we have strength for new Ecumenical Council? If Emperor Constantine could in his time, although unbaptized, understand the existential needs of time, actually the voice of the Creator of time, and convened the Council, are we, which are baptised in Jesus Christ, less aware of our opportunities and responsibilities?



Muhamed ef. Jusufspahić **Mufti of Serbia,** **The Islamic Community of Serbia**

Muhamed effendi Jusufspahic was born in 1968 in Belgrade. He enrolled the Faculty of Islamic sciences in Sarajevo in 1987 which he left because of the war events in the ex Yugoslavia and Bosna and Hercegovina territory in 1991. He finished his graduate studies in Cairo at University "Al-Azhar" Faculty of Islamic sciences, after which he enrolled post-graduate studies at the same university. He returned to Belgrade where he employed at the Serbian Islamic community as an Imam at Bajrakli mosque in 2000. He was one of the main initiators for founding Belgrade Islamic secondary Madrasa where he was the first principle. He was chosen for the Belgrade main Imam and Belgrade Mufti assistant in 2004. After the Law for Churches

and religious communities was brought in 2006, Serbian Islamic community was constituted as a Serbian Islamic community Rijaset where for the first time after the SFRJ was broken the merging door for Islamic community on the Republic of Serbia territory was opened, Muhamed effendi Jusufspahic was named for Meshihat president v.d. and Serbian Mufti. Next year he was officially chosen on that function where he is today. On the election session of the Islamic community Supreme Council he was chosen for Reis deputy in 2010.

Everyone Should Believe as His Heart Wishes

By the name of the God Gracious, Compassionate.

Thank God and to the man the prayer to God for the salvation and happiness.

Friends, brothers and sisters according to Adam, we truly are because we are not different in any way, thank God, God gracious, compassionate lord of the last judgement. Only you we worship, only to you we serve and only your help we ask for. Show us the right way. To the way of those you gave directions to by your blessing, not to those that makes you angry, nor those who lost their way. Amen – it is true.

Upon my time – everlasting God swears, creator of the time and space – every man is loser, except these that have faith, that do good deeds, mutually sincere, mutually patient! Who wants should believe – it was said by God to us – and who doesn't want should not believe. Oh, people – the Creator of everything calls us, I created you out of one man and one woman, so you could get to know each other. Among you, the best and the most respectable is the one who is God-pleasing. Say – God says – he, the God is the one and only. God is the shelter to everyone. He is not born neither he came to being, he is incomparable. He is incomparable! These are the words of God from Qur'an, sacred text of the Muslims, the book that should be read.

In Semitic Muhammad's, Arab language, God has words and senses "poured" and into Semitic Moses', Hebrew, and in Semitic Jesus', Aramaic, because these languages have conso-

nant alphabets which provides provides immanent ambiguity to God's words in time and fertile world of human physics, the word for heart is "kalb" and in Serbian language the heart is "kalup" (mold) of man. We should remind ourselves on Abraham with Nimrod, Moses with Pharaoh, Jesus with Cesar and Pharisees, Muhammad with polytheists and their servants. Some people give presents like Moses, and some like Pharaoh, some people beg like Moses, and some like Pharaoh! It is all about the heart, the human mold. What we place in children's heart makes their mold for the rest of their lives! We should follow the heart sold to God, not the heart devoted to not-God. Let the heart devoted to God be a locomotive, to the wagon of the weak, and lost. And many led wagons would like to have the place of the locomotive, the leader! Atheists, polytheists, heathens, and illiterate who say that they are believers but about their faith only God should judge.

Nisher Constantine got the time and burden, burden of the leader, made a decision to go towards the freedom of human faith. If he turned back, he could turn everything upside down. Still, today, there are people who want to turn upside down. That is responsibility that God gives us in time when he swears.

His mother was a believer of Jesus' faith. She sowed it in his heart. In the heart of polytheism she sowed the monotheism, mother, to arise and to grow, once - a child.

Why would we, the Muslims, be interested in this event?

- » Because we believe there is no difference between Jesus and Muhammad, and between the faith of Jesus and that there is no faith of Muhammad.
- » Because the freedom of religion is common both to the faith of Jesus and to the faith of Muhammad.
- » Because we live and love both Niš and Serbia, home and motherland.
- » Because we know what religious freedoms mean and because we know how it is when your temple is burnt!
- » Because we agree that in our motherland, Serbia, there should never be temples and human freedoms burnt.
- » Because we like to be with our neighbors in everything that is good.

God bless you. It is nice to be with you. Thank you for the invitation and with God's help to be in everything good together.



**Professor Dr Radovan Bigović,
Director of the Christian Cultural Center
and Professor at the Faculty of Theology,
University in Belgrade**

Dr Radovan Bigović, professor of Orthodox Seminary faculty, University in Belgrade, and head of the monastery of Saint Archangel Gavriilo in Zemun, was born on January 17th 1956 in Nikšić. He finished seminary in monastery Krka. On Seminary faculty SPC in Belgrade, he graduated in 1980. Two years later he graduated on Philosophical faculty in Belgrade. He was Assistant and Docent on Seminary faculty in Belgrade, and he was elected for associated professor and then in 2000 he was named a dean of the faculty. He defended doctoral dissertation in 1992.

Everyone Should Believe as His Heart Wishes

Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, honourable fathers, ladies and gentlemen, at the beginning I would like to thank, firstly, to organizers for inviting me to this very important and significant meeting. It is a great honour for me. Of course, I cordially congratulate to organizers for, we can already say that, successfully organised conference. This achievement is respect and attention worthy.

The point of this jubilee which we are heading to, and even this meeting here today and many others that will be organised probably in near future on different levels and in different places is not, as we had chance to hear from others, just a return to past. This is not a sort of “commemorative meeting” but searching for what is topical in this event – *Edict of Milan* – for our time as well. The *Edict of Milan* gave to the Christians freedom of public act in Roman Empire. This, I want to emphasise specially. The right for public act which is guaranteed by all Charters and Conventions on Human Rights today is being violated all over the world. Millions of believers, to a lesser or larger extent, suffers because of their religion. Christians are being denied this right in many countries all over the world.

Recently, I have read information that today more than 70 millions of Christians are treated as second-class citizens, without protection of their basic rights and freedoms, including the basic right – right to life. In Europe, USA, Australia where human rights and freedoms are being idolised, laic secularism does everything to disable Churches and religious communities from any social influence, any influence on public life. Politics, education, economy, culture, media should emancipate totally from each influence of the church and religion. Religion is therefore, as sociologist of religion say, being “totally privatised”. It could be a private matter of any individual. It is free and legitimate. You can pray as much as you want in temples and in Churchyard, but influence on public life is in jurisdiction of the state and so called secular social subjects.

This tendency (denying of public acting to the Church and religious communities) comes from the state but, frankly, it often comes from so called civil (laic) society and that is a serious problem which we should talk and think about exactly regarding this great jubilee. Christians apparently have to find the best and the most adequate methods for public acting in contemporary society.

The second aspect that should be emphasised regarding the contemplation on the *Edict of Milan*, is the fact that Christians when they became free people started constructive dialogue with Hellenic-Roman world, in other words, Hellenic-Roman culture. It is the beginning of the constitution of Christian civilization and Christian culture. This process lasted until the end of the middle age.

It seems that, even today Christians have in front of them the same task, to start constructive dialogue with the challenges of modern civilization, to find a balance again, in our region and in Europe, in relation God – Human, spiritual- material, balance between science and theology, between faith and knowledge, between the beyond and hither, because these divisions and opposites cause immense tragic consequences for each individual and whole European continent.

Today it is often spoken of law, of human rights, of human freedoms, of unity of diversities, of protection of human environment. In spite of that human dignity is being desecrated up to unsuspected proportion. Christianity with its way of life has something to say and offer to the world. It is not an exaggeration if we profess that it practically assures protection of human personality and human freedom. Without faith and Christian ascetic ethics, ethics of self-limited and self-constraint, we have only proclamation of human rights and freedoms. Contemporary man has actually become egoist, selfish and self-closed monad, and human who feels deeply inside a kind of loneliness. Therefore, all these ideals which are being proclaimed by modern civilization may be more or less realised only by accepting of one Christian style of life which implies at first place openness to the God, openness and moderation of man towards other man and towards God. Human as self-closed monad is truncated or incomplete man.

The *Edict of Milan* is being considered as a document on religious tolerance. This is topical even today. How to be open, manly and forbearing towards other and in the same time capable to maintain our own identity? Religious tolerance can be done in someone expansion and power constitution so called “repressive tolerance” (Marcuse). Therefore, it seems that regarding the great jubilee, 1700 years from the Edict of Milan, these three topics (religious freedom and public life of the Christians, constructive dialogue with contemporary civilization, and religious tolerance) deserve special attention. As they were actual then, they are today as well.

Thank you for attention and your patience.



Aleksandar Nećak President of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Serbia

Aleksandar Nećak was born in 1938 in Novi Sad. He finished Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade. He is a member Serbian Engineering Chamber. In the Belgrade Jewish Municipality he was a vice-president, a Council member, Investment and Financial commission president. In the Union of Jewish Communities of Yugoslavia he was the president of Museum commission, Financial commission, Cemetery commission, Summer vacation commission, he was a member of Executive Board of the Union of Jewish Communities in Serbia. He was a member of Serbia state delegation in ITF (Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research). He

is a member of Administrative committee of EJF (European Jewish Fund) and ECJC (European Council Jewish Communities). He is the President of Serbian Council of Jewish Communities since 2007.

Everyone Should Believe as His Heart Wishes

Thank you Eminent Bishop. Your Eminences, sisters and brothers, ladies and gentlemen, “everyone should believe as his heart wishes.” The topic name which makes us happy encourages us and when it is the question of inter-religion cooperation promises nice future that we all sincerely want. The *Edict of Milan* says: “we decided to allow Christians and all the others the freedom of choice and to follow the religion they wish.” That exact sentence makes the *Edict of Milan* very important and significant. Although Jews lost many rights because of the *Edict of Milan*, today I as a Jew support and greet the celebration of the *Edict of Milan* because of its civilizational values.

Flavius Valerius Constantine weaved his wisdom in the *Edict of Milan* and made civilizational move with it. There I see the biggest value of the *Edict of Milan*. Today Churches and religious communities in Serbia make efforts to realize its legitimate and reasonable demands, and wise man, Roman Emperor Constantine the Great, in the above mentioned edict 1700 years ago orders that all property must be returned to Christian community without any delay and in fullness. It would be so convenient for us after so many centuries to welcome such a man as Constantine the Great or a wise man.

As a Serbian citizen I am proud that in Serbia, Serbian Orthodox Church and Town of Niš solemnly and with dignity will celebrate 17 centuries since the *Edict of Milan* declared religious equality, the completion of the Christian persecution and the return of confiscated properties. Therefore, equality, the completion of persecution and the return of properties, these are the values that we support and underline even today. The cross on a Vinik hill will be the symbol and material characteristic of this significant event, and if I am right, His Holiness Serbian Patriarch Mr. Irinej has recently underlined the necessity of the dialogue between Eastern and Western Churches as there is a lot left to be said. Exalted with Serbian

Patriarch's wise thought let me be allowed to ask that this material symbol, I mean the cross, adjoin one spiritual precious stone.

The central Jewish belief is that people of all religions are God's children, and as God's children they are equal. Judaism teaches that just people from all nations have their place in the world that is coming. That means that all people turned to God, who dedicated their lives to religion will go to the sky, to use the Christian concept. Therefore, that is what connects us. I ask my Orthodox brothers if the Church majority and as a noble and good host starts dialogue between our two religions, our two communities, words from the past we will replace with brothers' love that connects us. Let that be the spiritual precious stone which will celebrate event in 2013 in the glory of Constantine the Great and civilizational values of the *Edict of Milan*.

הנה דחי פג מ'חא ת'כש מ'ענ המו בוט המ הנה (Psalm 133)

Ine ma tov u'manajim ševet ahim gam jahad. (How it is nice and good when brothers get together.)

With psalm 133. I wish to express my pleasure for getting together around the topic *Everyone should believe as his heart wishes*. Sabat salom.



