

Emperor Constantine I the Great between Byzantium and Constantinople

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Abstract. The paper examines the religious, ideological, and political manifestations of Emperor Constantine I the Great during the consecration ceremonies of the city named after him, which have been the subject of heated discussions and contradictory interpretations. The focus is on the policy of tolerating and encouraging local cults in Byzantium, which Constantine clearly preferred and pursued.

Historical sources can be grouped into at least two groups organized around the events related to the consecration of Constantinople in May 330 AD, in which two remarkable ritual and cult centres stand out:

1) **The Constantine Forum:** the consecration of the solar statue of Emperor Constantine at the newly constructed Constantine Forum on the famous porphyry column the day before or on the first day of the 40-day celebrations, accompanied by numerous additional ceremonies and rituals;

2) **The Hippodrome:** The ceremony of the Hippodrome on the first day of the 40-day celebrations in which the gilded *xoanon* of Constantine, holding a small sculpture of Tyche on the city in his right hand, was carried in the “Helios Chariot”.

In the worship of the Emperor Constantine I the Great during the consecration ceremonies of the Constantinople two important religious ideas were intertwined as central:

- Reviving and incorporating the ancient mythological tradition of the founding Byzantium in the new context and traditions of Constantinople;
- The specific role of Zeuxippus, the central solar deity of the Thracian population in the city identified with Helios / Zeus Helios / Zeus Hippios, in this religious-political context.

With this public behaviour, perhaps the emperor sought a balance between the traditional urban religion and local cult practices, on the one hand, and those of the imperial cult of the ruler or even his personal cult, on the other.

Keywords: Emperor Constantine I the Great, Byzantium, Constantinople, Zeuxippus, Tyche of the city



Fig. 1. Colossal head of Constantine (4th century), Capitoline Museums, Rome and Athens

Constantine I (the Great)'s religious, ideological, and political manifestations during the consecration ceremonies of the city named after him have been a subject of heated debates and contradictory interpretations. The special significance of two notable ritual and cultural centres stands out in the narratives of those events by Byzantine authors and in the reminiscences of the religious and political suggestions of the celebration of the birthday (*Γενέθλια*) - annually held in the following centuries - of the renewed Constantine's city:

1) **The Constantine Forum**, where Emperor Constantine's imposing solar statue on the famous porphyry column was consecrated on the first day of or on the day preceding the 40-day celebrations; the event was accompanied by numerous additional ceremonies and rituals - as *Brief Historical Notes* (*Παραστάσεις*

σύντομοι χρονικαί), § 55, state: "Constantine was celebrated at the Forum for forty days and praised by the circus parties and the city magistrates";

2) **The Hippodrome**, where, on the first day of the 40-day festivities, the ceremony with the carrying in "the chariot of Helios" of a wooden gilded statue of Constantine, holding the statue of the city's Tyche in its right hand, was conducted (Zonaras 13.3.26-27, Büttner-Wobst; Janin 1964, 77-80; Dagron 1974, 37); the event was accompanied by a big contest where the emperor offered many gifts, "establishing these birthdays as an eternal monument", again in the words of *Brief Historical Notes* (§ 56).

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After the publication of Theodor Preger's paper *Konstantinos-Helios* (Preger 1901, 457-469) with its harsh, though not entirely unfounded, criticism of Ioannis Karayannopoulos (Karayannopoulos 1956, 341-357), the issue of the religious-ideological situation surrounding the formal consecration of Constantinople finally got its polar dimensions determined, being crucified between paganism (Burckhardt 1853) and Christianity (Gibbon 1776; Coleman 1914; Barnes 1981; Odahl 2005; Stephenson 2009 with bibl.). Research has been directed at, on the one hand, tracing the cult - traditional for several imperial dynasties - of Sol Invictus and the Hellenic Helios, purely mechanically identified with Apollo as a comprehensive and powerful solar deity (Bardill 2012; Wallraff 2001, 256-269 with bibl.); and, on the other hand, at the possible Christian character of the religious symbolism in the rituals of consecrating Constantine's city (Wallraff 2001, 256-269; Barnes 1981; Karayannopoulos 1956, 341-357) and of the supposed religious convictions of the Emperor. The policy of tolerating

and encouraging Byzantium's local cults, which Emperor Constantine apparently preferred and followed, has remained in the background of research.

