

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

### **On Constantinian authenticity:**

Dörries 1954: 147-61; Barnes 1976, 2001; Lane Fox 1986, 627-53; Silli 1987, XIII; Cameron – Hall 1999, 51; Drake 2000, 292-305; Edwards 2003, XVIII-XXII; Cristofoli 2005; Girardet 2013; Barbero 2016, 226-47; Lenski 2016, 35, n. 56.

### **(Some) hypotheses on place and date of delivery:**

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

### **Structure of *OC*:**

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

### **\* [interpretive digression]**

#### **T1 Daniel in the lions' den (*OC 17*)**

And Daniel, after the dissolution of the Assyrian state (...) went over to Cambyses, the king of the Persians, by the providence of God. But there too was envy and with envy the pernicious attacks of the magi, great and numerous dangers in succession, from all of which the was easily saved with the help of Christ's providence, and easily excelled in the trial of every kind of virtue.

Δανιὴλ δὲ μετὰ τὴν κατάλυσιν τῆς Ἀσσυρίων βασιλείας (...) ἐπὶ Καμβύσην τῶν Περσῶν βασιλέα μετέβηεν ἐκ θείας προνοίας, φθόνος δὲ κἀνταῦθα, καὶ πρὸς γε τῷ φθόνῳ ὀλέθριοι μάγων ἐπιβουλαί, διαδοχαί τε κινδύνων μεγάλων τε καὶ πολλῶν, ἐξ ὧν πάντων συναρομένης τῆς Χριστοῦ προνοίας σωθεὶς εὐχερῶς παντοίας ἀρετῆς πείρα διέπρεψεν.

For when the man prayed three times a day [Dan. 6.3-9] (...) the magi (...) persuaded him (= the king) to sentence Daniel to be a sacrifice to savage lions (...). But Daniel's sentence and imprisonment led not to his doom but to his eternal renown. And set in the midst of beasts, he found the beasts milder than his jailers. For his prayer, assisting the virtue of rectitude and discretion, rendered docile those who were mad by nature. And when this was made known to Cambyses (...) he himself was staggered by the marvellous nature of what was reported, and regretted the easy credence that he had given to the slanders of the magi. [Dan. 6.9-23]. None the less, he dared to become an observer of this spectacle, and to see the man who was hymning Christ by the raising of both hands.

[all translations of the OC from Edwards 2003]

## T2 The Erythaeon Sibyl (OC 18)

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

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

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

Then shall all people wail and gnash their teeth;  
Eclipse shall hide the sun and dancing stars,  
Uplifting hollows, casting down high peaks.

Huge sorrow then shall fall on humankind.  
In peak and plain there shall be no distinction;  
Ocean shall bear no ships, as thunderbolts  
Strip the burnt land of springs and sounding rivers.

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

οὐ γὰρ τοὶ μάγοι, τρεῖς τῆς ἡμέρας εὐχομένου τοῦ ἀνδρός (...) ἐπεισαν αὐτόν (...) λεόντων ἀγρίων θοῖνη κατακριθῆναι. καθεῖρκετο δὲ κατακριθεὶς οὐκ εἰς ὄλεθρον ἀλλ' αἰώνιον εὐδοξίαν ὁ Δανιήλ, καὶ ἐν μέσοις τοῖς θηρσὶν ἐξεταζόμενος ἠπίων καὶ ἡμερωτέρων τῶν θηρίων ἢ τῶν καθειρξάντων ἐπειράτο· πάντας γὰρ εὐχὴ κοσμιότητος καὶ σωφροσύνης ἀρετῆ συναιρομένη τιθασοὺς ἀπειργάζετο τοὺς λυσσώδεις τῆ φύσει. γνωσθέντων δὲ τούτων τῷ Καμβύσῃ (...) ὑπερεκπέπληκτο μὲν αὐτὸς τῷ θαύματι τῶν ἀγγελιομένων, μετεγίνωσκε δὲ ἐπὶ τῷ πεισθῆναι ταῖς διαβολαῖς τῶν μάγων εὐχερῶς· ὅμως γοῦν ἐτόλμησε τῆς θέας ἐκείνης ἐπόπτης γενέσθαι καὶ ἰδεῖν τὸν ἄνδρα ἐκατέρας τῆς χειρὸς ὑψώματι τὸν Χριστὸν ὑμνοῦντα.

Παρίσταται δὲ μοι καὶ τῶν ἄλλοδαπῶν τι μαρτυριῶν τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ θεότητος ἀπομνημονεύσαι (...) ἡ τοίνυν Ἐρυθραία Σίβυλλα, φάσκουσα ἑαυτὴν ἔκτε γενεᾷ μετὰ τὸν κατακλυσμὸν γενέσθαι, ἰέρεια ἦν τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος (...) αὐτῆ τοίνυν εἶσω τῶν ἀδύτων ποτὲ τῆς ἀκαίρου δεισιδαιμονίας προαχθεῖσα καὶ θείας ἐπιπνοίας ὄντως γενομένη μεστή, δι' ἐπῶν περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ τὰ μέλλοντα ροεθέσπισεν, σαφῶς ταῖς προτάξεσι τῶν πρώτων γραμμάτων, ἧτις ἀκροστιχὶς λέγεται, δηλοῦσα τὴν ἱστορίαν τῆς τοῦ Ἰησοῦ κατελεύσεως.

