Abstract. This article presents an overview of published and unpublished Byzantine and post-Byzantine hymnographic texts dedicated to Saint Constantine, founder of Constantinople and first Byzantine emperor, and his mother Saint Helena. Specifically, we cite and comment upon some indicative passages primarily found in canons of the Matins, which refer to historical events from the lives of the saints and attribute to them, especially to Saint Constantine, virtues such as justice, piety, wisdom, and the defense of the true faith. These qualities are directly associated with the imperial political ideology as this was shaped principally by Eusebius of Caesarea in his works *Life of Constantine* and *Tricennial Oration*.

Keywords: Byzantine and post-Byzantine hymnography, canons, Menaion, Saint Constantine, Saint Helena, vision of Constantine, foundation of Constantinople, Council of Nicaea, discovery and exaltation of the Holy Cross, Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life of Constantine*, *Tricennial Oration*, imperial ideology

Introduction

Byzantine hymnography constitutes the richest branch of Byzantine literature. However, as is known, little of this wealth has been included in the printed editions of the liturgical books of the Orthodox Church. The detection, study and dissemination of these texts is both a desideratum and a challenge for the discipline of philology.

The hymnographic compositions in honor of Saints Constantine and Helena, prominent figures of Christianity and Byzantium, have been researched by a number of scholars in the past. Yet, in the current Menaion of May only one canon for their feast is encountered, although manuscripts contain several more. Some

* An abridged version of this article was presented at the 10th Meeting of Greek Byzantinologists (Ioannina, 27–30 November 2019).
of these canons have already been discovered, but the majority of them have not been examined and remain unpublished.

The content of these texts has been clearly influenced by the imperial ideology as this was shaped by the historical works of Eusebius of Caesarea, who was the first to formulate the basic principles of the Byzantine imperial ideology. These principles influenced not only the hymnography for Saints Constantine and Helena but also the much broader hagiological literature related to them. The imperial monarchy is projected in parallel to the heavenly hierarchy. The emperor is pictured as the chosen of God and at the same time as the protector of the Church. Frequent references are also made to the vision of the Cross, the founding of Constantinople and the observance and defense of the dogma against heresies and idolatry. Among other virtues, the piety of Saint Constantine is especially emphasized since it comprises a crucial characteristic of the imperial political ideology.

Published and unpublished canons

The feast of sovereigns and Equal-to-apostles Constantine and Helena is celebrated on 21 May\(^1\). In the Eastern version of Christian iconography, the saints are depicted together holding the Holy Cross between them. The Menaion of May contains a full service for their commemoration\(^2\), which includes only one canon in the Matins\(^3\). Nevertheless, almost since the beginning of the 20th century, researchers have detected in manuscripts numerous other hymnographic texts (canons, stichera, kontakia, kathismata, etc.). Most of these compositions are anonymous and are found in Parisian, Sinaic and Athöian manuscripts as well as in codices

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of the Patriarchates of Alexandria and Sofia. Apart from these unpublished poetic texts, variations may also be noted in the rest of the hymnography of this feast.

A part of this material has already been published and annotated. For the purposes of this article, we investigated additional manuscripts, different from the ones used by previous scholars. Those codices include newer texts or reflect a textual tradition distinct from that of the codices published. Here is a brief outline of the manuscripts and printed editions consulted:

In 1913, S. Gassisi published kathismata, oikoi, stichera and two (2) canons, all accompanied by short critical notes. For his own edition he used the printed editions of the Roman and Venetian Menaia, Anthologies of the 16th and 18th centuries, the edition of hymnographic texts of J.B. Pitra and manuscripts found in the libraries of Cryptofera and the Vatican.

Later on, S. Eustratiades provides in his Αγιολόγιον τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας some brief information about some hymnographic texts that were still unpublished in his time, while in the Ταμεῖον Ἐκκλησιαστικῆς Ποιήσεως (1951) he presents the beginnings (initia) of troparia and canons.

In 1993, A. Luzzi in an extensive article deals with hagiological issues, characteristics and attributes concerning the two saints, he comments on editorial issues regarding the texts cited by S. Gassisi and S. Eustratiades and he supplements the catalogue of hymnographic texts.

In 1996, E. Papailiopoulou-Photopoulou records four (4) unpublished canons. D. Stratigopoulos completes Papailiopoulou-Photopoulou’s catalogue of manuscripts in an article he authored in 2006, adding a canon for the saints composed by Nikolaos Malaxos. This canon, accompanied by critical notes, an Italian translation and relevant commentary, was published by A. Luzzi in 2010.