The debate about Constantine the Great's personal religious convictions is old but insoluble. Traditionally Constantine has been uncritically declared to have been the first Christian Emperor who cleared the way for the unchallenged rise of the Christian Church as a dominant force in the European civilization. As early as 1776, in his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Edward Gibbon (Gibbon 1776) gave his firm support to the hypothesis that Constantine had got baptized after the Battle of the Milvian Bridge on 28 October 312 AD (Barnes 1981, 71), and thus had initiated the Christianization of the Empire. In 1853, however, Jacob Burckhardt (Burckhardt 1853) reached the opposite conclusion that Constantine had tolerated the Christian Church because he had been aware that this could provide him with political support against his colleague emperors Maximinus (ruled from AD 310 to AD 313) and Licinius (ruled from AD 308 to AD 324), but had remained pagan. Another aspect to that hypothesis was added by André Piganiol (Piganiol 1932) and Alistair Kee (Kee 1982), who were convinced that Constantine had never adopted Christianity as his personal religion and had worshipped the Christian God from a pagan perspective as *summa divinitas* (Toom 2014, 1-20). I find it hard to agree with Andreas Alföldi (Alföldi 1948) and Norman Baynes (Baynes 1972), who claim that Constantine felt sincere religious devoutness (!) and aimed at uprooting paganism, encouraging Christianity in order to establish the latter as an official state religion. Sincerity, however, is the last thing we could perceive from the monumental and stern mask of the Emperor as seen in his sculpture depictions (for example Fig. 1) and from the scarce data provided by his contemporaneous authors! None of his contemporaries was able to define what exactly was hidden behind that impenetrable mask of a statesman. His overall behaviour demonstrated rather an imperial pragmatism and political expediency. The most realistic explanation of his religious tolerance to Christianity is the interpretation suggested by Harold A. Drake and David Potter (Drake 1976; Potter 2010, 596-606; Bardill 2012; cf. Burckhardt 1853; Kee 1982): that the socio-religious and political circumstances preceding the Battle of the Milvian Bridge had caused a politically expedient change in Constantine's behaviour for the purpose of imposing religious equality and achieving civil peace. Harold A. Drake points out that the Emperor's behaviour did not demonstrate any personal intolerance to pagan deities. That public behaviour was clearly reflected in the religious manifestations during the inauguration of Constantinople.

1. Emperor Constantine and Sol Invictus. The studies of the early scholars were dominated by the identification of the solar statues of the Emperor in Constantinople with Sol Invictus (Unconquered Sun). Since AD310 the legend SOLI INVICTO COMITI ("to the unconquered Sun, minister/companion/protector [of the Emperor]") started to appear regularly on Constantine's coins (RIC VI 1967, 42-43, RIC III 1968, 132, 133 137, 140, 226-227, 265, 298, 328 388-392, 409), which most scholars link to his "pagan" vision on his way back from Massilia in AD 309/310 (see below). Since AD 311 Constantine adopted the epithet "unconquered" in his personal titulature as well, with which he un-

equivocally declared his association with Sol. Jonathan Bardill (Bardill 2012, 87) supposes that Constantine adopted the epithet to emphasize his godly status, which is completely acceptable. With the anonymous panegyric of 310, delivered in Trier, the relatedness of the Emperor with the Sun god was declared officially not only with the coins that carried the official religious messages of the Empire but also in literature. It has been suggested that Constantine's coinage with the legend SOLI INVICTO COMITI was initiated in Lugdunum (Lyon) (RIC VI 1967, 240), followed by Londinium (London) and Trier, and since AD 312 - by Ticinum (modern Pavia), Aquileia, Rome...

According to the legend SOLI INVICTO COMITI (Berrens 2004, 206-209) accompanying most coin depictions of this type, Sol was the companion and protector of the Emperor, as seen on the bronze coins of Constantine the Great (for example Fig. 2b, 3b). From AD 310 to c. 317/318 AD Constantine used the image of Sol on his coins and claimed Sol's divine protection, which was skilfully integrated in the Emperor's propaganda machine (Ehrhardt 1980,



Fig. 2. Constantine I BI Nummus. London, AD 309-311:

- a - IMP CONSTANTINVS P AVG, laureate and cuirassed bust to right;
- b - SOLI INVICTO COMITI, radiate Sol standing, head to left, chlamys across left shoulder, raising right hand and holding globe