Ἰδρῶσει γὰρ χθῶν, κρίσεως σημεῖον ὄτ' ἔσται·  
Ἡξει δ' οὐρανόθεν βασιλεὺς αἰῶσιν ὁ μέλλων  
Σάρκα παρῶν πᾶσαν κρῖναι καὶ κόσμον ἅπαντα.  
Ὁψονται δὲ θεὸν μέροπες πιστοὶ καὶ ἄπιστοι  
Υψιστον μετὰ τῶν ἁγίων ἐπὶ τέρμα χρόνιοι,  
Σαρκοφόρων ψυχὰς δ' ἀνδρῶν ἐπὶ βήματι κρῖνει.

Χέρσος ὅταν ποτε κόσμος ὅλος καὶ ἄκανθα γένηται,  
Ρίψωσιν τ' εἶδωλα βροτοὶ καὶ πλοῦτον ἅπαντα,  
Ἐκκαύση δὲ τὸ πῦρ γῆν οὐρανὸν ἠδὲ θάλασσαν,  
Ἰχνεῦον ῥήξη τε πύλας εἰρκτῆς αἴδια.  
Σάρξ τότε πᾶσα νεκρῶν ἐς ἐλευθέριον φάος ἦξει,  
Τοὺς ἁγίους ἀνόμους τε τὸ πῦρ αἰῶσιν ἐλέγξει,  
Ὀππόσα τις πράξας ἔλαθεν, τότε πάντα λαλήσει  
Στήθεα γὰρ ζοφόνετα θεὸς φωστῆρσιν ἀνοίξει,  
Θρηῖνος τ' ἐκ πάντων ἔσται καὶ βρυγμὸς ὀδόντων.  
Ἐκλείψει σέλας ἡελίου ἄστρων τε χορεῖα,  
Οὐρανὸν εἰλίξει, μῆνης δὲ τε φέγγος ὀλεῖται.  
Υψώσει δὲ φάραγγας, ὀλεῖ δ' ὑψώματα βουνῶν.

Υψος δ' οὐκ ἔτι λυγρὸν ἐν ἀνθρώποισι φανεῖται,  
Ἴσα τ' ὄρη πεδίοις ἔσται, καὶ πᾶσα θάλασσα  
Οὐκ εἰς πλοῦν εἴξει· γῆ γὰρ φρυχθεῖσα κεραυνῶ,  
Σὺν πηγαῖς ποταμοὶ τε καχλάζοντες λειψοῦσιν,

Σάλπιγξ δ' οὐρανόθεν φωνὴν πολὺθρηνον ἀφήσει,  
Ὠρύουσα μύσος μέλεον καὶ πῆματα κόσμου.  
Ταρταρόν δὲ χάος δεῖξει τότε γαῖα χανοῦσα,

Signs manifest to all men there shall be:  
True men shall crave the branches of the Cross.  
As men grow pious Christ will shock the world,  
Unveiling the elect with his twelve springs.  
Rod shall be shepherd, ruling as with iron.  
Our God is this, set forth now in acrostics,  
Saviour immortal, king who died for us.

### T3 Virgil's Fourth Eclogue (OC 19-21)

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

*Whence then appeared a novel race of men*

And again, in another passage of the Bucolics:

*Sicilian Muses, let our theme be great*

What could be plainer than this? For he adds:

*The oracle of Cumae is fulfilled*

Obviously, the expression 'of Cumae' refers enigmatically to the Sibyl. (...) And the poet adds:

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

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

*He shall receive God's deathless life and see  
Heroes his massed companions -*

Obviously the righteous (...)

Ἡξουσιν δ' ἐπὶ βῆμα θεοῦ βασιλῆες ἅπαντες.  
Ρεύσει δ' οὐρανόθεν ποταμὸς πυρὸς ἡδὲ θεοῦ,

Σῆμα δέ τοι τότε πᾶσι βροτοῖς ἀριδείκετον, οἷον  
Τὸ ξύλον ἐν πιστοῖς, τὸ κέρας τὸ ποθούμενον ἔσται·  
Ἀνδρῶν εὐσεβέων ζωῆ, πρόσκομμά τε κόσμου,  
Υδασι φωτίζον κλητοὺς ἐν δώδεκα πηγαῖς·  
Ράβδος ποιμαίνουσα σιδηρεῖη γε κρατήσει.  
Οὔτος ὁ νῦν προγραφεῖς ἐν ἀκροστιχίαις θεὸς ἡμῶν  
Σωτὴρ ἀθάνατος βασιλεὺς ὁ παθῶν ἔνεχ' ἡμῶν.