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A detailed description of the data on the Matins canons that we obtained from the literature mentioned above and from our personal study of the manuscripts is as follows:

1. A canon in the Plagal Fourth Mode beginning with “Μόνε ἐπουράνιε βασιλεῦ”, and with “Ὑ γρὰν διοδεύσας” as the heirmos of the first ode. This canon appears as anonymous in the printed Menaia of May (of Rome, Venice and Apostoliki Diakonia). The heirmoi of the odes belong to various poets (John the Monk, Kosmas, Germanus). The canon is attributed by some scholars to Theophanes Graptsus. The same canon along with other hymnographic texts in honor of the two saints is contained in both editions of G. Vouteris (1899 and 1917).

2. A canon in the Second Mode, beginning with “Δεῦτε, πιστοὶ ἅπαντες, ἀνευφημήσωμεν”, and with “Δεῦτε λαοί” as the heirmos of the first ode. The heirmoi belong to Kosmas and John. This canon is encountered in three (3) codices:

- In a 15th-century manuscript of the Library of Paris (Par. gr. 344, ff. 71r–81r), paper Anthology of the months March–August with the full services of Vespers and Matins and the synaxarion of the saints after the sixth ode. The canon appears as anonymous. This manuscript is mentioned by S. Eustratiades and E. Papailiopoulos-Photopoulos.

- In a 14th-century manuscript of the Ecclesiastical, Historical and Archival Institute of the Patriarchate of Bulgaria (EHAI gr. 384, ff. 326–332), paper Menaion of the months March–May, originating from the collection of

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10 The study of the manuscripts was carried out by means of digital photographs. Codices Paris. gr. 344, Paris. gr. 1566, Sinait. gr. 637 and Sinait. gr. 670 were accessed through the Pinakes digital database, the codex of the Patriarchate of Alexandria through the Palaeographic Archive of the Educational Foundation of the National Bank (Athens), the manuscripts of Great Lavra and Vatopedi through the microfilm archive of the Patriarchal Foundation of Patriarchal Studies of the Vlatades Monastery (Thessaloniki), the manuscript of Kafsokalyvia (Mount Athos) through photographs sent to us by monk Patapius and the manuscript of Sofia through photographs sent to us by the Ecclesiastical, Historical and Archival Institute of the Bulgarian Patriarchate.


the monastery of Panagia Archangeliotissa in Xanthi (Greece). The canon is attributed to John the Monk\textsuperscript{15}.

- In an 18\textsuperscript{th}-century manuscript of the Athonian monastery of Vatopedi (Vatopediou 1667, ff. 180r–183r)\textsuperscript{16}, paper Menaion of May. The canon appears as anonymous.

3. A canon in the Fourth Mode beginning with “Σοί τῷ βασιλεύοντι τῶν αἰώνων”, and with “Ἄισομαι σοι, Κύριε, ο Θεός μου” as the heirmos of the first ode. The heirmoi belong to Germanus, Kosmas and John. The canon is found in five (5) manuscripts and in some of them it is attributed to John\textsuperscript{17}. S. Gassisi was the first to publish it from codex Vaticanus Reginensis gr. 65\textsuperscript{18}. The remaining four (4) manuscripts in which it is encountered are the following:

- A manuscript of the Patriarchate of Alexandria (Alex. Patr. 93, 75v–77v), parchment Menaion of the months May–June\textsuperscript{19}. The vesperal office is also included. The canon is attributed to John.

- A 14\textsuperscript{th}-century manuscript of the library of Paris (Par. gr. 1566, ff. 64r–67v), parchment Menaion of May–June\textsuperscript{20}. The Vespers is also included in the whole service.

- An 11\textsuperscript{th}–12\textsuperscript{th} century manuscript of the monastery of Saint Catherine of Sinai (Sin. gr. 637, ff. 62v–66r), parchment Menaion of March–July\textsuperscript{21}. The Vespers is included in the service.


\textsuperscript{16} σ.ν. ΚΑδΑσ, Τά σημειώματα τῶν χειρογράφων τῆς Ἱερᾶς Μεγίστης Μονῆς Βατοπαιδίου, Ἅγιον Όρος 2000, p. 297.

\textsuperscript{17} A. Luzzi, Il dies…, p. 604–605, where a hypothesis about the author is made.

\textsuperscript{18} S. Gassisi, Innologia Graeca…, p. 80–84. A. Luzzi relied on this edition for his commentary on the troparia.