Dr Andrija Kopilović Vice-Rector of the Theological-Catechetical Institute, Subotica

Andrija Kopilović was born in 1941 in Bajmok. He finished Faculty of Theology in Zagreb where he got his master's degree in 2002, and then got his PhD degree at the Pope's Theological Academy dogmatic-ecclesiology department in Krakow in 2004. He is named Cathedral Church master of ceremonies and youth catechist in high-schools. He is a member of Catechist Council since 1971. He acts in Presbytery Council since 1972. He was declared for a senior Bishopric member in 1975. He is Prosynodial examiner since 1975. He was named for a Pastor in Saint Aleksandar Parish in Subotica in 1982. He was Bishopric councilor from 1984 to 1989. He was a professor at "Paulinum" from 1969 to 1989. He was named for a Bishopric Vicar from 1989 to 1995. He was studies director in 1989. He was the Provost of Theological-Catechetical Institute since 1994. He is a Rector at Mother of God Sanctuary in Bunaric. He is a member of Presbyterial, Liturgical, Catechetical and Print Council since 1995. He is also a member of Serbian and Montenegrin Bishopric Conference Council for religion science. He is a president of Catholic Institute for culture, history and spirituality Ivan Antunovic and a member of Administrative Board of Croatian cultural centre Bunjevacsko kolo. He is named for an honorable archpresbyter in 2004.

Everyone Should Believe as His Heart Wishes

Your Excellencies, brothers and sisters, it is good that we have looked back on historical context, at least tackled the topic, and it seems to me that what is historical is challenging, whether it is clarified or it is being clarified regarding the person and before all regarding the *Edict o Milan*. At this moment, I was inspired by the presentation of Bishop Nemet to think about, as a challenge, and that is theological dialogue which exists already, thank God, in Orthodox and Catholic Church, institutionalised as theological dialogue actually shows what a great area exists, I would say, to correct wrong interpretations whether they come from one or other side. Therefore, I think that celebration of the jubilee does not have much significance if it is just a celebration but as a challenge in a sense, regarding what previous speaker, Mr. Nećak, has said wisely, that it is very topical to talk about problems, because the celebration as it is, is a cause to value something that was so clearly said and during the period of 1700 years forgotten.

I think that it is very important to actualize historical and theological context, it is that dialogue-theological which connects us in the multitude of facts when returning to resources and to interpretation of our fathers. Finally, what Mr. Bigović has said, that is this conference and number of other events and meetings, in my opinion, do not have significance if we do not see the *Edict of Milan* as a project in the future, in our future agenda. Thus, the question that is tackled here is a question of real freedom. I think that we live in time when human has never been more alienated than he is now, and has never been more locked up as he is now, and now there is a cause to talk about real liberation. Not only that the *Edict* gave the

equality but in the history the faith gave the liberation to man who became, it seems to me, the biggest individual.

Thus, in front of us is a pastoral project: what should we do to liberate the human from inside, because real freedom is the freedom from inside. Although there are the external ones a lot, the one from inside is a pastoral project which should be the reason for the dialogue. And finally, in the future, a vision, in my opinion, this whole walk towards jubilee could be a walk towards values, as Professor Tanasković has said in the morning, to help in spiritualizing both Europe's lobes of lungs, or of that former Roman Empire, because the emphasis is that is not breathing at least not with the heart. And I think that it is very important for society to learn these values, which won't be given by the society that proclaimed economy for the primary value, but the society which learns spiritual values. That is for us, Churches and religious communities the primary task. In my opinion, Constantine's jubilee's actualization of historical social and religious step forward is given to us as an offer, challenge and maybe as a responsibility for the future. I've summarised this as my contribution.

Thank you.



Archpriest Vitalij Tarasjev Elder of the Moscow Patriarchate compound in Belgrade

Everyone Should Believe as His Heart Wishes

Thank you Your Eminences on this opportunity to say a few words in the name of the Russian Orthodox Church. I would like to share with all of you the experience which Russian Orthodox Church had since the beginning of the spiritual regeneration which had started somewhere in the middle of 80s in the last century until nowadays, because during that period there were extremely many challenges and provocations regarding the subject that we are talking about today and that is the freedom of other man, freedom of the man who is different than us whether on national, or religious ground.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill who began his duty as the President of the Synod Department of Church External Relations in 1989, at the beginning of 90s when the process of Soviet Union falling apart was already over, when millions of people who have lived for decades in the spiritual chaos found themselves in the ambient which signified freedom, but at the same time the possibility of that freedom abuse. Metropolitan Kirill was the initiator that in canon territory of the Russian Orthodox Church, which is for centuries, as you are familiar with, multinational and multiconfessional, to establish the Russian Inter-religious Council. First reason for that was the possibility of inter-religious and inter-national conflicts on our canon territory. Thank God, Russian Orthodox Church, as the major one in Russian Federation, state that legally inherited the Soviet Union, took over the biggest responsibility for that and thank God again, our brothers Buddhist, Jews and Muslims who traditionally live in our canon territory and who shared that responsibility with us came to us. The result of that is, thank God, big conflicts – armed conflicts were not on the great part of the Russian Federation territory, confrontations were prevented, all representatives of the major religions in Russian Federation responsibly performed their duties, and members of Russian Orthodox Church, I mean bishopric, clergy, accomplished their mission successfully developing that tolerance among our Russian Orthodox people. That was extremely necessary during 90s. And the second positive consequence which we feel today, testifies that the whole society in Russian Federation still has stabilization tendency. People are more and more turned to their everyday professional obligations. They are turned to their private lives, families, and in that ambient Russian Orthodox Church did not stay inactive. Educating believers and children in that spirit, for what we have fought, and that is a kind of quiet life style without physical and other conflicts and that every person who is a society member in Russian Federation has equal rights for own development, spiritual and economical as well.

And today, thank mighty God, and not only in Moscow and central Russia, but literally, from Poland border up to those East coasts where you can see Japan, the game is equal and we can cite many examples which say to us that members of other religious communities or other

nations, succeeded to reach an ideal, high and respectable place in a society with their honest work.

Russia is, of course, different than Serbia. Serbia has its specific way of communicating with European Union and is on a way of European integrations. Russian Federation communicates in a different way with European Union countries and spiritually, culturally and economically connects with them in a different way, but this example of existing an active Inter-religious Council is a good example and I think that all the things that Bishop of Bačka Mr. Irinej during past years did in the name of Serbian Orthodox Church, and that is gathering all members of religious communities who traditionally live on this territory and that gathered, even informally, still show their word and their opinion in front of Serbian governmental agencies and in front of Serbian public as well, represents a good cooperation between Church and religious communities, based on love and respecting all the people in Serbia.

At the end of my presentation I wish to thank all the participants for their attention and once again thank Bishop of Bačka Mr. Irinej for showing me trust and invitation.

ANNEX



Letter of support from His Holiness, Mr. Irinej, the Serbian Patriarch



ПАТРИЈАРХ СРПСКИ

Госпођа Мирјана Прљевић,
међународни генерални секретар
Асоцијације ЦИВИС,
Доситејева 4,
Београд,

22. јула 2010. г.
Београд

ПОШТОВАНА ГОСПОЂО ПРЉЕВИЋ

У вези са Вашим писмом од 19. јула ове године, у коме Нас извештавате о планираном међународном сусрету у Нишу, у фебруару 2011. године, а поводом великог јубилеја – 1700 година од доношења Миланског едикта са радним насловом: “НЕПРОЛАЗНА ВРЕДНОСТ И ТРАЈНА АКТУЕЛНОСТ МИЛАНСКОГ ЕДИКТА – У СУСРЕТ ВЕЛИКОМ ЈУБИЛЕЈУ 2013“, у организацији Асоцијације ЦИВИС, овим Вас обавештавамо да са радошћу дајемо Наш благослов за одржавање истог скупа у просторијама Епархије нишке у Нишу.

С благословом,



ПАТРИЈАРХ СРПСКИ

Letter of support from the Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church



СВЕТИ АРХИЈЕРЕЈСКИ СИНОД
СРПСКЕ ПРАВОСЛАВНЕ ЦРКВЕ

Број 1438

22. децембар 2010. године
у Београду

Госпођи Мирјани Прљевић,
међународном генералном секретару
Асоцијације CIVIS
Београд

Поштована госпођо Прљевић,

Част нам је извести Вас да је Свети Архиепископски Синод у својој седници од 7. децембра 2010. године посветио дужну пажњу Вашем допису од 25. новембра 2010. године, којим обавештавате Његову Светост Патријарха српског Господина Иринеја о детаљима у вези са одржавањем конференције под називом *Непролазна вредност и трајна актуелност Миланског едикта – у сусрет великом јубилеју 2013*, која је планирана за фебруар месец 2011. године.

С обзиром на то да би то била прва конференција посвећена овом јубилеју, значајном како за Српску Православну Цркву тако и за цео хришћански свет, Свети Архиепископски Синод је одлучио да организатор ове Конференције буде Епархија нишка, коју ће иста реализовати у сарадњи са Светим Архиепископским Синодом,

Одбором Светог Архијерејског Сабора за припрему обележавања 1700-годишњице Миланског едикта, Вашом Асоцијацијом, аустријском фондацијом *Pro Oriente* и швајцарском Фондацијом за мир и решавање криза.

У исто време, обавештавамо Вас да ће Његово Преосвештенство Епископ бачки Господин Иринеј узети учешће у припреми поменуте Конференције и у њеном раду у име Светог Архијерејског Синода и Одбора Светог Архијерејског Сабора за припрему обележавања 1700-годишњице Миланског едикта.

Молећи се Господу да, молитвама светога цара Константина, поменута Конференција буде успешна, желимо Вам свако добро од Христа Господа.

Са благословом,

За Председника
Светог Архијерејског Синода
Члан, Епископ далматински



Letter of support from H.E. Mr. Orlando Antonini, Apostolic Nuncio of the Holy See in Serbia



APOSTOLIC NUNCIATURE
SERBIA

Belgrade, 15th November, 2010

Prot. No. 660/10

Dear Ms. Prljevic,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated 10th November 2010, informing me of the planned joint conference with Austrian foundation "ProOriente" which will take place on February 24 to 26, 2011, in Nish, Serbia with the title "EVERLASTING VALUE AND PERMANENT ACTUALITY OF THE EDICT OF MILAN - On the way to the great jubilee of 2013".

It is with great pleasure that I am giving my full support to this kind of initiative coming from the Association of NGOs in Southeast Europe – CIVIS and I am with you in your effort especially for the improvement of ecumenical dialogue. May this conference be an innovative opportunity to celebrate with gratitude and joy the great jubilee in the year 2013.

With sentiments of appreciation and esteem, I remain

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Antonini".

Archbishop Orlando Antonini
Apostolic Nuncio

Ms. **MIRJANA PRLJEVIC**
International Secretary General
Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
of Southeast Europe – CIVIS
Dositejeva 4
11000 BELGRADE

Letter of Support from H.E. Mr. Clemens Kojas, Austrian Ambassador in Serbia

Mirjana Prijević
Secretary General International
CIVIS
Dositejeva 4/IV
11000 Belgrade

Österreichische Botschaft
Belgrad

GZ: BELGRAD-ÖB/KULT/0145/2010

Belgrade, 6.12.2010

Dear Ms. Prijević,

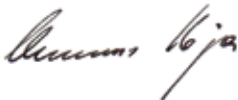
Thank you very much for informing me about the planned international conference "Everlasting Value and Permanent Actuality of the Edict of Milan – on the Way to the Great Jubilee in 2013" on February 24-26 2011 in Niš.

The Austrian Embassy welcomes this event as an important contribution for inter-religious dialogue and regional reconciliation. We would therefore like to express our full support for the organization of this conference.

We are convinced that CIVIS association together with the Austrian "Pro Oriente" Foundation and the Swiss Peace and Crises Management Foundation are ideal partners in this endeavor.

I look forward to joining you at the conference.