ἢ τε νέα τοῦ δήμου διαδοχὴ συνέστη, περὶ  
ἧς οἶμαι λέγειν τὸν ἐξοχώτατον τῶν κατὰ Ἰταλίαν  
ποιητῶν·

Ἔνθεν ἔπειτα νέα πληθὺς ἀνδρῶν ἐφάνθη.

καὶ πάλιν ἐν ἐτέρῳ τινὶ τῶν Βουκολικῶν τόπῳ·

Σικελίδες Μοῦσαι, μεγάλην φάτιν ὑμνήσωμεν.

τί τούτου φανερώτερον; προστίθησι γάρ·

Ἦλυθε Κυμαίου μαντεύματος εἰς τέλος ὁμφῆ,

Κυμαῖαν αἰνιττόμενος δηλαδὴ τὴν Σίβυλλαν. (...) καὶ  
προστίθησιν ὁ ποιητής·

Τὸν δὲ νεωστὶ παῖν τεχθέντα, φασφόρε μήνη,  
Ἄντι σιδηρεῖης χρυσοῦν γενεῖν ὀπάσαντα,  
Προσκύνει.  
Τοῦδε γὰρ ἄρχοντος τὰ μὲν ἔλκεα πάντα βρότεια  
<ἴαται>, στοναχαὶ δὲ κατευνάζονται ἀλιτρῶν.

συνίεμεν δὴ φανερῶς τε ἅμα καὶ ἀποκρύφως δι'  
ἀλληγοριῶν τα<ῦτα> λεχθέντα, τοῖς μὲν βαθύτερον  
ἐξετάζουσι τὴν τῶν ἐπῶν δύναμιν ὑπ' ὄψιν ἀγομένης  
τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ θεότητος, ὅπως δὲ μή τις τῶν  
δυναστευόντων ἐν τῇ βασιλευούσῃ πόλει ἐγκαλεῖν  
ἔχη τῷ ποιητῇ, ὡς παρὰ τοὺς πατέρας νόμους  
συγγράφοντι ἐκβάλλοντί τε τὰ πάλαι ὑπὸ τῶν  
προγόνων περὶ τῶν θεῶν νομιζόμενα, ἐπικαλύπτεται  
τὴν ἀλήθειαν.

ἠπίστατο γὰρ οἶμαι τὴν μακαρίαν καὶ ἐπώνυμον τοῦ  
σωτῆρος τελετὴν, ἵνα δὲ τὸ ἄγριον τῆς ὀμότητος  
ἐκκλίνοι, ἦγαγε τὰς διανοίας τῶν ἀκουόντων πρὸς τὴν  
ἐαυτῶν συνήθειαν, καὶ φησι χρῆναι βωμοὺς ἰδρῦσθαι  
καὶ νεῶς κατασκευάζειν θυσίας τ' ἐπιτελεῖσθαι τῷ  
νεωστὶ τεχθέντι. ἀκολουθῶς δὲ καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ἐπήγαγε  
τοῖς φρονουῦσι. φησὶ γάρ·

Λήψεται ἀφθάρτοιο θεοῦ βίωτον καὶ ἀθρήσει  
Ἦρωας σὺν ἐκείνῳ ἀολλέας· ἡδὲ καὶ αὐτὸς

δηλαδὴ τοὺς δικαίους. (...)

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

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

*But when the hour and fruit of manhood come*

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

*No sinful crews shall then profane the sea,  
The fruitful earth shall yield abundant growth, (...)*

(21) One of those who lack understanding might think that this is said of a human generation. But when a human child is born, in what sense is the earth unsown and unploughed (...)?

#### **T4 Decius, Valerian, Diocletian (OC 24-25)**

(24) I put the question to you now, Decius, you who trampled upon the toils of the just in hatred of the church and appointed retribution for those who lived a holy life: how do you fare now after your life? What kind of state are you in, what miseries surround you? The time between life and death showed your good fortune, when, falling with all your army on the Scythian fields, you led the renowned power of Rome to contempt against the Getae. But you Valerian, who showed the same murder-lust toward those who heeded God, you made the holy judgment manifest when you were caught and led as a prisoner in bonds with your very purple and all your royal pomp, and finally, flayed and pickled at the behest of the King of the Persians (...) (25) And Diocletian after the murder-lust of his persecution, having voted himself down, unwittingly renounced himself as one unworthy of power, and confessed the harmfulness of his folly in the confines of one contemptible dwelling! What good did it bring to this man to have kindled war against our God? I suppose that of passing the rest of his life in fear of the thunderbolt. Nicomedia tells it, and the witnesses are not silent, of whom I happen to be one. For I saw him cry out, when he was mentally enfeebled

Φύσει δ' εὐώδη τὰ σπάργανα σεῖο γε ποίην  
"Ὀλλυται ἰοβόλου φύσις ἔρπετοῦ, ὄλλυται ...  
Λοίγιος, Ἀσσύριον θάλλει κατὰ τέμπε' ἄμωμον.