\textsuperscript{19} Τ.Δ. Μοσχονάς, Πατριαρχείον Ἀλεξάνδρειας. Κατάλογοι τῆς Πατριαρχικῆς Βιβλιοθήκης, vol. I, Χειρόγραφα, Ἀλεξάνδρεια 1945, p. 91–92 (where no dating for the manuscript is given); Ε. Παπαχαλιοπούλου-Φιτοπούλου, Ταμεῖον…, p. 202, num. 613. There is no reference to this particular manuscript in the study of Ν.Π. Τζουμέρκας, Τὰ βυζαντινὰ χειρόγραφα τῆς Πατριαρχικῆς Βιβλιοθήκης Ἀλεξανδρείας, ΕΦ 85–86, 2014–2015, p. 297–332.


• A 13th-century manuscript of the monastery of Saint Catherine of Sinai (Sin. gr. 670, ff. 190v–210v), parchment codex containing services for feasts of saints. The canon is attributed to John the Monk.

In the codex Sin. gr. 637, the text for the third and eighth odes is completely different from the text found in the rest of the manuscripts, while in the fourth and fifth odes only the last troparion differs. Finally, in the seventh and in the ninth ode half of the troparia are different.

4. A canon in the Plagal Second Mode, beginning with “Ἐξ ἀναξίων χειλέων καὶ ῥυπαρῶν δεήσεων”, and with “Ὡς ἐν ἠπείρῳ πεζεύσας” as the heirmos of the first ode. All the heirmoi belong to John. The canon forms the acrostichis “Εκτὶν δέησιν προσδέχου, Κωνσταντίνε”. This anonymous canon, which apparently is part of an octaechon, is handed down in a 16th-century manuscript of the Athonian Monastery of Great Lavra (Lavrae Θ 32, ff. 321r–315r), a paper Anthology containing services for all 12 months. The service also includes Vespers. We do not know whether this canon is a text of the Byzantine period surviving in a later manuscript or a product of post-Byzantine hymnography. In this particular codex, the text has been copied rather clumsily, as it contains many noticeable errors, omissions of verses and metrical deviations.

As regards the canons composed in the post-Byzantine period, the following information is available:

5. A canon in the Second Mode, beginning with “Παντοκράτορ ὑψιστε, Χριστέ, βασιλεῦ αἰώνε”, and with “Ἐν βυθῷ κατέστρωσε ποτέ” as the heirmos of the first ode. The heirmoi belong to John the Monk and Kosmas. The canon forms the acrostichis “Πιστῶν ἀνάκτων τὴν ἀπαρχὴν αἰνέσω· ὁ μαλαξός”. A. Luzzi published that canon from a Marcian codex.

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22 K. W. Clark, Checklist..., p. 9; Σ. Στρατηγόπουλος, Οἱ ἁγιοὶ Κωνσταντίνος καὶ Ἐλένη..., p. 49.
24 On the author Nikolaos Malaxos, who lived in the 16th century, cf. Σ. Στρατηγόπουλος, Ο Νικόλαος Μαλαξός, Πρωτοπαπάς Ναυπλίου και το συγγραφικό του έργο, Θεσσαλονίκη 2008 [= ΒΚΜ, 47], p. 98–125. The style of this specific canon is quite vivid and contains many references to the Old Testament.
25 A. Luzzi, Il canone..., p. 274–291; Σ. Στρατηγόπουλος, Ο Νικόλαος Μαλαξός..., p. 198; ΙΔΕΜ, Οἱ ἁγιοὶ Κωνσταντίνος καὶ Ἐλένη..., p. 50.
6. A canon in the Plagal First Mode beginning with “Ὁ προγνώστης Ἐθέός, ὁ ἐκ μὴ ὄντων τὸ πᾶν”, and with “Τῷ Σωτῆρι Θεῶ” as the heirmos of the first ode. All the heirmoi belong to John the Monk, while the composer of the canon is Cyril Lavriotes. The canon is found:

- In a paper manuscript of the Monastery of Great Lavra, Mount Athos (Lavrae Ω 111) dating from 1789. The initial information about it is provided by S. Eustratiades. The manuscript comprises the autograph codex of Cyril Lavriotes and contains prose and poetic works of the author. In this codex, the canon is presented without theotokia. The canon in the form in which it is included in Lavrae Ω 111 was published in 1938 in the journal “Αγιορειτική Βιβλιοθήκη” (“Agioreitike Bibliothekē”) with no mention of the publisher’s name.