Sincerely,



Dr. Clemens Kojas
Ambassador

Letter of Support from H.E. Mr. Wolfram Maas, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Serbia



Botschaft
der Bundesrepublik Deutschland
Belgrad

Abendschrift

Ms
Mirjana Prijević
International Secretary General
Association of Non-Governmental
Organisations of Southeast Europe - CIVIS
Dositejeva 4/IV
11 000 Belgrade
Republic of Serbia

Wolfram Maas

Botschafter der Bundesrepublik Deutschland

Belgrade, 10th of february 2011

Dear Ms Prijević,

thank you very much for informing me about the activities of CIVIS in preparing for the Jubilee of 1700 years of the Edict of Milan issued by Constantine the Great.

This jubilee is of great importance to all countries Constantine the Great lived in and influenced. The Edict of Milan is a milestone of open-mindedness and statesmanship on the way into a modern world.

Its celebration will surely foster religious tolerance and christian unity.

Preparations for this important jubilee have my full support! I therefore wish you and CIVIS all the best in this important effort.

Yours sincerely

Letter of support from the Mayor of Niš, Mr. Miloš Simonović



Република Србија
Град Ниш
ГРАДОНАЧЕЛНИК

Број: 3316/2010-01
Датум: 02.12.2010

АСОЦИЈАЦИЈА НЕВЛАДИНИХ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЈА
ЈУГОИСТОЧНЕ ЕВРОПЕ
Ц И В И С

Мирјана Прљевић
међународни генерални секретар

Поштована госпођо Прљевић,

Град Ниш је модеран, демократски, међународном праву привржени град, који жели да буде лидер у региону и део свих европских интеграционих процеса али и да при томе очува свој идентитет и своју историју која је заиста респектабилна.

Један од циљева ка којима смо усмерени је да постанемо препознатљиви на културној мапи Европе и света и да се шира домаћа и страна јавност упозна са значајем нашег града.

Са намером неговања историјско-културног наслеђа утицајног на потоњи културни идентитет не само нашег града већ и шире, Град Ниш изражава пуну подршку одржавању међународног научног скупа у нашем граду под називом „Непролазна вредност и трајна актуелност Миланског едикта – у сусрет великом јубилеју“, од кога очекујемо да ће такође допринети расветљавању времена, личности и улоге Константина Великог рођеног на овим просторима, и који ће такође широј јавности приближити вредност Миланског едикта како у прошлости тако и у садашњости.

Овај скуп видимо још и као корак напред у сусрет обележавању 1700. годишњице доношења првог едикта о верској толеранцији за чије ће обележавање Град Ниш уложити све своје напоре да буде достојан домаћин светског обележавања овог јубилеја.



Градоначелник

Мр Милош Симоновић

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

People need, more than ever before, better communication. But, good communication implies, also, multilingual communication. Therefore, the main point of this project is multilingual platform exploring, with a motto – eDIALOGmultilingual. In order to achieve that objective, information technologies provide very useful e-support, from any human activities - exploring, science, art, travel, communication, medicine. And these software packages, with respect to that fact, include various special e-program orientations.

MISSION

Selected research platform of e-communication among people, in our conviction, is the Scriptures in general, as the oldest written documents which are systematized and defined. Links within the same and link between the various documents (for instance relations between Bible-Kuran-Tanakh), is, in our view, the challenge of research of the history of mankind.

In cooperation with a number of experts from Serbia and Italy, the primary textual base of the multilingual words, shall be made in 2011. The linguistic platforms for exploring the set of multilingual words are the sets of the Holy Scriptures translations.

EDITIONS:

eBIBLEmultilingual

HISTORY

The first eBible in Serbian was published by the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church in 2000, thus marking, by that edition, the beginning of the 21st century.

Now, after ten years, such AUDIO/DATA CD is accessible to foreign readers, as well. The edition allows linguistic, cultural, academic, educational, still different, recognition of the biblical text.

The ornnilingual eHolyBible contains useful lexicographic data, audio samples of parts of the Bible, internet links at choice, musical and pictorial impressions of the Holy Bible. The 35 languages presented include Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Serbian, Italian, Russian, Hungarian, Croatian and Arabic.

FEATURES

The electronic access to the biblical texts, useful both for theologians and for ordinary readers, who want to read the Holy Bible. In the framework of the accompanying material, which contains pictures and parts of the original parchments and, depending on the language chosen by the reader, it is possible to read various versions of biblical texts. An important feature of the software is, the fact that every reader, respecting the procedure, may include or exclude the biblical texts, based on MS Excel Data.

⁹² The text is part of the eDIALOGmultilingual brochure

PROMOTIONS

The eBible was represented at previous two book fairs in Belgrade, at the stand of the Ministry of science. It was presented at congresses in Italy (Rome, Santa Croce del Sannio - with support by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), in Ljubljana, Canada, USA, as well. The work was offered to the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church, and handed personally to his Holiness the Pope, Benedict XVI. The previous edition was handed personally to Mr. Bill Gates, and Steve Ballmer - Microsoft. The members of the Serbian Parliament are also users of the software.

eTRANSLATOR

It's a dictionary of the Holy Bible multilingual words placed on the Serbian internet domain. That internet data would give translations not using the link word-word, but linguistic rules of various languages as well.

LOGOScantatae

It's the oratory, for symphonic orchestra, choir, soloists and multimedia - based on the libretto of multilingual biblical texts.

The project is supported by MULTIKOM-Belgrade, S&T-Belgrade/Austria.

The publisher of the eBible first edition was the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The publisher of the eBible present edition is the Innovation center of the Mechanical Engineering Faculty of the Belgrade University.

AUTHOR of the editions is InfoMark-Belgrade (©Menuet 2000)

The project is presented by Mr. Milutin Lilić.



Association of Non-governmental Organisations in Southeast Europe - CIVIS

It was founded in 2007 by prominent representatives of the NGOs from Serbia and Southeast Europe who had already been actively involved in all levels of the stabilisation process in the region. Given the fact there was no common association that would represent the interests and positions of the NGOs from Southeast Europe, soon after its founding, the CIVIS Association acquired participatory status in the **Council of Europe's Conference of international NGOs**. The CIVIS Association is active in domains of inter-religious dialogue, empowerment and organisation of civil society, as well as in the acceleration of the European integration of the Western Balkans.

CIVIS has implemented by now several important projects in the field of inter-religious dialogue seen as one of the dimensions of wider inter-cultural dialogue. In 2008, in the European year of Inter-cultural dialogue, the CIVIS Association organised in the Council of Europe premises in Strasbourg an international conference titled **"The Contribution of the Churches and Religious Communities in the Sustainable Peace-building in the South-East Europe"**. The conference was followed by a bilingual publication gathering the speeches of all speakers and it had promotion in Strasbourg, Zagreb and Belgrade. Next year, a special TV serial was prepared "Inter-religious Dialogue and Peace in the Balkans in the period 1990-2009" which was more than once broadcasted at national televisions in the region. The project was realized under the auspices of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and with the donation of the Swiss Peace and Crises Management Foundation.

Further information about CIVIS: www.civis-see.org



Peace and Crises Management Foundation

Peace and Crises Management Foundation

Peace and Crises Management Foundation was founded in Switzerland in 1992 by Mr. Boris Vukobrat. The creation of the foundation was a response to the devastating disintegration of former Yugoslavia. The principle idea of the Foundation is peaceful resolving of conflicts, eradication of all forms of national, religious, and any other hostilities, and the establishment and reinforcement of all forms of civic, democratic society, founded on the highest world standards. Peace and Crises Management Foundation has been acting as non-governmental, non-partisan organisation. Since its creation, the Foundation has been conducting peace-making, humanitarian, publishing, and media activities. One of the main projects of the Foundation was *“Proposals of a New Community of the Former Yugoslav Republics”*, that was a result of Mr. Vukobrat’s concerns about Yugoslavia and its future. The ideas expressed in the Proposals gave a solid basis for the solution of the conflicts and for the renewal of cooperation in the region after the war. During the years following the end of the conflicts in Yugoslavia, the Foundation gave a strong support to the civil sector and democratic transition of the newly formed states.

More on Peace and Crises Management Foundation is available at www.fondmir.com



PRO ORIENTE

The impetus for creating the foundation PRO ORIENTE in 1964 came from the visionary Franz Cardinal König, Archbishop of Vienna. The basis for this was the Second Vatican Council’s Ecumenical Decree *“Unitatis Redintegratio”*. The idea then was that the foundation should promote contact with those Churches oppressed by Communist regimes, and also with the Oriental Orthodox Churches, taking appropriate initiatives. Vienna, because of its geopolitical situation and its traditionally good ecumenical climate, was and is a particularly suitable site for PRO ORIENTE. The fall of the Iron Curtain on the one hand made the work of the foundation easier, but on the other hand, the strengthening of the identity of the individual Orthodox Churches in various countries brought forth new challenges to efforts towards Christian unity. The mission of PRO ORIENTE is further encouraged by the fact that Pope Benedict XVI has made ecumenical efforts a priority of his pontificate. The process of European enlargement is strengthening the forty years of efforts by PRO ORIENTE to overcome the division of Europe by uniting Christians, most of whom, in south-eastern Europe, are of the Orthodox faith. The methods of the foundation are based on academic investigation of the reason for the divisions between Christians, with the additional goal of promoting reconciliation. PRO ORIENTE sees its activities as a contribution to peace in the world.

More on PRO ORIENTE foundation is available on www.pro-oriente.at

List of Participants

PARTICIPANTS:

1. **His Grace Bishop of Bačka, Mr. Irinej**, Serbian Orthodox Church
2. **Dr. Johann Marte**, PRO ORIENTE Foundation President
3. **Mr. Boris Vukobrat**, Peace and Crises Management Foundation President and Honorable President of Association of Non-Governmental Organisations – CIVIS
4. **Ms. Mirjana Prljević**, International Secretary General of the Association of Non-Governmental Organisations – CIVIS
5. **Mr. Božidar Djelić**, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia
6. **Mag. Miloš Simonović**, City of Niš Mayor
7. **H. E. Mons. Orlando Antonini**, Apostolic Nuncio of the Holy See in Serbia
8. **Archpriest Vitalij Tarasjev**, Superintendent of the Metochion of the Moscow Patriarchy in Belgrade
9. **Mr. Henri Bohnet**, Konrad Adenauer Foundation Director, Belgrade Representative Office
10. **Mag. Jelena Jablanov Maksimović**, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Belgrade Representative Office
11. **Dr. Christian Gastgeber**, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Byzantine studies
12. **Mag. Erika Juhász**, Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Piliscsaba, Hungary
13. **Dr. Sebastiano Panteghini**, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Byzantine Studies
14. **Dr. Peter Piffl-Perčević**, President of the PRO ORIENTE Foundation Section in Graz
15. **Dr. Ivan Redi**, PRO ORIENTE Foundation Section in Graz
16. **Mag. Florian Tuder**, PRO ORIENTE Foundation, Vienna
17. **Prof. Milutin Timotijević**, Rector of Prizren Seminary St. Cyril and Methodius, temporary relocated in Niš
18. **Prof. Dr. Darko Tanasković**, Faculty of Philology Professor, University of Belgrade
19. **Prof. Dr. Radivoj Radić**, Visantologist, Institute for Byzantine Studies, Belgrade
20. **H.E. Mons. Ladislav Nemet**, Bishop of Zrenjanin, Roman Catholic Church
21. **H.E. Mons. Stanislav Hočevar**, Archbishop of Belgrade and Metropolitan, RCC
22. **H. E. Mr. Istvan Čete-Semeši**, Bishop of Reformative Christian Church in Serbia
23. **Mr. Muhamed Jusufspahić**, Serbian Mufti, Islamic Community of Serbia
24. **Prof. Dr. Radovan Bigović**, Director of Christian Cultural Center and Professor at the Faculty of Theology, University of Belgrade
25. **Mr. Aleksandar Nećak**, President of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Serbia
26. **Mons. Andrija Kopilović**, PhD, Vice-Rector of the Theological-Catechetical Institute, Subotica
27. **Mr. Milutin Lilić**, Innovation Center, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, University of Belgrade, Author of the project eDIALOGUEmultilingual

GUESTS:

28. **Prof. Dr. Nicolas Cnokrak**, Dean of the Orthodox Institute of Theology Saint-Serge, Paris
29. **H.E. Mr. Clemens Kojá**, Ambassador of Austria in Serbia
30. **H.E. Mr. Ljubiša Georgievski**, Ambassador of the Republic of Macedonia in Serbia
31. **Mr. Petr V. Frolov**, Counsellor, Head of Political Section, Embassy of the Russian Federation
32. **Mr. Aleksandar Simić**, Composer
33. **Mr. Milan Sitarski**, Belgrade Open School

34. **Mr. Milan Predan**, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Slovenia
35. **Rev. Mons. Jose Leite Nogueira**, Apostolic Nunciature of the Holy See in Serbia
36. **Mr. Mario Zadro**, First Secretary, Political Affairs, Embassy of the Republic of Croatia
37. **Mr. Aleksandar Sedmak**, Head of Innovation Center, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, University of Belgrade
38. **Prof. Dr. Mile Ilić**, President of the City of Niš Assembly
39. **Dr. Aleksandar Cvetković**, Prefect of the Niš County
40. **Mr. Miloje Branković**, Honorary Consul of Hungary in Niš
41. **Ms. Stela Jovanović**, Honorary Consul of the Republic of Slovakia in Niš
42. **Prof. Dr. Predrag Cvetković**, Vice-dean of the Faculty of Law in Niš and Assistant of the Mayor of Niš
43. **Mr. Mile Veljković**, Head of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments and Cultural Heritage Preservation Niš
44. **Dr. Miša Rakocija**, Historian of Art, Editor in Chief of the Scientific Journal Niš and Byzantium
45. **Mr. Dragan Milošević**, President of the Board for the Construction of the Complex of Emperor Constantine, Niš, Serbia
46. **Ms. Marica Maksimović**, National Museum of Nish Director
47. **Mr. Srdjan Savić**, Niš Cultural Centre Director
48. **Ms. Ivanka Stančevski**, Historian Archive Director
49. **Mr. Miomir Radovanović**, Head of the Office for International Cooperation in the Field of Science, Education and Culture of the City of Niš

ORGANIZERS

50. **Bojana Popović**, Secretary General of the Association of Non-Governmental Organizations – CIVIS
51. **Ana Mišić**, City of Niš Mayor's Office, International Cooperation Affairs
52. **Priest Branko Cincarević**, Protopresbyter Stavrophor, Diocese of Niš, Serbian Orthodox Church
53. **Priest Mr. Ivan Cvetković**, Archpriest, Diocese of Niš, Serbian Orthodox Church

Conference Agenda

Thursday 24th February 2011

13:00	Arrival of participants to Niš, Hotel Tami Residence Durmitorska prilaz bb, Niš www.tamiresidence.com
13:15	WELCOMING COCKTAIL Church Hall, Diocese of Niš, 7 Prijezdina st. Niš
15:00	Dinner at hotel Tami Residence

Friday 25th February 2011

08:30	REGISTRATION OF PARTICIPANTS Church Hall, Diocese of Niš, 7 Prijezdina st. Niš
09:00	OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE <i>Opening address of hosts and special guests</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ His Grace Bishop of Bačka, Mr. Irinej, Serbian Orthodox Church ▶ Mr. Miloš Simonović, Msc. Mayor, City of Niš ▶ Archpriest Vitalij Tarasjev, Superintendent of the Metochion of the Moscow Patriarchy in Belgrade ▶ H.E. Orlando Antonini, Apostolic Nuncio of the Holy See in Serbia ▶ Dr. Johan Marte, President of the PRO ORIENTE Foundation ▶ Ms. Mirjana Prljević, International Secretary General of the Association CIVIS ▶ Mr. Bozidar Djelić, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia
09:15	MORNING SESSION, part I <i>At most 20 min. for the presentation and 10 min. for the discussion</i> Moderator: Mr. Henri Bonet, Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Belgrade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Constantine the Great and his Bible “Decree” Dr. Christian Gastgeber, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Byzantine Studies ▶ Constantine the Great and his Importance: Seen by the Historiography of the 7th Century Mag. Erika Juhász, Péter Pázmány University, Piliscsaba, Hungary ▶ Constantine the Great and the Renewal of his Image (14th century, Ecclesiastical History of Nikephoros Xanthopoulos) Dr. Sebastiano Panteghini, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Byzantine Studies
11:00	Coffee break
11:30	MORNING SESSION, part II <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Aureole of the Constantine the Great Prof. Milutin Timotijević, Rector Orthodox Theology School Saint Kirilo and Metodije from Prizren, temporarily displaced in Niš ▶ Christianity in the Dialectics of Freedom and Restraint Prof. Dr Darko Tanasković, Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade ▶ Constantine the Great in Serbian Medieval Resources Prof. Dr Radivoj Radić, Visantologist, Institute for Byzantine studies, Belgrade
13:00	Presentation of the E-DIALOG MULTILINGUA Project, Mr. Milutin Lilić

13:15	Lunch hosted by the City of Niš The Regent Club, Obrenovićeve 10, Niš
15:00	AFTERNOON SESSION <i>At most 15 min for the presentation and 60 min for the discussion</i> Topic: <i>Everyone Should Believe as His Heart Wishes</i> <i>Ut daremus et Christianis et omnibus liberam potestatem sequendi religionem, quam quisque voluisset</i> <i>Constantine the Great</i> Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ His Grace Bishop of Bačka, Mr. Irinej, Serbian Orthodox Church ▶ H.E. Mons. Ladislav Nemet, Bishop of Zrenjanin, Roman Catholic Church Discussants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ H.E. Msgr. Stanislav Hočevar, Archbishop of Belgrade and Metropolitan, Roman Catholic Church ▶ Mr. Muhamed Jusufspahić, Serbian Mufti, Islamic Community of Serbia ▶ Prof. Dr Radovan Bigović, Director of Christian Cultural Center and Professor at the Faculty of Theology, University of Belgrade, Serbia ▶ Mr. Aleksandar Nećak, President of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Serbia ▶ H. E. Mr. Istvan Cete-Semesi, Bishop of Reformativ Christian Church in Serbia ▶ Mons. Andrija Kopilović, PhD, Vice-Rector of the Theological-Catechetical Institutea ▶ Archpriest Vitalij Tarasjev Superintendent of the Metochion of the Moscow Patriarchy in Belgrade
17:00	Coffee break
17:30 18:00	Conclusions, formulation of the final paper
19:00	Dinner at Tami Residence Hotel
Saturday 26th February 2011	
09:30	Joint visit to National Museum in Nišu 14 Generala Milojka Lešjanina st. Niš
10:30	Departure from Niš
<i>Working languages: English and Serbian</i>	

SPECIAL ADDITION

Edict of Milan

Gift from Mr. Nebojša Ozimić, historian



Nebojša Ozimić

Nebojša Ozimić was born in 1962 in Niš. He graduated on the Faculty of Philosophy History department in Niš. In the same year he enrolled post-graduate studies at the Faculty of Philosophy Ancient history department in Kosovska Mitrovica. He worked as a history professor, editor-coordinator at the Student-cultural centre in Niš, and since 2010 he works as a curator-historian at the National Museum in Niš. He was a member of the Board for establishing Emperor Constantine as a Town of Niš protector (2001-2004), a member of Organizational board for Town's slava Saint Emperor Constantine and and Empress Jelena (2002-2005), Town of Niš Council for cultural creativity vice-president (2005-2007) and a member of a Board for Saint Emperor Constantine cross raising (2010).

EDICT OF MILAN

INTRODUCTION: GALERIUS' EDICT (311) OF TOLERANCE

The edict of the end of the persecution of Christians which was issued in 311 AD in Nicaea by Galerius, immediately before his death⁹³ and his co-rulers, definitely belongs to that body of legal acts of the ancient world which were treated with such little consideration which was in great opposition to their unquestionably great significance. The reason for this lies primarily in the fact that the contemporaries to this happenings, Lactantius and Eusebius among others, willingly minimized the vitality of the edict brought by Galerius, who, according to their records, was the person with greatest responsibility for the persecution of the Christians in the 4th century. In this work we will point to the false constructs of these two writers regarding all aspects of Galerius' and Constantine's work.

The law dating from 311, the *Edict of Religious Tolerance*, considering its form as well as its content, befittingly bears both its name and glory of the first document of that kind in the Roman Empire. With the issuing of the *Edict of Religious Tolerance*, which was primarily the merit of Church historians of that period, the so-called *Edict of Milan*, signed by Constantine and Licinius in February 313, was delineated, although it mostly re-affirmed the edict of 311. In the following pages of this book we will examine the persecution of the Christians of the 4th century and try to shed some light upon several matters of great importance to Galerius' edict of 311. Those are:

1. The reasons for the beginning of the Great persecution of Christians and its scope;
2. The reasons for which Galerius passed the law and the significance of the first Edict of religious tolerance;
3. Lactantius' and Eusebius' role in creating the cult of a bad ruler (Galerius and Diocletian), i.e., a ruler chosen by God (Constantine), which resulted in deliberate oversight of Galerius' and Diocletian's good deeds.

We learn about so-called "Great persecution of Christians", which Diocletian started in 303, through the works of Eusebius⁹⁴ and Lactantius⁹⁵ which were contemporary witnesses to these events. According to Lactantius, and this is the information taken over by Eusebius as well, Diocletian begins the persecution of Christians out of rather vague motives, under the influence of Galerius.⁹⁶ However, this claim of Lactantius' is contradictory because the same

⁹³ The edict was proclaimed known on 30 April, whereas Galerius died on 5 May, 311

author adduces Hierocle as “the initiator and counselor in the preparation of the persecution”⁹⁷ so that we cannot know for certain who inspired the commencement of the persecution of Christians.⁹⁸ The claim on which Lactantius insists, that Galerius was the one who demanded that Diocletian should apply the measures of repression towards Christians, was also incorrect if we are aware of the description of this ruler’s traits: “He was a remarkable man, wise, fervent in the matters of state, the man who took care of his family and environment, who was prepared to accomplish every task which could befall him, always mysterious, sometimes insanely daring, but mostly cautious; with his iron will he smothered all internal urges that could have lead him astray”⁹⁹

Chances are certainly slight, if indeed there are any, that the younger and more courageous Galerius imposed on authoritative Diocletian the order about the launch of the persecution of Christians, and all that supposedly because Galerius’ mother was angry at Christians who did not want to participate with her in rites honoring The Great Mother Goddess. It is more likely that Diocletian considered Christianity an obstacle for the reconstruction, which he had successfully carried out in various fields of the life of Roman Empire.¹⁰⁰

In an unusually short period of only a few months Diocletian and Galerius issue four edicts by which Christians are deprived of all rights and titles, as well as participation in courts; churches are forbidden to congregate and hold services; finally, Christian priests are compelled to offer sacrifices to non-Christian gods before their absolution.¹⁰¹ These legal acts applied also to members of high-ranked Roman families, as it was in the case of Diocletian’s wife Prisca and daughter Valeria.¹⁰²

The persecution itself had three easily distinguishable phases. The first one, of the shortest duration, lasts to Diocletian’s abdication in 305. Its main characteristic is a series of legal acts issued by Diocletian by which he tried to compel Christians to take part in the civic religious rites of Rome. Many authors maintain that the period of Diocletian’s reign (303-305) was, in

⁹⁴ Eusebius (260-339), the bishop in native town Caesarea. He was educated at the renowned school of Origen. Markedly learned in theology, he authored, together with Pamphilus The Apology of Origen, and after Pamphilo’s death, his biography (now lost), and The Martyrs of Palestine. It is most likely that he became the bishop of Caesarea in 313 AD and stayed on that position until his death on 30 May, 339. He was called the father of ecclesiastical history, a genre to which he set foundation with his work Church History in 10 books. Church History comprises two parts. The former part covers the period from the birth of Jesus Christ to 303 AD, and is recounted in seven books, while the latter part is made of the eighth, ninth and tenth books dealing with the period between the years 303 and 324. He also left an unfinished biography of the emperor Constantine.

⁹⁵ Lactantius (250-320), the teacher of Constantine’s son Crispus, converted to Christianity shortly before his death. He was moved from his position of a rhetorics professor on account of his conversion. Lactantius became a restless critic of paganism and one of the defenders of Christian Church. His work “On the Deaths of the Persecutors” (*De mortibus persecutorum*) is estimated by the majority of the researchers of this period to date from around 318, and esteemed as one of the most important testimonies of the first years of Constantine’s (co-) reign. In this work, Constantine’s vision on Milvian Bridge is mentioned for the first time, which, according to Lactantius, led to victory over Maxentius.