τούτων οὐδὲν ἀληθέστερον οὐδὲ τῆς τοῦ σωτῆρος ἀρετῆς οἰκειότερον εἴποι τις ἂν· αὐτὰ γὰρ τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ σπάργανα, πνεύματος ἁγίου δύναμις, εὐώδη τινὰ ἄνθη νεολαία ὥπασε γέννα. ὁ δὲ ὄφις ἀπόλλυται, καὶ ὁ ἰὸς τοῦ ὄφεως ἐκείνου, ὃς τοὺς πρωτοπλάστους πρῶτος ἐξηπάτα, παράγων τὰς διανοίας αὐτῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐμφύτου <σωφροσύνης> ἐπὶ τὴν τῶν ἡδονῶν ἀπόλαυσιν, ὅπως γνοῖεν τὸν ἐπητημένον αὐτοῖς ὄλεθρον. πρὸ γὰρ τοι τῆς κατελεύσεως τοῦ σωτῆρος τῆς ἀθανασίας τῶν δικαίων ἀγνοία τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπὶ μηδεμιᾷ χρηστῇ ἐλπίδι ἐρειδομένης ἔθραυε (...)

*Ἄλλ' ὅταν ἡνορέης ὥρη καὶ καρπὸς ἴκηται,*

(τουτέστιν, ἐπειδὴν ἀνδρωθεὶς τὰ περιέχοντα τὸν βίον τῶν ἀνθρώπων ριζόθεν ἐξέλη τὴν τε ξύμπασαν γῆν εἰρήνην κατακοσμήσῃ,)

*Οὐχ ὅσιον ναύτησιν ἀλιτρυτοῖσιν ἀλᾶσθαι,  
Φυομένων ἄμυδις γαίης ἀπο πίοινο μέτρῳ,*

(...) Ταῦτα δόξειεν ἂν τις τῶν οὐκ εὖ φρονούντων περὶ γενεᾶς ἀνθρώπου λέγεσθαι. παιδὸς δὲ τεχθέντος ἀνθρώπου, ποῖον δὴ ἔχει λόγον γῆν ἄσπαρτον καὶ ἀνήροτον (...);

Σὲ δὲ νῦν τὸν Ἀέκιον ἐρωτῶ, τὸν ἐπεμβαίνοντά ποτε τοῖς τῶν δικαίων πόνοις, τὸν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν μισήσαντα, τὸν ἐπιθέντα τιμωρίαν τοῖς ὀσίως βεβιωκόσι· τί δὴ νῦν πράσσεις μετὰ τὸν βίον; ποῖαίς δὲ καὶ πῶς δυστραπέλοις συνέχη περιστάσεις; ἔδειξε δὲ καὶ ὁ μεταξὺ τοῦ βίου καὶ τῆς τελευτῆς χρόνος τὴν σὴν εὐτυχίαν, ἡνίκα ἐν τοῖς Σκυθικοῖς πεδίοις πανστρατιᾷ πεσὼν τὸ περιβόητον Ῥωμαίων κράτος ἦγες τοῖς Γέταις εἰς καταφρόνησιν. ἀλλὰ σύγε, Ὀυαλεριανέ, τὴν αὐτὴν μαιφονίαν ἐνδειξάμενος τοῖς ὑπηκόοις τοῦ θεοῦ, τὴν ὀσίαν κρίσιν ἐξέφηνας ἀλοὺς αἰχμάλωτός τε καὶ δέσμιος ἀχθεὶς σὺν αὐτῇ πορφυρίδι καὶ τῷ λοιπῷ βασιλικῷ κόσμῳ, τέλος δὲ ὑπὸ ἀπώρου τοῦ Περσῶν βασιλέως ἐκδαρῆναι κελευσθεὶς καὶ ταριχευθεὶς. (...) (25) Διοκλητιανὸς δὲ μετὰ τὴν μαιφονίαν τοῦ διωγμοῦ αὐτὸς ἑαυτοῦ καταψηφισάμενος, λέληθεν ἀποκηρύξας μὲν ἑαυτὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς ὡς ἄχρηστον, ὁμολογήσας δὲ τὴν τῆς ἀφροσύνης βλάβην μιᾶς εὐκαταφρονήτου οἰκίσεως καθειργμῶ. τί δὴ τούτῳ συνήνεγκε πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἡμῶν τὸν πόλεμον ἐνστήσασθαι; ἴν' οἶμαι τὴν τοῦ κεραυνοῦ βολὴν δεδιῶς διαγάγοι τὸν ἐπίλοιπον βίον. λαλεῖ Νικομήδεια, οὐ σιωπῶσι δὲ καὶ οἱ ἱστορήσαντες,

and in fear of every sight and sound, that the cause of the evils surrounding him had been his own folly when he invoked against himself God's protection of the just. Nevertheless the palace and his house were destroyed, after the dispensation of the thunderbolt and the fire from heaven. **The outcome of these actions had indeed been foretold by people of intelligence.**