- In a paper manuscript of the Skete of the Holy Trinity of Kafsokalyvia, Mount Athos (Kafsokalyvion 171, ff. 446–450) dating from the year 1892, an Anthology of services. The beginning of this canon and the manuscript of Kafsokalyvia, without its number, are mentioned in the catalogue of E. Papailiopoulou-Photopoulou. The later catalogue of manuscripts compiled by the monk Patapius helped to detect the number of the manuscript, although this catalogue does not mention the name of the poet. In the manuscript of Kafsokalyvia, the order of the troparia up until the seventh ode is different from the order found in the autographic codex Ω 111 of Great Lavra. The theotokia in all the odes encountered in this manuscript are the same as the ones in the canon of the Ascension.

7. A canon in the Plagal Second Mode beginning with “Ἄναξ ἀνάκτων, ὦ Λόγε Υἱὲ Θεοῦ”, and with “Ὡς ἐν ἠπείρῳ πεζεύσας” as the heirmos of the first ode. The heirmoi belong to John the Monk. In the canon there is an alphabetic

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29 ΠΑΤΑΠΙΟΥ ΚΑΥΣΟΚΑΛΥΒΙΤΟΥ, Κατάλογος τῶν χειρόγραφων κωδίκων τοῦ κυριακοῦ τῆς Σκῆτης Ἁγίας Τριάδος Καυσοκαλυβίων, Θεσσαλονίκη 2005, p. 264, num. 25.

30 E. ΠΑΠΑΙΩΑΝΝΙΟΥΛΟΥ-ΦΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ, Τάμειον…, p. 202, num. 614. No mention of the manuscript number is made in Δ. ΣΤΡΑΤΗΓΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, Οἱ ἁγιοι Κωνσταντῖνος καὶ Ἑλένη…, p. 50.
acrostichis, while the initial letters of the theotokia form the name of Cyril Lavriotes. The text is included in the autographic codex of the poet of the Athonian monastery of Great Lavra (Lavrae Ω 111). The canon has been published in the journal “Ἀγιορειτικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη”\textsuperscript{31}.

8. A canon in the First Mode beginning with “Ἀναστάσεως ἡμέρα λαμπρυθέντες Χριστοῦ”, and with “Ἀναστάσεως ἡμέρα” as the heirmos of the first ode. This canon has been published in the “Ἀγιορειτικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη”, where it is attributed to Theodore the Studite, without any reference to manuscripts\textsuperscript{32}. A reference to the same canon is found in the catalogue of manuscripts of the Skete of Holy Trinity in Kafsokalyvia (Mount Athos), where the hieromonk Theodoritus from Ioannina is mentioned as the poet\textsuperscript{33}. Commentary on the manuscripts and the canon may also be found in the work of monk Patapius on Theodoritus\textsuperscript{34}.

**Historical events and hymnographic texts\textsuperscript{35}**

In all the existing hymnographic texts in honor of Saints Constantine and Helena, historical events from their lives are commemorated. What follows is an indicative reference to the most important ones, mainly from the texts that have not yet been published:

- From the life of Constantine the Great

The vision of the sign of the Cross in the sky is quite frequently mentioned. According to Eusebius of Caesarea\textsuperscript{36}, this event was reported to him by Constantine the Great himself\textsuperscript{37}. To provide an indicative sample, we cite the following troparia:

\textsuperscript{31} “Ἀγιορειτικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη” 23–24, 1937–1938, p. 178–182 (the publisher’s name is not specified).

\textsuperscript{32} “Ἀγιορειτικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη” 23–24, 1937–1938, p. 411–413.

\textsuperscript{33} Παταπίου Κατάλογος, Κατάλογος..., p. 218, num. 13.

\textsuperscript{34} Παταπίου Κατάλογος, Κατάλογος..., p. 218, num. 13.

\textsuperscript{35} The use of asterisk (*) in the chapters III–IV indicates a change of verse and the use of υ indicates the addition of a syllable.


The Hymnography in Honour of Saints Constantine and Helena

Σύ, βασιλεῦ, θεία ἐλλάμψει πεφώτισαι ὁ γὰρ Σταυρὸς ὁ τίμιος ἀστροδεικτούμενος ἐπεφάνη σοι λέγων Ἐν τούτῳ, Κωνσταντίνε, νίκα τῷ ὑπλῷ ἐχθροῦς.

Similar content is also encountered in the exapostilarion:

Σταυρὸν τετραστερόφωτον ἐν οὐρανοῖς τεθέασαι, θεόστεπτε Κωνσταντίνε, φωνῆς δὲ θείας ἀκούσας ἐν τούτῳ νίκα ἅπασας τὰς τῶν βαρβάρων φάλαγγας.