⁹⁶ Lact., DMP, 11, 12; Euseb., HE 8, 1, Burkhart 299. Burkhart presents strong arguments when he claims that Lactantius completely misinterpreted the relationship between Diocletian and Galerius, negating any possibility that Galerius could have imposed his will on Diocletian, or that Diocletian yielded to Galerius’ demands that the persecution should take place. There will be more said about Eusebius’ and Lactantius’ portraying of Roman rulers in due course of this work.

⁹⁷ Lact., DMP, 16,4; Div. Inst. 5,2,12

⁹⁸ Of this and other inconsistencies of Lactantius and Eusebius, as well as their role in making the cult of Constantine and the image of Galerius, more will be said later on.

⁹⁹ Hist. august. Numerian, gl.14

¹⁰⁰ Jedin, 426

¹⁰¹ Euseb., HE 8, 2 i 5; Vukomanović, 252

¹⁰² Euseb., HE 8, 1

¹⁰³ Н.Коваленко, История древнего мира, II, Москва, 1982., 367; Вукомановић, 252-253

¹⁰⁴ Jedin, 430; Lietzmann, History, 68-71, T.D. Barnes, Constantine and Eusebius, Harvard - Cambridge, London, 1981.

fact, the only real persecution of Christian¹⁰³, whereas other claim that only after 308, three years after Diocletian's abdication, did the persecution abate.¹⁰⁴

The second phase is the shortest and it encompasses the events which occurred in 308 and diminished the intensity of short-lived persecution. This is the period of taking necessary steps towards consolidation of Roman religion and its rituals. The third phase starts with the edict issued by Maximinus Daia which planned the renovation of non-Christian temples and rituals, and ends with Galerius' edict of 311.

The persecution was not of the same intensity, and every tetrarch differently put Diocletian's edict into effect. One of them, Constantius Chlorus, limited the implementation of the edict solely to tearing down Christian temples, while he kept Christians at his courts in Trier and York and did not even deprive them of their military ranks¹⁰⁵ in Africa only turning in of the sacred books was demanded, and it was clear to Christians that even that was not going to be followed through rigorously. The Christians, in turn, did not mind to resist and thus sacrificed their lives.¹⁰⁶

The persecutions in the West stopped as early as 306. The situation was similar in Pannonia, which was governed by Licinius since 308 without disturbing his Christian subjects¹⁰⁷ In the East, however, with the coming of Maximinus Daia as a Caesar, most horrid persecutions began. Many non-Christians resented the way Christians were treated, especially Maximinus Daia's treatment of them. Still, it was not until 308 that the persecution weakened, and it did not last long.¹⁰⁸ The fact that non-Christians described the persecution as "difficult, exaggerated, appalling and stupid".¹⁰⁹ speaks sufficiently about the character of the persecution. Based on many well-known cases of martyrs and martyrdom, it can be inferred that the worst of men did the interrogations, as well as the occurrence that judges who were tolerant at all were temporarily moved from their positions.¹¹⁰ To what extent the tortures irritated non-Christian population and induced their sympathy, testifies Eusebius' claim that "even pagans took part in the joy of Christians and congratulated them on the turn of events."¹¹¹

After a couple of months' stagnation in 308 and a more peaceful life, Maximinus Daia began a new surge of persecutions by the edict which planned the renovation of damaged and ruined non-Christian temples. That same edict gave in great detail the directions for the rituals of sacrifice to the gods¹¹². The termination of all persecutions takes place at the end of 310 with Galerius' illness. At the very end of his life, on the 30th of April, he issues the edict proclaimed in Nicomedia. This legal act announces the termination of the persecution of Christians on the entire territory of the empire and the permission to practice their religion freely.

¹⁰⁵ Euseb., HE 8, 13

¹⁰⁶ Burkhart, 299; P.Shaff, History of the Christian Church, vol. II, Ante-Nicene Christianity. A.D. 100-325., New York, 1970., 47 (in further text Shaff)

¹⁰⁷ Jedin, 429

¹⁰⁸ Jedin, 431 ; Shaff, 48

¹⁰⁹ Euseb., De Mart.Pal. 9,1

¹¹⁰ Burkhart, 298

¹¹¹ i.e. at the end of the persecution in 311, Euseb, HE 9,1,7-11

¹¹² Euseb., De Mart.Pal. 9,2

¹¹³ Lact., D.M.P., 34

¹¹⁴ Euseb., HE 8, 17, 9

¹¹⁵ Euseb., HE 8, 16- 17

¹¹⁶ Lietzmann, History, 70

We are familiar with the edict from two sources- the Latin version from Lactantius' text "*On the Deaths of the Persecutors*"¹¹³ and the Greek one from Eusebius' "*Ecclesiastical History*"¹¹⁴. Here we will not deal with Eusebius' mundane, almost mean description of Galerius' illness, but we will cite a commonly accepted claim, which Eusebius started in the first place, that Galerius' health problems and his deep and true repentance for the misdeeds done to Christians, were the cause of bringing the Nicomedian edict of 311.¹¹⁵ Although Constantine and Licinius signed the edict as well as Galerius did, it is undoubtedly clear that the person behind this document is Galerius, taken ill. We will not go into his reasons for issuing a legal act of such importance, which has every right to be called the *Edict of Tolerance*,¹¹⁶ but we will survey certain problems which preceded the edict and the ones which followed it.

The edict itself is permeated by the Roman concept of law and state. In the introductory part the aspiration of the ruler to keep the empire in the old religion is explained, "in accordance with the ancient laws and common institutions."¹¹⁷ Since the majority of Christians refused to serve "other heavenly gods", the signers of the edict, having seen that the Christians exposed themselves to unnecessary danger were still unwilling to renounce their God, "found it useful, for our love of man and for the sake of custom, as we always do, to condescend to Christians, and, therefore, we allow them to stay in their religion and they can erect buildings in which they will congregate as they are accustomed."¹¹⁸

The closing part of the quote from the *Edict* reminds of Tertulian's notion the of ideal faith laid out in the open letter to vice-consul of Africa Scapola in which he says that it is "a right of every man to confess the religion he chooses. And no one should ban or impose a religion of his own. Religion is not to be imposed, it must be accepted freely."¹¹⁹

Concept of the edict completely clarifies that the legislator, from the standpoint of the state, sees the martyrdom of Christians as strange and unnecessary, the same way it sees the anarchy in Christendom. Religious split and mutual intolerance, which characterized early Christianity and remained a permanent mark of this religion, caused not only a lack of understanding on Romans' part, but also a sensible fear of transferring the mutual problems of Christians to the matters of state. One part of the edict deals with this pointing to a great split in Christian church which is manifested in unrelenting tensions within the state:

"For these people (Christians) so deviate by their behavior, they are so led by insanity that they diverge from the ancient laws and introduce those (laws) which they like.¹²⁰ And as they do not think alike, they are mutually divided."¹²¹

This part of Galerius' edict confirms a great division within Christian church as a result of different theological interpretations, and also of personal interests. In times before the beginning of the persecution 303/304, Christian church in Asia Minor and Africa was economi-

¹¹⁷ Euseb., HE 8, 17

¹¹⁸ Euseb., HE 8, 17

¹¹⁹ est unicuique, quid putaverit colere; nec alii obest aut prodest alterus religio. Sed nec Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani, Opera, V, Vinobonae, 1957, 10 ("humani iuris et naturalis religionis est cogere kreligionem, quae sponte suscipi debet").

¹²⁰ What is meant here is certainly Christians' abstention from the army and civil service, about which Celsus wrote in his work "The True Word", appealing to Christians to submit to secular authority with the following words: "Support the emperor with all your might, share with him the protection of the law; fight for him, if the circumstances require; help him to command his armies. In order to achieve that, make end to your abstention from civil and military service, participate in doing social duties for the sake of preserving lawfulness and true piety"(IV, 4, 17). Cited from Viper, 268

¹²¹ Lact., D.M.P., 34

cally strongest. There is a part of the letter written by the bishop Cyprian of Carthage to Eusebius which is a testimony of Christianity of that area. He complains not about the Romans, but the Christians. He says that *"his parishioners are crazy for money, Christian women paint their faces, bishops take illustrious positions in the state, and they make fortunes, lend money charging usurers' interests and renounce their faith at the first sign of danger."*¹²²

The quoted part from the edict *"(...) they diverge from the ancient laws and introduce those (laws) which they like. And as they do not think alike, they are mutually divided."* requires further explanation. Namely, in mere hundred and fifty years after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, there were numerous deviations from his teaching mostly made mostly by his disciples. Dilemma whether Jesus' teaching should be preached to non-Jews or it should stay within the limits of Judaism, divided the disciples and gave rise to many misconceptions of the original teaching. On the other hand, living among non-Christians, the neophytes could not change their previous way of life easily. So they kept going to gladiator fights, carried on with their usurious ventures, indulged themselves in luxurious life and, especially, did not give up slaves.¹²³ Apostle Paul tried to point out the equality of slaves and the free¹²⁴ but later, faced with the reaction of the Christians, he reluctantly admitted the difficulty in changing the relation of free man and slave.¹²⁵

One more thing about the last quoted sentence of the Edict: "And as they do not think alike, they are mutually divided." Hard changing of habits gave rise to different conceptions of the teaching of Jesus' and the kingdom of God (*regnum Dei*), so that in mid-second century on the territory of Roman empire, there are several dozens of various Christian teachings. As an attempt to set and explain one right understanding of Jesus' teaching, a text entitled "Against Heresies" is written by Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyons.¹²⁶ Taking into consideration that, prior to the persecution, Christians had high material and political positions, it is clear that Galerius feared Christian disunity, destructive in itself, more than he feared Christians.

As much as their economic and politic power mattered to the Empire and thus made them bearable to Rome, their disagreement and inner conflicts made Christianity the strongest factor of discord within the Empire. The idea of the Empire as a state of God, within which all Christian fractions lived in harmony, ruled by the Savior, whereas all the subjects were Christians, was an additional danger to any ruler of Rome.

The signers of the edict in the closing part of the legal text are specific that Christians must know that it is all *"on condition that nothing be done by them contrary to discipline"*. In another letter we shall indicate to the magistrates what they have to observe. Wherefore?¹²⁷, on

¹²² Euseb., HE 8, 1;

¹²³ Sa izuzetkom esena koji su u svojoj zajednici propovedali i sprovodili opštu slobodu.

¹²⁴ 1.Korinćanima, 12,13; Galaćanima, 3,28

¹²⁵ Efešanima, 6, 5-9

¹²⁶ Viper, 201. U doslovnom prevodu ove knjige naslov je "Razotkrivanje i osporavanje učenja koje se lažno naziva gnosisom". Pored toga što je iskazao svu moguću privrženost kanonima izvan kojih nema, po njemu, ničega, Irinej je grčku reč "jeres", sa osnovnim značenjem "grupa", "delo", "odeljenje" upotrebio kao pogrdu reč čiji je sada smisao "otkidanje", odstupanje od pravilneosnove. U narednim stolicima će više stotina hiljada hrišćana označenih ovim terminom biti pobijeno, u različitim vremenskim i istorijskim situacijama, samo stoga što ih je neko okarakterisao kao jeretike!

¹²⁷ Euseb., HE 8, 17. Podvukao N.O. Lact., D.M.P., 34.4 Atque cum plurimi in proposito perseverarent ac videremus nec diis eosdem cultum ac religionem debitam exhibere nec Christianorum deum observare, contemplatione mitissimae nostrae clementiae intuentes et consuetudinem sempiternam, qua solemus cunctis hominibus veniam indulgere, promptissimam in his quoque indulgentiam nostram credidimus porrigendam. Ut denuo sint Chrsitiani et conventicula sua component, ita ut ne quid contra disciplinam agant.

account of this indulgence of ours, they ought to supplicate their God for our safety, and that of the people, and their own, that the public welfare may be preserved in every place, and that they may live securely in their several homes.