- Fig. 3.** Constantine the Great AE-3 (19 mm, 3.20 g), Aquileia, c. 317 AD:
- a - IMP CONSTANTINVS P AVG, laureate and cuirassed bust to right;
 - b - SOLI INVICTO COMITI, radiate Sol standing, head to left, chlamys across left shoulder, raising right hand and holding globe

177-181). It should be noted, however, that since AD 317 the Emperor's coins with images of that deity became ever rarer (Aland 1979, 118). Around AD 319 it disappeared from Constantine's bronze coinage, according to some authors, "along with all other pagan themes" (Bruun 1958, 15-37). After that line only one instance has been found - a coin of Sol-Comes, dated AD 324/25 (Alföldi 1964, 10ff.). In the view of a group of scholars, among whom are I. Karayannopoulos, K. Aland and others (Wlosok (Hrsg.) 1978, 485ff; Gesche 1968; Gesche 1978, 368-374; Aland 1959, 493ff.; Aland 1960, 240ff; Aland 1979, 100), since AD 325 at least, if not earlier, around AD 317/8, Sol Invictus - Unconquered Sun must have lost its former significance and no longer played a central role in Emperor Constantine's representations.

Hermann Usener (Usener 1905, 465-491) proposes a compromise formula supposing that "the idea of one irreplaceable all-powerful Sun god must have become so close for the Christians too that he had turned into a way of visualizing the Savior". Some authors see here an instance of strong pagan-Christian syncretism, a "new religion" in the rituals of the foundation of Byzantium... But that does not square with the fact that Sol had completely disappeared from Constantine's coins at least five to six years before the erection of the statue on *the Forum of Constantine* in Byzantium! During those years significant political and ideological changes occurred.

The diverging accounts of the Byzantine authors leave no doubt that Constantine's statue on the porphyry column brought from Egyptian Thebes on *Forum Constantini* stood far from the traditional iconographic schemes of Sol Invictus (Lozanova 2020: Chapter I: *The Emperor-Sun in the City of Sun*), that the Emperor seems to have abandoned in his other demonstrations of his power considerably long before the inauguration of Constantinople in AD 330. A similar conclusion is even more clearly suggested by the descriptions of the solar statue of Constantine holding Tyche in his right hand, carried in "the chariot of Helios" during the celebrations on the Hippodrome (Lozanova 2020: *The Emperor Constantine I and Tyche of Constantinople*).

The two cults - of Sol Invictus and of Greek Helios - should, however, be distinguished both from each other and from the local context of their universalization through their identification with the Greek Apollo. But the public behaviour of Emperor Constantine in the ceremonies of the inauguration of the city named after him could have demonstrated tolerance of ancient local and definitely non-Christian traditions. There is no doubt that the forms of honouring the Emperor's statues were foreign to any Christian context and suggested elements of pagan mysterious language. That those were passed over in silence by Eusebius probably "speaks" most loudly of the fact!

In their analysis of numismatic material from Constantinople and Constantine's coinage during the time of the inauguration of the city Noel Lenski and Lars Ramskold (Ramskold, Lenski 2012, 39-40; Lenski 2015, 330) convincingly draw attention to a very important aspect of the Emperor's policy concerning the encouragement of the religious identity of the polis through the toleration of local cults. Noel Lenski (Lenski 2015, 330) sees in that a definite effort on the part of the Emperor to achieve religious harmony in his search for a *via media* between the old and the new paths while remaining re-

spectful of the past and local traditions. Contrary to Eusebius's claims (Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 3.48.2) that Constantinople had been founded as a purely Christian capital city with only Christian churches we have conspicuous evidence that Constantine tolerated local pagan cults and the city's religious traditions skilfully avoiding confrontation with the members of different confessional communities, among which the Christian one was not dominant. We should also keep in mind that the city became a true ecclesiastical centre as late as AD 451, i.e., 120 years after its foundation, when, by a decision of the Council of Chalcedon, the see of the bishop of Constantinople became equal to the one of the bishop of Rome (Canon 28: The bishop of New Rome (Constantinople) shall enjoy the same privileges as the bishop of Old Rome, on account of the removal of the Empire. For this reason, the [metropolitans] of Pontus, of Asia, and of Thrace, as well as the Barbarian bishops shall be ordained by the bishop of Constantinople (Tanner (ed.) 1990, 99f.; cf. Daley 1993, 529-553). From this point of view, the decisions of the Council of Constantinople in AD 381 (the third canon: The bishop of Constantinople, however, shall have the prerogative of honour after the Bishop of Rome because Constantinople is New Rome (Tanner (ed.) 1990, 32; cf. Daley 1993, 529-553) were only a prelude to its turning into the Christian centre of the Eastern Orthodoxy (Dagron 1974, 43-47; Melville-Jones 2014, 247-262).