ὧν καὶ αὐτὸς ὦν τυγχάνω. εἶδον γάρ, ἠνίκα εὐτελής τὸ φρόνημα καὶ πᾶσαν μὲν πρόσοψιν παντοῖον δὲ ψόφον δεδιὼς ἐποτινῆτο τῶν περιεστώτων κακῶν αἰτίαν γεγενῆσθαι τὴν ἀφροσύνην ἑαυτοῦ προκαλεσαμένου καθ' ἑαυτοῦ τὴν θεῖαν τοῖς δικαίοις ἐπικουρίαν. ἐδηροῦτο μέντοι τὰ βασίλεια καὶ ὁ οἶκος αὐτοῦ, ἐπινεμομένου σκηπτοῦ νεμομένης τε οὐρανίας φλογός. **καὶ προείρητό γε ἡ τούτων ἔκβασις ὑπὸ τῶν εὖ φρονούντων.**

#### **T5 Cicero, *de div.* 1.18.34**

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

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

#### **T6 Correcting Plato (OC 9)**

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

αὐτὸς τε ὁ ὑπὲρ πάντας τοὺς ἄλλους ἠπιώτατος Πλάτων, καὶ τὰς διανοίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων πρῶτος ἀπὸ τῶν αἰσθήσεων ἐπὶ τὰ νοητὰ καὶ αἰεὶ ὠσαύτως ἔχοντα ἐθίσας ἀνακύψαι ἀναβλέψαι τ' ἐπὶ τὰ μετάρσια διδάξας, πρῶτον μὲν θεὸν ὑφηγήσατο τὸν ὑπὲρ τὴν οὐσίαν, καλῶς ποιῶν, ὑπέταξε δὲ τούτῳ καὶ δεύτερον, καὶ δύο οὐσίας τῷ ἀριθμῷ διεῖλε, μιᾶς οὐσίας τῆς ἀμφοτέρων τελειότητος, τῆς τε οὐσίας τοῦ δευτέρου θεοῦ τὴν ὑπαρξιν ἐχούσης ἐκ τοῦ πρώτου· αὐτὸς γάρ ἐστιν ὁ δημιουργὸς καὶ διοικητὴς τῶν ὅλων δηλονότι ὑπεραναβεβηκῶς, ὁ δὲ μετ' ἐκείνῳ ταῖς ἐκείνου προστάξεσιν ὑπουργήσας τὴν αἰτίαν τῆς τῶν πάντων συστάσεως εἰς ἐκείνῳ ἀναπέμπει. (...) μέχρι μὲν οὖν τούτου Πλάτων σώφρων ἦν· ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἐξῆς εὐρίσκειται διαμαρτάνων τῆς ἀληθείας, πληθὸς τε θεῶν εἰσάγων καὶ ἐκάστοις ἐπιτιθεὶς μορφάς, ὅπερ καὶ παραίτιον ἐγένετο τῆς μείζονος πλάνης παρὰ τοῖς ἀλογίστοις τῶν ἀνθρώπων, πρὸς μὲν τὴν πρόνοιαν τοῦ ὑψίστου θεοῦ μὴ ἀφορώντων, τὰς δ' εἰκόνας αὐτῶν ἀνθρωπίαις τε καὶ ἐτέρων ζώων τύποις μεταμορφουμένας σεβόντων. συμβέβηκε δὲ μεγίστην τινὰ μεγάλου τ' ἐπαίνου ἀξίαν φύσιν τε καὶ παιδείαν τοιοῦσδέ τισι μεμιγμένην πταισμάσιν ἀκαθάρτως τε καὶ μὴ εἰλικρινῶς ἔχειν.

#### **T7 Constantine's life as his argument (OC 22, 26)**

(22) For my part, I ascribe to your goodwill all my good fortune and that of those who are mine. And the evidence is that everything has turned out according to my prayers – acts of courage, victories, trophies over my enemies. Even the great city is conscious of it

Ἐγὼ μὲν τῆς εὐτυχίας τῆς ἑμαυτοῦ καὶ τῶν ἐμῶν πάντων αἰτιῶμαι τὴν σὴν εὐμένειαν. μαρτυρεῖ δὲ καὶ ἡ ἔκβασις τῶν κατ' εὐχὰς ἀπάντων, ἀνδραγαθία, νῆκαι, κατὰ τῶν πολεμίων τρόπαια, σύννοιδεν δὲ καὶ μετ' εὐφημίας ἐπαινεῖ καὶ ἡ μεγάλη πόλις, βούλεται

and gives praise with reverence, while the people of the most dear city approve, even if it was deceived by unsafe hopes into choosing a protector unworthy of it (...) (26) but when they praise my service, which commenced with the inspiration of God, do they not confirm that God is the cause of my feats? Absolutely. For it is God's prerogative to decree the best things, and that of human beings to obey God.