It will remain a mystery what made Galerius to insert that part in which he prohibits Christians to do “nothing... contrary to discipline”. Did the legislator have in mind Christians’ traditional wish to change worldly authority for that of heaven, or he meant of Christian disobedience towards un-Christian Rome which frequently found expression in separate incidents, as was the case of a prominent Christian from Nicomedia who tore the edict during Terminalius’ reign (February 24), 303.¹²⁸ Surely Galerius considered Roman Empire to be pleasing to gods inasmuch Christians found that same empire absolutely opposite to what their faith preached. As the Christian population in Asia Minor, Africa and Spain was of a wealthy make-up, it could easily be expected that there were uprisings against Rome, similar to that recounted by Burkhart.¹²⁹

The situation described by Cyprian certainly escalated by the end of the third century when in 298 Diocletian offered the Christians who were in the army either to accept the old Roman religion and renounce Christianity, or to leave the army.¹³⁰ The assumption that Diocletian had some indirect knowledge of a possible uprising of the Christians, and that he wanted to minimize the possible involvement of the army as much as he could, is quite acceptable. The possibility that the Christian generals in the East wanted to conduct a coup, as well as that Galerius was the one who detected the plot and informed Diocletian of it, is the theme on which Burkhart insists¹³¹ and it, due to its importance, requires more extensive research. We cite it here as a possibility not yet sufficiently explored and which we would like to bring to attention.

Once again, it should be noted that the significance of Galerius’ edict of 311 is great by the sole fact that it represents the first legal act of Rome which terminates the persecutions of Christians and puts Christianity on a par with other religions of the Empire. Lactantius¹³² and, even more so, Eusebius played important roles in creating a bad image of unchristian Galerius which gives the acclamation to Christians. In making the cult of Constantine to whom they both were devoted, they made the *Edict of Milan*, signed in February 313, the first *Edict of Religious Tolerance*, although this document merely confirmed what Galerius had proclaimed on 30th of April, 311 in Nicomedia.

The reasons for which Galerius’ edict of 311 stayed in the shadow of that of Constantine’s and Licinius’, lies primarily in the aspiration of the first two Christian writers who contributed with their work to making the cult of the Emperor Constantine as the first Christian emperor, sent from God. Even in this undertaking there are discrepancies between Lactantius’ and Eusebius’ data.

¹²⁸ Burkhart, 295

¹²⁹ Burkhart, 293-294

¹³⁰ Eusebius places this event in 301 which is here marked as 298; Burkhart, 292

¹³¹ Burkhart, 292-298

¹³² In Ecclesiastical History Eusebius writes about Constantine as a deputy of God, and in the unfinished Life of Constantine, he completely loses sense of proportion and good taste in glorifying the man and ruler who happens to be his personal friend. Surely Eusebius, as Constantine’s personal friend and biographer and Lactantius, the person in charge of the education and upbringing of Constantine’s sons, newly converted to Christianity, needed to magnify everything Constantine did, i.e., minimize his predecessors.

The most important thing in making the cult of Constantine was the vision of the cross on the eve of the battle at the Milvian Bridge in October 312. Lactantius' account of this event says that Constantine was told in his sleep to put the heavenly sign of God on the shields of his soldiers, which he obeyed- he put the shortened version of the word "Christ", bent the upper end of the slanted letter X,¹³³ thus making crux monogramica, the sign not unfamiliar to the Christians of the period.¹³⁴ Lactantius finished this work in 318, when actors of this event were still alive.

A whole quarter of a century after Lactantius, Eusebius gives this information in such an apologetic mode that his every claim in Constantine's biography becomes subject to doubt.¹³⁵ *Ecclesiastical History*, whose tenth book Eusebius finished in 324, six years after Lactantius' text became available, is not laid out in an enthusiastical tone completely deprived of objectivity, which characterizes Eusebius' work. However, in only a year's time, this bishop becomes Constantine's close friend who, a quarter of a century later, portrays Constantine as a God-fearing, devotional ruler, inspired by spirit¹³⁶ whereas Lactantius' Constantine certainly was not such. Nothing worse could have happened to Constantine- to have his close friend, an apologist and panegyrist inclined to exaggerations write about him in the same way Galerius had newly converted Lactantius written about him with a hatred characteristic to new converts.¹³⁷ The pattern was perfectly clear- Constantine must be completely opposite to Galerius, although the edict he co-signed with Licinius, widely known as the *Edict of Milan* (313), is nothing but re-affirmed and, in parts which could easily be neglected, elaborated Galerius' *Edict of Religious Tolerance* of 311. On the other hand, non-Christian authors highlight Galerius' courage and his character, whereas Lactantius himself conveys the claim that the author of the edict of 311 was "a courageous and virtuous man"¹³⁸

The aim of writing of the biography is given at the very beginning in the following words: "But farther, when I raise my thoughts even to the arch of heaven, and there contemplate his thrice-blessed soul in communion with God himself, freed from every mortal and earthly vesture, and shining in a refulgent robe of light, and when I perceive that it is no more connected with the fleeting periods and occupations of mortal life, but honored with an ever-blooming crown, and an immortality of endless and blessed existence, I stand as it were without power of speech or thought and unable to utter a single phrase, but condemning my own weakness, and imposing silence on myself, I resign the task of *speaking his praises worthily to one who is better able, even to him who, being the immortal God and veritable Word, alone has power to confirm his own sayings*"¹³⁹ By their deliberate exaggeration, both Christian writers left a rather extorted and hardly graspable image of Constantine the Great, and inferring from the abovementioned facts, they made Galerius the most hated person in the history of Christian church.

¹³³ Lact., D.M.P., 44

¹³⁴ Jedin, 440-441

¹³⁵ Euseb., V.C., 1, 27-32 Besides this, Eusebius claims to have seen for himself in the year 325 the flag with the signs X and P, which was borne by Constantine's army prior to the Milvian battle (Euseb., V.C.1,30). That cannot be true because at that time he could not come even near Constantine's court. Later, when he saw it, the flag was the royal sign, although the shape of its cross remains vague. This is all the more so because until the mid- fourth century, the symbol of Christianity was a fish.

¹³⁶ Euseb., V.C., 1, 28-30. Burkhardt points out the ambiguity of Eusebius' style, lack of precision in giving the data and numerous omissions. (Burkhardt, 303-304)

¹³⁷ One cannot but think that non-Christian authors like Ammianus Marcellinus, Eunapius or Bemerchus would be much more precise in portraying someone who would certainly be closer to our minds as a historical person. The same goes for Galerius as well.

¹³⁸ Eutrop.10, 1; Aur.Victor, Caesares, cap.40

¹³⁹ Euseb., V.C., 1,2

2. THE EDICT OF MILAN (313)

The death of Galerius marks the end of tetrarchy as a form of rule. Constantine, who, after his father's death, takes rule over Britain and Gaul in York, in a furious attack eliminates Maxentius as an obstacle to his throne in October, 312. In February 313, together with Licinius, his co-ruler and ruler of the East, he issues the edict of the prohibition of the persecution of Christians, so-called *Edict of Milan*. In June that same year Licinius introduces this law to the Eastern provinces.

We learn of this document from two sources- Eusebius *Church History* (10, 5, 1-4) and Lactantius' text *On Deaths of the Persecutors* (48, 2-12) in two somewhat different versions. By comparison of these two translations, and we give both in this book, it is easily noticeable that Lactantius' version is clearer and more easily understood and for that reason it will be used in the comments and quotations. Of course, this is not meant to diminish the significance of Eusebius' version.

According to Lactantius (48, 1), who is the first to convey the text of the edict, this document was first proclaimed in Nicomedia and for that reason Paul Lemerle rightly says that the real name of this law should be the *Edict of Nicomedia*¹⁴⁰ and we add, for two reasons at least:

- » Not a single reconstruction of the events supports the assumption that Constantine was in Milan during this period. What is known, however, is the fact that he spent the entire year 313, as well as the following two, in vivid correspondence with local bishops, accelerated construction or reconstruction of Christian churches and dealing with church matters. Moreover, Eusebius inserts the Greek translation of Lactantius' text of the Edict into the tenth book of *Church History*, which gives account of the events taking place in the period between 315 and 314,¹⁴¹ therefore, rather a while after the publication of the Edict itself, thus making an anachronism. This dilemma is also unresolved in *Vita Constantini*, the most comprehensive work about Constantine.
- » It is doubtful whether Constantine and Licinius composed the Edict in Milan in the first place. It was incorporated into Church tradition by discreetly favoring Constantine's role in the making of this act of utmost importance to Christians.

In any case, the Edict which by its essence could be called the Edict of equalling Christianity to the other religions of the Empire played an important role in stabilizing religious situation of the period. The need of the legislator that there should not be a dominant religion in the Roman Empire, and later on in the East Roman Empire (Byzantium) with the seat in New Rome/ Constantinople, survived about eight decades, and then Theodosius the First proclaimed Christianity the official religion on the 27th of February, 380. By this act, yesterday's victims of intolerance to differences became the persecutors of those who did not belong to Church, which certainly was not the intention of the authors of the Edict of 313.

M. Jović makes a correct observation when he says that "without difference to Christian tradition, Constantine's and Licinius' Act was not given to Christians only. Time, inexorable as it is, imposed on the rulers the demand to ban that dated habits, persecutions and murders. The new stability of the State required the use of a more integral leveling of the subjects."¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ P.Lemerle, *Istorija Vizantije*, Plato, Beograd, 1996., 62

¹⁴¹ Euseb., HE 10, 4-7

¹⁴² Jović, 53-74, 70

The equating of religions and cessation of the persecutions of Christians was definitely brought about by this Act. Its establishing, however, caused the persecutions of those who believed or thought differently later on. With Theodosius Christianity becomes the official religion, which will in time of Theodosius II result in the first anti-Jewish laws. In the same manner, the advocates of other streams in Christianity (e.g. the Arians) are punished by death if they spread a teaching contrary to the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed.

Thus the institutionalized Christianity in time became the opposite of its original teaching. However it may seem, the Edict brought by Constantine and Licinius in 313, in all its entirety exuded the plenitude of ancient thought, which for centuries allowed for a difference in opinion.

The text of the *Edict of Milan*, in which joint rulers address all the magistrates of the Empire, reads:

2.1 THE TRANSLATION¹⁴³

When we, Constantine and Licinius, emperors, had an interview at Milan, and conferred together with respect to the good and security of the commonweal, it seemed to us that, among those things that are profitable to mankind in general, the reverence paid to the Divinity merited our first and chief attention, and that it was proper that the Christians and all others should have liberty to follow that mode of religion which to each of them appeared best; so that that God, who is seated in heaven, might be benign and propitious to us, and to every one under our government. And therefore we judged it a salutary measure, and one highly consonant to right reason, that no man should be denied leave of attaching himself to the rites of the Christians, or to whatever other religion his mind directed him, that thus the supreme Divinity, to whose worship we freely devote ourselves, might continue to vouchsafe His favour and beneficence to us. And accordingly we give you to know that, without regard to any provisos in our former orders to you concerning the Christians, all who choose that religion are to be permitted, freely and absolutely, to remain in it, and not to be disturbed any ways, or molested. And we thought fit to be thus special in the things committed to your charge, that you might understand that the indulgence which we have granted in matters of religion to the Christians is ample and unconditional; and perceive at the same time that the open and free exercise of their respective religions is granted to all others, as well as to the Christians. For it befits the well-ordered state and the tranquillity of our times that each individual be allowed, according to his own choice, to worship the Divinity; and we mean not to derogate anything from the honour due to any religion or its votaries. Moreover, with respect to the Christians, we formerly gave certain orders concerning the places appropriated for their religious assemblies; but now we will that all persons who have purchased such places, either from our exchequer or from any one else, do restore them to the Christians, without money demanded or price claimed, and that this be performed peremptorily and unambiguously; and we will also, that they who have obtained any right to such places by form of gift do immediately restore them to the Christians: reserving always to such persons, who have either purchased for a price, or gratuitously acquired them, to make application to the judge of the district, if they look on themselves as entitled to any equivalent from our beneficence. "All those places are, by your intervention, to be immediately restored to the Christians. And

¹⁴³ The version of the Edict according to Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum*, 48 taken from www.newadvent.org-TRANS

because it appears that, besides the places appropriated to religious worship, the Christians did possess other places, which belonged not to individuals, but to their society in general, that is, to their churches, we comprehend all such within the regulation aforesaid, and we will that you cause them all to be restored to the society or churches, and that without hesitation or controversy: Provided always, that the persons making restitution without a price paid shall be at liberty to seek indemnification from our bounty. In furthering all which things for the benefit of the Christians, you are to use your utmost diligence, to the end that our orders be speedily obeyed, and our gracious purpose in securing the public tranquility promoted. So shall that divine favour which, in affairs of the mightiest importance, we have already experienced, continue to give success to us, and in our successes make the commonweal happy. And that the tenor of this our gracious ordinance may be made known unto all, we will that you cause it by your authority to be published everywhere.”