André Piganiol advances the now unprovable but quite plausible hypothesis that the city was founded to rather be a refuge for philosophers. Piganiol finds a reason for such suppositions in a passage by Porphyry from the latter's biography of his teacher, the neo-Platonist Plotinus (*Vita Plotini* 12). Porphyry mentions that Plotinus tried to convince Emperor Gallienus to rebuild a destroyed city in Campania, once called the City of philosophers, for the purposes of Plotinus's philosophical school. The city's new citizens were to live there in accordance with the laws of Plato's ideal state and the city itself was to be named Platonopolis (Piganiol 1932). But like the case of the neo-Platonist Sopater of Apamea, a follower of Porphyry, the intrigues of those envious of him in the imperial court, "driven by envy and malice", put an end to his plans. Could it have been that Sopater tried to suggest a similar idea to Constantine? According to John Lydus's account (Ioann. Lyd., *De mensibus* 4, 2, p. 52 Bekker), after the Emperor himself, that prominent sophist and Neoplatonist philosopher, a disciple of Iamblichus, had also a central place in the consecration ceremony of Constantinople, playing the role of *telestes* in a mystical ritual (*telesmata*) together with "the hierophant" (i.e., initiated in the mysteries) Prætextatus. Sozomenus in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* (I, 5), Zosimus in *Historia Nova* (I, 40), Eunapius of Sardis (AD 347-414) in *Vitae sophistarum*, as well as the *Suda lexicon* (s.v. Σώπατρος) point out the enormous influence that Sopater had on Constantine (Lozanova 2020, Epilogue: *Between paganism and Christianity*).

In the light of the mentioned events, the solar aspects of the remarkable ritual and cult emphases in the consecration ceremony of the re-founded city acquire new functional dimensions in the context of the Emperor's manifestations.

2. Emperor Constantine I and Byzantion. According to the Hellenistic traditions the cult of the Emperor could be associated with the worship of the most important local deity, in whose temple a statue of the Emperor was placed (Warmind 1993, 211-220). In Asia Minor the cult of Roman Emperor could be taken to be a continuation of the local religious traditions (Price 1984). In Gaul, for instance, Emperor Augustus seems to have put a lot of effort to be identified with the highest pan-Celtic deity Lugh (Lugus), whose annual celebration, the festival of Lughnasadh (also known as Lughnasad), coincided with the first day of (the month of) August (Sueton. *Claud.* 2.1; Dio Cas. 54.32.1; MacNeil 1962, 418; see Fishwick 2015, 99-100). Even more prominent were the efforts of Emperor Elagabalus (ruled from AD 218 to AD 222) to merge the cult of the emperor with the cult of the Sun under the Roman name of Sol Invictus (Halsberghe 1972). Elagabalus was the impersonation of his deity and therefore his private residences became the most sacred places in the Empire. Constantine also worshipped Sol Invictus for a while, but acted much more wisely and maturely taking into account the good examples set by his predecessors. According to Morten Lund Warmind (Warmind 1993, 216), the Emperor's objective was to transform the cult of the emperor by relating it to the solar cult in the religion of the Roman Empire. The position of Pontifex Maximus as the culmination of his religious career secured the sacralization of his persona and his approximation to the divine. The biographical excurses of Constantine always represent him as guided by supernatural powers. That was why the depictions of the Emperor preserved their sacral character and continued to be an object of reverence and awe.

The inauguration ceremony of Constantinople in May 330 AD and the Emperor's solar statues leave no doubt that his behaviour in the first days of the celebrations of the city's birthday unequivocally demonstrated his claims to divinity and to being identified with a solar deity different from Sol Invictus (Bardill 2012, 151-158), which provided the grounds for his recognition as the universal Sun god Apollo (since Pseudo-Kodinus, i.e., since the 10th century AD - Zonaras, Anna Comnena, John Skylitzes, John Tzetzes). An echo of those efforts of Constantine's could be discerned in his propaganda as early as the panegyric of 310, which characterizes him as *praesentissimus hic deus* (*Pan. Lat.* VI.15 u 22.1).