δὲ καὶ ὁ δῆμος τῆς φιλτάτης πόλεως, εἰ καὶ πρὸς ταῖς σφαλεραῖς ἐλπίσιν ἐξαπατηθεὶς ἀνάξιον ἑαυτῆς προεἶλετο προστάτην (...) (26) Ὅταν δὲ τὴν ἐμὴν ὑπηρεσίαν ἐπαινῶσιν, ἐξ ἐπιπνοίας θεοῦ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἔχουσαν, ἄρ' οὐ τῆς ἐμῆς ἀνδραγαθίας τὸν θεὸν αἴτιον εἶναι διαβεβαιοῦνται; πάντων γε μάλιστα· ἔστι γὰρ θεοῦ ἴδιον τὸ τὰ ἄριστα προστάττειν, ἀνθρώπων δὲ τὸ τῷ θεῷ πείθεσθαι.

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

*Victor Constantinus Maximus Augustus to the Provincials of the East.*

Νικητῆς Κωνσταντῖνος Μέγιστος Σεβαστὸς ἐπαρχιώταις ἀνατολικοῖς.

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

(48) Πάντα μὲν ὅσα τοῖς κυριωτάτοις τῆς φύσεως περιέχεται νόμοις, τῆς κατὰ τὴν θείαν διάταξιν προνοίας τε καὶ θεωρίας ἰκανὴν αἴσθησιν τοῖς πᾶσι παρέχει, οὐδὲ ἔστι τις ἀμφιβολία οἷς κατ' εὐθείαν γνώσεως ὁδὸν διάνοια ἐπ' ἐκείνον ἄγεται τὸν σκοπόν, ὡς ἡ τοῦ ὑγιοῦς λογισμοῦ καὶ τῆς ὀψεως αὐτῆς ἢ ἀκριβῆς κατάληψις μιᾶ ῥοπή τῆς ἀληθοῦς ἀρετῆς ἐπὶ τὴν γνῶσιν ἀναφέρει τοῦ θεοῦ. διόπερ πᾶς συνετὸς ἀνὴρ οὐκ ἂν ποτε ταραχθεῖ τούτους πολλοὺς ὁρῶν ἐναντίας προαιρέσεσι φερομένους. ἀνόητος γὰρ ἂν ἡ τῆς ἀρετῆς ἐλάνθανε χάρις, εἰ μὴ καταντικρὺ τὸν τῆς διεστραμμένης ἀπονοίας βίον ἢ κακία προὔβελθητο. διὸ τῇ μὲν ἀρετῇ στέφανος πρόκειται, τῆς δὲ κρίσεως ἀθνητεῖ ὁ ὕψιστος θεός. ἐγὼ δ' ὡς ἐγὼ δ' ὡς ἔνι μάλιστα φανερώς περὶ τῶν κατ' ἑμαυτὸν ἐλπίδων πᾶσιν ὑμῖν ὁμολογήσαι πειράσομαι.

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

(49) Ἔσχον ἔγωγε τοὺς πρὸ τούτου γενομένους αὐτοκράτορας διὰ τὸ τῶν τρόπων ἄγριον ἀποσκήρους, μόνος δ' ὁ πατὴρ ὁ ἐμὸς ἡμερότητος ἔργα μετεχειρίζετο, μετὰ θαυμαστῆς εὐλαβείας ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἑαυτοῦ πράξεσι (2) τὸν σωτῆρα θεὸν ἐπικαλούμενος. ὅσοι δὲ λοιποὶ, οὐχ ὑγιαίνοντες τὰς φρένας ἀγριότητος μᾶλλον ἢ πραότητος ἐπεμέλοντο, καὶ ταύτην ἔτρεφον ἀφθόνως, ἐπὶ τῶν ἰδίων καιρῶν τὸν ἀληθῆ λόγον διαστρέφοντες, τῆς δὲ πονηρίας αὐτοῖς ἢ δεινότης εἰς τοσοῦτον ἐξήπτετο, ὡς πάντων ὁμοῦ τῶν θείων τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων εἰρηνευομένων ἐμφυλίους ὑπέκεινων πολέμου ἀναρριπίζεσθαι.