2.2.THE EDICT OF MILAN OF 313¹⁴⁴

Perceiving long ago that religious liberty ought not to be denied, but that it ought to be granted to the judgment and desire of each individual to perform his religious duties according to his own choice, we had given orders that every man, Christians as well as others, should preserve the faith of his own sect and religion.

But since in that rescript, in which such liberty was granted them, many and various conditions seemed clearly added, some of them, it may be, after a little retired from such observance.

When I, Constantine Augustus, and I, Licinius Augustus, came under favorable auspices to Milan and took under consideration everything which pertained to the common good and prosperity, we resolved among other things, or rather first of all, to make such decrees as seemed in many respects for the benefit of every one; namely, such as should preserve reverence and piety toward the deity. We resolved, that is, to grant both to the Christians and to all men freedom to follow the religion which they choose, that whatever heavenly divinity exists may be propitious to us and to all that live under our government.

We have, therefore, determined, with sound and upright purpose, that liberty is to be denied to no one, to choose and to follow the religious observances of the Christians, but that to each one freedom is to be given to devote his mind to that religion which he may think adapted to himself, in order that the Deity may exhibit to us in all things his accustomed care and favor.

It was fitting that we should write that this is our pleasure, that those conditions being entirely left out which were contained in our former letter concerning the Christians which was sent to your devotedness, everything that seemed very severe and foreign to our mildness may be annulled, and that now every one who has the same desire to observe the religion of the Christians may do so without molestation.

7. We have resolved to communicate this most fully to your care, in order that you may know that we have granted to these same Christians freedom and full liberty to observe their own religion.

¹⁴⁴ Verzija edikta prema Eusebiju (Euseb., HE 10,5).

Since this has been granted freely by us to them, your devotedness perceives that liberty is granted to others also who may wish to follow their own religious observances; it being clearly in accordance with the tranquillity of our times, that each one should have the liberty of choosing and worshipping whatever deity he pleases. This has been done by us in order that we might not seem in any way to discriminate against any rank or religion.

And we decree still further in regard to the Christians, that their places, in which they were formerly accustomed to assemble, and concerning which in the former letter sent to your devotedness a different command was given, if it appear that any have bought them either from our treasury or from any other person, shall be restored to the said Christians, without demanding money or any other equivalent, with no delay or hesitation.

If any happen to have received the said places as a gift, they shall restore them as quickly as possible to these same Christians: with the understanding that if those who have bought these places, or those who have received them as a gift, demand anything from our bounty, they may go to the judge of the district, that provision may be made for them by our clemency. All these things are to be granted to the society of Christians by your care immediately and without any delay.

And since the said Christians are known to have possessed not only those places in which they were accustomed to assemble, but also other places, belonging not to individuals among them, but to the society as a whole, that is, to the society of Christians, you will command that all these, in virtue of the law which we have above stated, be restored, without any hesitation, to these same Christians; that is, to their society and congregation: the above-mentioned provision being of course observed, that those who restore them without price, as we have before said, may expect indemnification from our bounty.

In all these things, for the benefit of the aforesaid society of Christians, you are to use the utmost diligence, to the end that our command may be speedily fulfilled, and that in this also, by our clemency, provision may be made for the common and public tranquillity.

For by this means, as we have said before, the divine favor toward us which we have already experienced in many matters will continue sure through all time.

And that the terms of this our gracious ordinance may be known to all, it is expected that this which we have written will be published everywhere by you and brought to the knowledge of all, in order that this gracious ordinance of ours may remain unknown to no one.

3. THE COMMENTS ON THE EDICT OF MILAN

As we can see, there are two important moments in the Edict of Milan that need be emphasized: granting religious freedom and return of the appropriated Property of Christians.

“And therefore we judged it a salutary measure, and one highly consonant to right reason, that no man should be denied leave of attaching himself to the rites of the Christians, or to whatever other religion his mind directed him, that thus the supreme Divinity, to whose worship we freely devote ourselves, might continue to vouchsafe His favour and beneficence to us”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Lact., D.M.P.,48,2.

This sentence of the Edict brings us to the essence of the act in a most direct way: the Empire needs the persecution to stop and it needs God's support, no matter whose God it may be-peaceful and good life will provide progress to the state, which is of great importance not only to its citizens, but also to its rulers.

"And accordingly we give you to know that, without regard to any provisos in our former orders to you concerning the Christians, all who choose that religion are to be permitted, freely and absolutely, to remain in it, and not to be disturbed any ways, or molested. And we thought fit to be thus special in the things committed to your charge, that you might understand that the indulgence which we have granted in matters of religion to the Christians is ample and unconditional."¹⁴⁶

In this place the Augusti ban all the restrictions imposed on Christians and guarantee the freedom of religion to every subject of the Empire. The same guarantees are given to non-Christians as well: "...and perceive at the same time that the open and free exercise of their respective religions is granted to all others, as well as to the Christians. For it befits the well-ordered state and the tranquillity of our times that each individual be allowed, according to his own choice, to worship the Divinity; and we mean not to derogate anything from the honour due to any religion or its votaries."¹⁴⁷

Considering the fact that in the quotes given from the Edict Christianity is equaled to the other religions in the Empire, i.e. the Augusti clearly show their intention in doing so, there is only one thing left to do - to solve the problem of the places of Christian congregation, and also of the appropriated material possessions of the members of Christian community. Constantine and Licinius are clear on that matter- those who took them, must give them back- and, therefore, they take it to be their task to see that the state should compensate the damaged citizens so that the justice could be done and that the rightful owners could reclaim their possessions. This part of the Edict refers to all Christian possessions confiscated from them during the persecution:

"Moreover, with respect to the Christians, we formerly gave certain orders concerning the places appropriated for their religious assemblies; but now we will that all persons who have purchased such places, either from our exchequer or from any one else, do restore them to the Christians, without money demanded or price claimed, and that this be performed peremptorily and unambiguously; and we will also, that they who have obtained any right to such places by form of gift do immediately restore them to the Christians: reserving always to such persons, who have either purchased for a price, or gratuitously acquired them, to make application to the judge of the district, if they look on themselves as entitled to any equivalent from our beneficence.

All those places are, by your intervention, to be immediately restored to the Christians. And because it appears that, besides the places appropriated to religious worship, the Christians did possess other places, which belonged not to individuals, but to their society in general, that is, to their churches, we comprehend all such within the regulation aforesaid, and we will that you cause them all to be restored to the society or churches, and that without hesitation or controversy: Provided always, that the persons making restitution without a

¹⁴⁶ Lact., D.M.P.,48.4-5

¹⁴⁷ Lact., D.M.P.,48. 6

price paid shall be at liberty to seek indemnification from our bounty. In furthering all which things for the benefit of the Christians, you are to use your utmost diligence, to the end that our orders be speedily obeyed, and our gracious purpose in securing the public tranquillity promoted. So shall that divine favour which, in affairs of the mightiest importance, we have already experienced, continue to give success to us, and in our successes make the common-weal happy. And that the tenor of this our gracious ordinance may be made known unto all, we will that you cause it by your authority to be published everywhere.”¹⁴⁸

There are quite a few authorities who think that thus formulated text of the Edict of Milan does not represent the recognition of the undeniable right of religious freedom, but, in a way, the permission of religious freedom, granted by imperial benevolence, which is the expression of God’s will.¹⁴⁹ For the later course of development of Christian church the reasons for which the two Augusti brought this Act are quite irrelevant. Still, we cannot but try to look into another subject which has been the matter of discord for centuries. Of course, it deals with the understanding of faith and religious freedom of Constantine and Licinius themselves.

4. THE AUGUSTI AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

4.1 LICINIUS

One can only speculate about Licinius and his attitude to religion based on fragmentary references in Eusebius, Lactantius and Zosimus. What ties him to Christianity is his signing of the two edicts which called for the termination of the persecution of Christians, so-called Galerius’ Edict of 311 and the Edict of Milan of 313. Licinius was the one who made the content of the just signed Edict of Milan known to the people of Nicomedia in June 313. Lactantius gives us the prayer given to Licinius by an angel in his dream the night before the battle with Maximinus:

“Supreme God, we beseech You; Holy God, we beseech You; unto You we commend all right; unto You we commend our safety; unto You we commend our empire. By You we live, by You we are victorious and happy. Supreme Holy God, hear our prayers; to You we stretch forth our arms. Hear, Holy Supreme God.”¹⁵⁰

According to Lactantius, after this battle Licinius came to Nicomedia, wherefrom he sent to the deputy of Nicomedia the text of the *Edict of Milan* on July the 13th.¹⁵¹ Two Augusti, Constantine and Licinius, came to be related by the marriage of Licinius and Constantine’s sister Constantia, but the peace between them was not possible- the following year Constantine will violate the territory held by Licinius¹⁵², thus starting the series of mutual confrontations which will end in 324 with defeat and Licinius’ death in 325. Judging from the coins he struck, it is clear that he stayed pagan in his soul, but signed the two Acts in the name of the stability of the state.

¹⁴⁸ Lact., D.M.P.,48, 7-12

¹⁴⁹ G. Lombardi, Persecuzioni, laicità, libertà religiosa. Dall’ Editto di Milano alla Dignitatis Humanae, Roma,1991; J. Burckhardt, Die Zeit Constantins der Grossen, Wien, 1952.

¹⁵⁰ Lact., D.M.P.,46

¹⁵¹ Lact., D.M.P.,48,1

¹⁵² Burkhart,326

One gets the impression that after 319 Licinius directed to Christians the anger he felt for Constantine, as if his opponent's growing thirst for power was their fault. While in the West Constantine affirms his authority and the cult of a liberator with Christians, whom he discreetly turns against Licinius, he, in turn, feels forced to openly show mistrust towards Christian community. Although Licinius did nothing more than to ban Christians from his court and impose minor restrictions on them, it still assumed the size of a persecution due to a great number of Christians.¹⁵³ Now there was not a Christian soul who favored Licinius over Constantine, which first made Licinius prohibit the assemblies of bishops. Moreover, as every religious ceremony became suspected as undermining, Licinius took a series of unpopular measures- he ordered that religious gatherings should take place out of the populated areas and that women could receive religious education only from women teachers; Christian officers were discharged from the service, some bishops were killed and churches closed¹⁵⁴ – which only worked against him. Bishops in Licinius' state openly call themselves “those men whom the great and pious emperor treated as his friends”, referring to Constantine.¹⁵⁵

In time Licinius will, feeling more and more incapable of solving the problem with Christians, introduce more drastic measures which proved to be to his disadvantage. Once tolerant, the ruler who had kept his subjects in ignorance of his faith,¹⁵⁶ now openly turned to non-Christians, surrounding himself with Egyptian priests, interpreters of dreams and oracles.¹⁵⁷ Even with such a drastic aversion from Christians, Licinius never brought a legal act which would order the persecution of Christian community, neither in part, nor in its entirety.