Such a clear demonstration of tolerating local cults can be detected in the model episode, laconically inserted in the mentioned anonymous panegyric, delivered in Trier in AD 310 (*Pan. Lat.* 6 (7), 21.3-4), which mentions Emperor Constantine's "pagan" vision:

Vidisti enim, credo, Constantine, Apollinem tuum comitante Victoria coronas tibi laureas offerentem, quae tricenum singulae ferunt omen annorum...

For, O Constantine, you saw, I believe, your protector Apollo, in company with Victory, offering you laurel crowns each of which bear the presage of thirty years...

According to the chronology of the events, on his way back from Massilia in AD 309/310 (during Maximianus' revolt), somewhere along the road south of Rhine, the Emperor received a message that the "barbarians", i.e., the

Franks had rebelled during his absence (MacMullen 1968, 34-36; Barnes 2011, 72-74; Bardill 2012, 88-89, 169). Constantine marched against the rebels, but on the following day he received the message that the Franks had suddenly withdrawn. The vision of Appollo is presented in connection with those events, though it is not clear whether it preceded the message of the Frankish withdrawal or whether it should be presented as a result of a divine intervention. Unfortunately, the account, heavily compressed, is taken outside its context and not all of the details are specified! The panagerist obviously counted on the fact that the audience had been familiar enough with the story of the miraculous event that had happened to the Emperor. According to him, having turned off from the road to visit “the most beautiful temple in the world”, Constantine was greeted by the remarkable sight. It has been supposed that that was the popular temple at Granum (Grand, in the Vosges, France), where the Celtic deity Grannus, identified with Apollo was worshipped. There the Emperor had the vision of Apollo, accompanied by Victory, offering him laurel wreaths and foretelling him a long reign and a long life. The orator hints at the association between Apollo and Constantine. Grateful for the help, the Emperor gave generous gifts to the temple. The studying that episode that remained in the shadow of the vision preceding the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in AD 312 have paid insufficient attention to an aspect of it that was significant from the point of view of the Emperor’s lasting religious-political behaviour and strategy. In his conflict with the Franks, Constantine sought the authority and support of the local deity, especially revered by the local population, who became his patron and crowned him with a victory and a long reign. The establishment of the figure of Apollo as a universal supreme deity who could combine all the other deities has been interpreted as a form of quasi-monotheism (Doug Lee 2006, 162; Toom 2014, 4, n. 18), but that was a secondary consequence of the identification and universalization of one local solar deity.

H. Drake thinks that Constantine developed a monotheistic dialogue, concentrated on an indeterminate supreme divinity by which he included the Christian God as well (Drake 2000, 195). In the context of that behaviour his efforts of tolerating local cults would be perfectly natural.

Against the background of the new-founded Constantinople, richly decorated with pagan statues and relics brought from all the ends of the Empire, including Rome, the pompous declaration of James Barry that from its very consecration the “New Rome” was visibly and officially Christian does not sound convincingly. Constantinople was planned as a monument to the greatness of the Emperor, rather than as a “new capital city”, and even less - as a “Christian capital city” from the point of view of its time. While Eusebius tries to suggest that Constantine initiated the construction of churches, *Chronicon Paschale* (1.527-529) draws attention to Constantine’s large-scale construction programme of completely secular buildings and pagan sanctuaries that followed the model of the initial building of Byzantion from its mythological *oikist-eponym* Byzas (Lozanova 2020).

3. Emperor Constantine I and Zeuxippus Helios. The question remains of whether there was a local solar deity in Byzantion with such a high authority and status for the Emperor to identify with in order to legitimize his power and to win the support of the local population. A similar view at that model behaviour in all of its ritual gestures in the context of the (re-)foundation of the city is offered by the ancient cult figure of Zeuxippus Helios, the central solar deity of the Thracian population of the city, that was associated with Zeus Helios and especially revered since times immemorial (see Lozanova 2020, Chapter II: *Zeuxippus - Zeus Helios and Septimius Severus* with all the sources).