[tr. Cameron – Hall 1999]

### **T9 Eusebius' Life of Constantine, I 27-28**

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

Εὖ δ' ἐννοήσας ὡς κρείττονος ἢ κατὰ στρατιωτικὴν δέοι αὐτῷ βοηθείας διὰ τὰς κακοτέχνους καὶ γοητικὰς μαγανείας τὰς παρὰ τῷ τυράννῳ σπουδαζομένας, θεὸν ἀνεζήτηε βοηθόν, τὰ μὲν ἐξ ὀπλιτῶν καὶ στρατιωτικοῦ πλήθους δεύτερα τιθέμενος (τῆς γὰρ παρὰ θεοῦ βοηθείας ἀπούσης τὸ μὴ τὰ ταῦτα δύνασθαι ἡγεῖτο), τὰ δ' ἐκ θεοῦ συνεργίας ἅμαχα εἶναι καὶ ἀήττητα λέγων. ἐννοεῖ δῆτα ὁποῖον δέοι θεὸν βοηθὸν ἐπιγράψασθαι, ζητοῦντι δ' αὐτῷ ἐννοία τις ὑπεισηῆσθαι, ὡς πλείονων πρότερον τῆς ἀρχῆς ἐφαψαμένων οἱ μὲν πλείοσι θεοῖς τὰς σφῶν αὐτῶν ἀναρτήσαντες ἐλπίδας, λοιβαῖς τε καὶ θυσίαις καὶ ἀναθήμασι τούτους

hopes to many gods, and had cultivated them with drink-offerings, sacrifices, and dedications, had first been deceived by favourable predictions and oracles which promised welcome things, but then met an unwelcome end, nor did any god stand at their side to protect them from divinely directed disaster; only his own father had taken the opposite course to theirs by condemning their error, while he himself had throughout his life honoured the God who transcends the universe, and had found him a saviour and guardian of his Empire and a provider of everything good. He judiciously considered these things for himself, and weighed well how those who had confided in a multitude of gods had run into multiple destruction (...) he marshalled these arguments in his mind, and concluded that it was folly to go on with the vanity of the gods which do not exist, and to persist in error in the face of so much evidence, and he decided he should venerate his father's God alone.

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

θεραπεύσαντες, άπατηθέντες τὰ πρῶτα διὰ μαντειῶν κεχαρισμένων χρησμῶν τε τὰ αἴσια άπαγγελιομένων αὐτοῖς τέλος οὐκ αἴσιον εὐραντο, οὐδέ τις θεῶν πρὸς τὸ μὴ θεηλάτοις ὑποβληθῆναι καταστροφαις δεξιῶς αὐτοῖς παρέστη, μόνον δὲ τὸν ἑαυτοῦ πατέρα τὴν ἐναντίαν ἐκείνοις τραπέντα τῶν μὲν πλάνην καταγῶναι, αὐτὸν δὲ τὸν ἐπέκεινα τῶν ὄλων θεόν, διὰ πάσης τιμήσαντα ζωῆς, σωτῆρα καὶ φύλακα τῆς βασιλείας άγαθοῦ τε παντὸς χορηγὸν εὐρασθαι. ταῦτα παρ' ἑαυτῶ διακρίνας εὖ τε λογισάμενος, ὡς οἱ μὲν πλήθει θεῶν ἐπιθαρρήσαντες καὶ πλείοσιν ἐπιπεπτώκασιν ὀλέθροις (...) ταῦτ' οὖν πάντα συναγαγὼν τῆ διανοίᾳ, τὸ μὲν περὶ τοῦς μῆθὲν ὄντας θεοὺς ματαιάζειν καὶ μετὰ τοσοῦτον ἔλεγγον άποπλανᾶσθαι μωρίας ἔργον ὑπελάμβανε, τὸν δὲ πατρῶον τιμᾶν μόνον ὤετο δεῖν θεόν.

(28) Άνεκαλεῖτο δῆτα ἐν εὐχαῖς τοῦτον, ἀντιβολῶν καὶ ποτνιῶμενος φῆναι αὐτῶ ἑαυτὸν ὅστις εἴη καὶ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ δεξιᾶν χεῖρα τοῖς προκειμένοις ἐπορέξει. ἀποκλινοῦσης, αὐτοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἰδεῖν ἔφη ἐν αὐτῶ οὐρανῶ ὑπερκείμενον τοῦ ἡλίου σταυροῦ τρόπαιον ἐκ φωτὸς συνιστάμενον. γραφὴν τε αὐτῶ συν-ῆφθαι λέγουσαν· τούτῳ νίκα.