That was the sad and certainly unexpected end of Constantine's co-ruler which Eusebius described differently, depending on his needs- at the beginning of his reign as a “God-beloved emperor, honored alike for his intelligence and his piety”¹⁵⁸ whereas he later speaks of him as “a cruel animal... demon of evil... sly serpent.”¹⁵⁹

4.2 CONSTANTINE

Constantine's case is somewhat different. Closest to him, as it had been to his father Constantius Chlorus, the commander acting as the Caesar of Gaul and Britain, was the reverence of the cult of Apollo. Therefore Constantine, after having defeated Germans and while preparing to go to Rome in 310, pays a visit to “the most honest shrine”, as quoted by Eusebius referring to Apollo Grannus in Grand, Gaul.¹⁶⁰

Constantine's stay in the sanctuary and the dream he had in the temple of Apollo, interpreted by Zeno the Egyptian, made a powerful influence on the future founder of the Christian empire on earth. Constantine never forgot the decree of the oracle that, willing to Apollo, he was to rule for thirty years (the three wreaths put on his head by the goddess Nike). His biographer, Eusebius, did not forget it either, and reminded in his panegyrics of the prophecy of a

¹⁵³ Sulpitius Sever, *Sacra historia*, I, 2

¹⁵⁴ Euseb., V.C., I, 49-59; II, 1-20. Eusebius here gives the key to understanding Licinius' discontent and disappointment with the church: “He did not know that people prayed for him in those churches; he thought we prayed only for Constantine!”

¹⁵⁵ Euseb., V.C., I, 56

¹⁵⁶ Euseb., HE 9,9,1

¹⁵⁷ Burkhart, 328

¹⁵⁸ Euseb., HE 9,9,1

¹⁵⁹ Euseb., V.C., I, 49; II, 1 and 46; III, 3.

¹⁶⁰ Paneg. 6.; Barnes, 36. In the cited text, Barnes argues that the major part of the description of Constantine's dream in the oracular shrine is nothing more but the expression of the panegyrist's imagination

thirty-year rule.¹⁶¹ There is a testimony to a more permanent attachment of Constantine the Great to the cult of Apollo by way of celebrating New Sun (Sol Invicti) from 321: the proclamation given by this ruler that courts are to be closed on December 25th, for the sake of “honoring the day of the Sun”¹⁶² whereas his army, about to start a decisive battle against Licinius, carry Apollo’s statues as protection.

At the same time Constantine erects Christian churches in one part of Rome and statues of Mother Cybele and Sol Invictus, with much resemblance to Constantine himself, in another. Such treatment of different religions could be explained by the previous identification of Christ with the life-giving Sun, as was the cult of Apollo – which, according to Tertullian, was one way Christians of that period represented their God.

Speaking of Constantine’s conversion, J. Palanque reminds of Lactantius’ words about the three degrees of conversion:” The first degree makes judgments about false religions and rejects godless cults; the second reveals that there is only one, supreme God; the third recognizes the deputy sent by God in order to announce Him”.¹⁶³ According to Palanque, Constantine reached the third degree after the victory over Maxentius in 312¹⁶⁴ - God spoke to him giving the instructions how to do His will. We believe that the event really happened, but only after 323, judging from the speeches he gave and the laws he passed at that time.

The *Edict of the Eastern Nations* (324) clarifies considerably Constantine’s notion of religious freedom. In it the emperor directly addresses God and prays for the Christians of the East, its dignitaries, welfare of the empire and the emperor as a servant of God.¹⁶⁵ A part of the Edict reads as follows: “Let those, therefore, who still delight in error, be made welcome to the same degree of peace and tranquility which they have who believe. For it may be that this restoration of equal privileges to all will prevail to lead them into the straight path. Let no one molest another, but let every one do as his soul desires. Only let men of sound judgment be assured of this, that those only can live a life of holiness and purity, which you call to a reliance on your holy laws. With regard to those who will hold themselves aloof from us, let them have, if they please, their temples of lies: we have the glorious edifice of your truth, which you have given us as our native home. We pray, however, that they too may receive the same blessing, and thus experience that heartfelt joy which unity of sentiment inspires.”¹⁶⁶

Vincenzo Poggi points to the significant datum that at the end of 1938, one of the leading professors of Ancient History from Cambridge and an authority on paleography of Constantine’s day, Dr. Arnold Hugh Martin Jones, judging from a text with the fragments of this Edict, determined the genuineness of the emperor’s other decisions laid out in *Vita Constantini*.¹⁶⁷ This information helps us understand Constantine’s sometimes quite elusive relation to Christianity.

¹⁶¹ Paneg.7. More about this event can be found in C.Y.M.Kerboul, *Constantin et la fin du monde antique*, Meyenne, 1993., 28- 40 (Kerboul, *Constantin in the following text*)

¹⁶² Theod. Cod., II, 8, 1

¹⁶³ Паланк,65

¹⁶⁴ Паланк, 66

¹⁶⁵ Podi, 15

¹⁶⁶ Euseb. V.C., 2,56

¹⁶⁷ A.H.M.Jones, *Notes on the Genuineness of the Constantinian Documents in Eusebius “Life of Constantine”*, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*,5, (1954), 196-200 prema Podi, 14-15

In the Edict Constantine contrasts himself and his father to the previous rulers ("The former emperors I have been accustomed to regard as those with whom I could have no sympathy, on account of the savage cruelty of their character. Indeed, my father was the only one who uniformly practiced the duties of humanity..."¹⁶⁸) Eventually, after having listed the sins of the evil rulers, he confirmed that every one of them had a shameful end: "The perpetrators of this dreadful guilt are now no more: they have experienced a miserable end, and are consigned to unceasing punishment in the depths of the lower world"¹⁶⁹

In the further text of this Edict, Constantine deals with religious freedom. He promises not to persecute non-Christians, maintaining that excessive zealotry is in discord with religious freedom. On the other hand, Constantine fears that Christians, having felt the benevolence of the emperor, might start competing with non-Christians in persecutions.¹⁷⁰

"And now I beseech you, most mighty God, to be merciful and gracious to your Eastern nations, to your people in these provinces, worn as they are by protracted miseries; and grant them healing through your servant"¹⁷¹

It seems that the part of the prayer concerning the other bishoprics relates to that part of the empire under Licinius' rule. Is what is felt here preparing the believers for what Constantine started that same year- settling his affairs with Licinius? It certainly seems so. There are many places in the Edict, as well as in the aforementioned quote, in which Constantine calls on Christians to guard themselves from any form of proselytism emphasizing that the free confession of religion in societies of a mixed make-up is a necessary factor of peace and stability. And, as many times before, emphasizes that his sole concern is the peace and well-being of all subjects of the empire:

"My own desire is, for the common good of the world and the advantage of all mankind, that your people should enjoy a life of peace and undisturbed concord. Let those, therefore, who still delight in error, be made welcome to the same degree of peace and tranquility which they have who believe. For it may be that this restoration of equal privileges to all will prevail to lead them into the straight path. Let no one molest another, but let every one do as his soul desires."¹⁷²

And then follows the cathartic command to non-Christians: "With regard to those who will hold themselves aloof from us, let them have, if they please, their temples of lies: we have the glorious edifice of your truth, which you have given us as our native home. We pray, however, that they too may receive the same blessing, and thus experience that heartfelt joy which unity of sentiment inspires."¹⁷³

After that, he addresses both: "Henceforward, therefore, let us all enjoy in common the privilege placed within our reach, I mean the blessing of peace, endeavoring to keep our conscience pure from all that is contrary."¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁸ Euseb. V.C., 2,49,1

¹⁶⁹ Euseb. V.C., 2,53

¹⁷⁰ An attentive reader will notice that the author of this text avoids using the commonly used term "pagan" which is (mis)used for all those who are not Christian, substituting it with a more precise one, "non-Christian". Indeed, how could the word pagan (Lat. Paganus, i - peasant, - s) denote a devotee of Mithraism or the mysteries of Isis?

¹⁷¹ Euseb. V.C., 2,55,1

¹⁷² Euseb. V.C., 2,56,1

¹⁷³ Euseb. V.C., 2,56,2

¹⁷⁴ Euseb. V.C., 2,59

Just before this inspired Edict was written, in that same year 324, Constantine had defeated Licinius at the battle near present-day Yedren in Turkey and, pleaded by his sister Constantia, spared Licinius' life ordering him not to leave Thessalonica.¹⁷⁵ Nevertheless, half a year later, Constantine killed Licinius, because of Licinius' supposed conspiracy and thus became the sole ruler of the empire in 325.

The fact that he was now the only ruler of the entire Empire, introduced, in words of H. Jedin, "by necessity a new phase in his religious policy, for he did not have anymore a joint ruler or a rival to consider, someone who would have a different opinion."¹⁷⁶ As anticipated by the Edict, convening the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in 325 emphasizes Constantine's expectations from Christian church that he trusts with secular authority.¹⁷⁷ By the time of Nicean Concil it was already clear that he sides with Christians by way of certain laws, limiting non-Christians to whom he prohibits private ceremonies in 319; 323 respective sacrificial offerings are forbidden; every decade he refuses to climb Campidoglio as a proper way to celebrate a period of a full decade's reign¹⁷⁸ On one hand, he tears down non-Christian temples and shuts them down, but on the other he strikes his money with representations of Apollo, Mithras, Sol Invictus, etc.¹⁷⁹ The greatest irony is the fact that he, being the *pontifex maximus*, the protector of Rome and its high priest, presides over the Council of Nicaea!

A change in Constantine's person takes place after Nicean Council. The same person who, only a year before (324) wrote about religious tolerance in such an inspired way, in 325-326 publishes the epistle to bishops and nations, affirming that, from that point on, those who spread the heresy of Arius, or those who are caught in possession of the heretic texts, are to be decapitated. He finishes the epistle with the words: *May God protect you, beloved brethren*.¹⁸⁰

Constantine is more and more confused by the reasons for the schism in Church; increasing dogmatic conflicts are the most potent adversary he ever had. In the atmosphere of the uttermost confusion, after having Licinius killed (325), he also kills his son, Licinianus. Furthermore, he kills his own son Crispus and wife, Fausta for the alleged adultery. In this way he secures the throne for himself, because there are no serious claimants left. The peace he once had is irretrievably gone. As much as he is enthusiastic about the recovering of the Holy Cross (327) and building of the New Rome near the city of Byzant (330), he is also bereaved by the death of his mother Helena.

Shortly after the thirtieth jubilee of his reign, the first Christian emperor spent his last few years in repeated illnesses until his death on the 22nd of May in 337.

This is how the reliable Socrates Scholasticus describes the event in his *Church History*:

"A year having passed, the Emperor Constantine having just entered the sixty-fifth year of his age, was taken with a sickness; he therefore left Constantinople, and made a voyage to Helenopolis, that he might try the effect of the medicinal hot springs which are found in

¹⁷⁵ Jedin, 453

¹⁷⁶ Jedin, 453

¹⁷⁷ Podi, 22

¹⁷⁸ Podi, 21-22

¹⁷⁹ N. Ozimić, Konstantin Veliki i kult Apolona, NIŠ I VIZANTIJA, V, Niš, 2007., 495-502 ¹⁸⁰ Socr. Scholl., HE, 1,9

the vicinity of that city. Perceiving, however, that his illness increased, he deferred the use of the baths; and removing from Helenopolis to Nicomedia, he took up his residence in the suburbs, and there received Christian baptism. After this he became cheerful; and making his will, appointed his three sons heirs to the empire, allotting to each one of them his portion, in accordance with the arrangements he had made while living. He also granted many privileges to the cities of Rome and Constantinople; and entrusting the custody of his will to that presbyter by whose means Arius had been recalled, and of whom we have already made mention, he charged him to deliver it into no one's hand, except that of his son Constantius, to whom he had given the sovereignty of the East. After the making of his will, he survived a few days and died. Of his sons none were present at his death. A courier was therefore immediately dispatched into the East, to inform Constantius of his father's decease.

The body of the emperor was placed in a coffin of gold by the proper persons, and then conveyed to Constantinople, where it was laid out on an elevated bed of state in the palace, surrounded by a guard, and treated with the same respect as when he was alive, and this was done until the arrival of one of his sons. When Constantius had come out of the eastern parts of the empire, it was honored with an imperial sepulture, and deposited in the church called The Apostles: which he had caused to be constructed for this very purpose, that the emperors and prelates might receive a degree of veneration but little inferior to that which was paid to the relics of the apostles. The Emperor Constantine lived sixty-five years, and reigned thirty-one. He died in the consulate of Felician and Tatian, on the twenty-second of May, in the second year of the 278th Olympiad. This book, therefore, embraces a period of thirty-one years.”¹⁸¹

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