A similar situation can be detected in the effort of Emperor Septimius Severus to place his name over the ancient solar cult centre of Zeuxippus, which the local population did not accept and preserved its ancient toponym and cult... (Lozanova 2020, Chapter II: *Zeuxippus - Zeus Helios and Septimius Severus*). It is by no accident that Jonathan Bardill (Bardill 2012, 34) has been tempted to suppose that for his statue Constantine may have used the statue of Helios (Zeuxippus), that had stood on the Tetrastoon (The Square with the four porticoes) since times immemorial but was later moved by Emperor Septimius Severus to the acropolis of the city, in the temple of the solar deity, identified with Apollo, that he had built or reconstructed. That is not very plausible since the copper obelisk was quite ancient and may have been of aniconic rather than of antropomorphic appearance. But the parallel between the solar cult on the ancient agora of Byzantion and the cult situation of the Forum of Constantine is obvious and by no means accidental (Lozanova 2020, 200-218)! The identification of Constantine with the Sun god (of Byzantion?) (Hesych. § 41, p. 41 Preger; Const. Rhod. V.69, Legrand; Leo Gramm. *Chron.*, p. 87, 17 Bekker; Theodos. Melit., p. 63 Tafel; Cedren. P 296, p. 518 Bekker; Tzetz. *Chil.* 8, see 325-339, p. 295 Kiessling; Anna Comnena, 12.4.5, Reifferscheid; Synopsis Sathas, p. 187 (= Codex 487 of the Marcian Library in Venice); Preger 1901, 457-469, etc.) through the iconography of his statue on the porphyry column of *Forum Constantini* and the formula of its epithet in the sources, “shining like the Sun” (Κωνσταντίνῳ λάμποντι; ἔλαμψεν Ἡλίου δίκην - Cedren.), apparently carries specific religious-political suggestions. The cult of the Emperor is at the same time a cult of the Sun (Preger 1901, 457-469; Karayannopoulos 1956, 341-357; Dagron 1974, 38 f.; Berger 1988, 297-299; Fowden 1991, 125-131; Wallraff 2001, 261 ff. with bibl., etc.). In F. J. Dölger’s words, “the solar cult and the imperial cult have been combined in the depiction of Constantine-Helios in Constantinople” (Dölger 1925, 68). In this way, the ancient Byzantion not only became the new city of Constantine, of the Sun Emperor, but was simultaneously the City of the imperial Sun (Wallraff 2001, 262). Thus, the statue on the porphyry column clearly symbolized Constantine’s claims that the roots of the “new city”, founded by him, went deeply into the most distant past of the city. The Roman Emperor, it seems, took advantage of the tradition of the original foundation of the city and its religious-political traditions so that he could repeat and... reassert those.

What is more, through his complex “relations” with the Tyche of the city during Constantinople’s inauguration, Emperor Constantine, apparently, made a demonstrative use of the local mythology of the founding of Byzantion, cre-

ating a permanent, deliberately archaized religious-political and mythological background of his undertaking (Lozanova 2020). On the second day of the spectacular 40-day celebrations of the foundation of the new city the Emperor made clear religious manifestations with his patroness. Constantine resurrected the ancient religious and mythological context, “flirting” with the goddess, protectress of the city, Tyche-Keroessa, the mother of the *heros-oikistes* and the eponym Byzas - probably, gracefully and discretely (?) replacing her with the figure of his own mother Helena (Lozanova 2020). Thus, the propaganda messages and allegories were outlined, as derived from the mythological traditions of the city’s foundation and structured by the relations between the Great Goddess-Mother and her solar son.

With that policy and behaviour of his, the Emperor perhaps was seeking a balance between the traditional religion of the city and the local cult practices, on the one hand, and those of the imperial cult of the ruler or even his personal pre-Christian cult, on the other. That effort to achieve balance would explain the neutral language of Constantine’s public messages and public demonstrations of his religious preferences. Certainly, the Emperor’s aspiration at demonstrating universal religious tolerance and balanced concealment of his personal religious-philosophical views should not be underestimated in those processes. The mentioned trends in coinage and his court propaganda could be explained not so much by his supposed new orientation to Christianity and the act of turning away from paganism but rather by his efforts to maintain a deliberate ambiguity and religious ambivalence, through which Constantine “tried to keep in balance” the religious state of the Empire and its civil peace (Burckhardt 1853, 382).

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