#### T10 Praise of treatise: VC 4.35

Νικητῆς Κωνσταντῖνος Μέγιστος Σεβαστὸς Εὐσεβίῳ. (...) ὑπερθουμάσας σε τῆς φιλομαθείας τε καὶ φιλοτιμίας, αὐτὸς τε τὸ βιβλίον ἀνέγνων ἀσμένως, καὶ τοῖς πλείοσιν, οἳ γε τῆ περι τὸ θεῖον λατρεία γνησίως προσανέχουσι, (3) καθὰ ἐβουλήθης, ἐκδοθῆναι προσέταξα. συνορῶν τοίνυν μεθ' ὅσης θυμηδίας τὰ τοιαῦτα παρὰ τῆς σῆς ἀγχινοίας δῶρα λαμβάνομεν, συνεχεστέροις ἡμᾶς λόγοις εὐφραίνειν

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

#### Commission of the codices: VC 4.36.

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

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

#### T 11 VC 4.17

Σκέψαιτο δ' ἂν τις τὰ τούτων σεμνότερα, διαγνοὺς ὡς ἐν αὐτοῖς τοῖς βασιλείοις ἐκκλησίας θεοῦ τρόπον διέθετο, σπουδῆς ἐξάρχων αὐτὸς τῶν ἔνδον ἐκκλησιαζομένων· μετὰ χεῖράς γέ τοι λαμβάνων τὰς βίβλους τῆ τῶν θεοπνεύστων λογίων θεωρία προσανεῖχε τὸν νοῦν, εἴτ' εὐχὰς ἐνθέσμους σὺν τοῖς τὸν βασιλεῖον οἶκον πληροῦσιν ἀπεδίδου.

One might observe the more solemn aspects of these things by noting how he conducted matters even in the imperial quarters in the manner of a church of God, being himself the leader in earnestness of those constituting the church there. He would take the books in his hands and apply his mind to the meaning of the divinely inspired oracles, and would then render up lawful prayers with the members of the imperial household.

## REFERENCES

- Barbero, A. (2016), *Costantino il vincitore*, Roma.
- Barnes, T.D. (1976) 'The Emperor Constantine's Good Friday Sermon', *Journal of Theological Studies* 27: 414-423.  
(1981) *Constantine and Eusebius*, Cambridge, MA and London.  
(2001) 'Constantine's Speech to the Assembly of the Saints: Place and Date of Delivery', *Journal of Theological Studies* 52: 26-36.
- Bleckmann, B. (1997) 'Ein Kaiser als Prediger: zur Datierung der konstantinischen Rede an die Versammlung der Heiligen', *Hermes* 125: 183-202.
- Bowen, A., Garnsey, P. (2003) *Lactantius: Divine Institutes*, Liverpool.
- Cameron, Av., Hall, S.G. (1999) *Life of Constantine. Eusebius. Introduction, translation, and commentary*, Oxford.
- Corke-Webster, J. (2019) *Eusebius and Empire: Constructing Church and Rome in the Ecclesiastical History*, Cambridge.  
(2020) 'A Bishop's Biography: Eusebius of Caesarea's *Life of Constantine*', in de Temmerman, K. ed. (2020) *Oxford Handbook of Ancient Biography*, Oxford: 297-312.
- Cristofoli, R. (2005) *Costantino e l'Oratio ad sanctorum coetum*, Napoli.
- DePalma Digeser, E. (2000) *The Making of Christian Empire, Lactantius and Rome*, Ithaca, NY and London.
- Dörries, H. (1954) *Das Selbstzeugnis Kaiser Konstantins*, Göttingen.
- Drake, H.A. (1985) 'Suggestions of Date in Constantine's *Oration to the Saints*', *Studia Patristica* 19: 43-51.  
(2000) *Constantine and the Bishops: the Politics of Intolerance*, Baltimore and London.
- Edwards, M. (2003) *Constantine and Christendom: the Oration to the Saints; the Greek and Latin Accounts of the Discovery of the Cross; the Edict of Constantine to Pope Silvester*, Liverpool.
- Eshleman, K. (2012) *The Social World of Intellectuals in the Roman Empire: Sophists, Philosophers, and Christians*, Cambridge.
- Girardet, K.M. (2013) *Konstantin. Rede an die Versammlung der Heiligen*, Freiburg.
- Johnson, A. (2006) *Ethnicity and Argument in Eusebius' Praeparatio Evangelica*, Oxford.  
(2014) *Eusebius*, London.
- Johnson, A., Schott, J., eds. (2013) *Eusebius of Caesarea: Tradition and Innovations*, Washington D.C.
- Lane Fox, R. (1986) *Pagans and Christians*, London.
- Lenski, N. (2016) *Constantine and the Cities: Imperial Authority and Civic Politics*, Philadelphia.
- Lettieri, G. (2013) 'Lattanzio ideologo della svolta costantiniana', in *Enciclopedia Costantiniana*, Milan: I 45-57.
- Potter, D.S. (1994) *Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius*, Cambridge MA.
- Silli, P. (1987) *Testi costantiniani nelle fonti letterarie*, Milan.
- Whitmarsh, T. (2018) 'How to write anti-Roman History', in Allen, D., Christesen, P., Millet, P. eds. (2018) *How to do Things with History: new Approaches to Ancient Greece*, Oxford: 365-390.
- Wienand, J. (2012) *Der Kaiser als Sieger. Metamorphosen triumphaler Herrschaft unter Constantin I.*, Berlin.  
(2015) *Contested Monarchy: Integrating the Roman Empire in the Fourth Century AD*, Oxford.