This vision, according to Eusebius, was the point of Constantine’s conversion to Christianity. The same view is reflected in the kathisma below:

Τὰς αἰσθήσεις ἐκτείνας πρὸς οὐρανὸν καὶ τῶν ἄστρων μανθάνων τὴν καλλονὴν ὁ πταυρὸς ὁ τίμιος διαγράφον «ἐν τούτῳ νικᾶν καὶ κρατύνεσθαι» ὅθεν τῆς ψυχῆς σου ἐπανοίξας τὸ ὄμμα, τὸ γράμμα ἀνέγνωκας καὶ τὸν τρόπον μεμάθηκας, Κωνσταντίνε πανσέβαστε.

The defeat of his opponent, Maxentius, at the Tiber bridge in October 312 is illustrated in the troparion:

Ἡ μόνη γέφυρα Θεὸς καὶ Κύριος ὁπηνίκα σὲ εἶδεν ἐν τοῖς δεινοῖς, τῆς γεφύρας ἔσωσε, τὸν δ’ ἐχθρόν σου τῷ βυθῷ, παραδίδωσι, θεσπέσιε.

The founding of Constantinople in 324 is reminisced in the apolytikion for the two saints and in many troparia of the canons. For example:


38 Par. gr. 344, ff. 72v–73r; EHAI gr. 384, f. 326; Vatopediou 1667, f. 180r (βασιλεὺς in cd.).
39 Σ. Εὐστρατίαδου, Ταμεῖον…, p. 155.
41 MR, V, 141.
Anastasia Nikolaou

Πόλιν τερπνήν σὺ ἐκ τερμάτων συνέστησας* τὴν ἀληθῶς ἑπτάλοφον* καὶ θεοπύργωτον,* ἔνθα οἱ τῶν Ρωμαίων* σκηπτούχοι κραταίονται* καὶ μεγαλύνονται44.

Constantine the Great is credited with the initiative to convene the First Eumenical Council in Nicaea in 325, during which the Arian doctrine was condemned45. These events are noted in the following troparion:

Ἐκ τῶν τῆς γῆς τεσσάρων περάτων, ἔνδοξε,* ἡ ἐν Νικαιᾷ σύνοδος* τῷ σῷ προστάγματι* συνηθροίσθη, παμμάκαρ,* Ἀρείου καθελούσα* δόγμα τὸ ἀθεὸν46.

and in the sticheron of the Lauds:

Μέγας φωστήρ ἔξανέτειλας τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Χριστοῦ, Κωνσταντίνε μακάριε* διὰ σοῦ γὰρ Ἀρείου ὁ παμμίαρος πέπτωκε* καὶ ἀπεδείχθη ὅθεν αἰτοῦμέν σε* τῷ Σωτῆρι πρέσβευε* υπέρ ἡμῶν* πίστει τῶν τελοῦντων σου* τὴν μνήμην σήμερον47.

The contribution of Constantine the Great to the formation of the Creed has also been decisive48. This fact is depicted in the troparion:

Σοῦ μακαρία ἡ μνήμη,* ὑπερένδοξε ἄναξ,* ἐν πάσῃ γενεᾷ καὶ γενεᾷ˙* σὺ γὰρ φυτὸν κατεφύτευσας* ἐκτρέφων τοῦ Κυρίου τὸν λαὸν* τὴν ὀρθόδοξον πίστιν, τὸ τῆς τριάδος σύμβολον49.

Hymnographic texts often refer to the demolition of pagan temples and altars50 and the construction of Christian churches51. As an example, we cite the following troparion:

Ναοὺς καὶ βωμοὺς* τῶν εἰδώλων καταστρέψας, παμμακάριστε,* ναοὺς Κυρίων φυοδόμησας* καὶ τῶν ἁγίων τὰ λείψανα* εὐσεβῶς ἐναπέθου* καὶ πανσόφως ἀνέκραζε˙* εὐλογητός εἶ ὁ Θεὸς ὁ τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν52.

44 Par. gr. 344, f. 73r; EHAI gr. 384, f. 326; Vatopediou 1667, f. 180r.
45 Eusebius CAESARIENSI SIS, p. 83–85; B. Φείδας, Εκκλησιαστικὴ Ἰστορία…, p. 413–469.
46 Par. gr. 344, f. 73r; EHAI gr. 384, f. 326 (τῶν τεσσάρων τῆς γῆς in cd); Vatopediou 1667, f. 180r (σκηπτούχοι in cd.).
47 S. Gassisi, Ημνημονία Γρακέα…, p. 71.
48 B. Φείδας, Εκκλησιαστικὴ Ἰστορία…, p. 464.
49 Par. gr. 344, f. 79v; EHAI gr. 384, f. 332; Vatopediou 1667, f. 182r.
50 Eusebius CAESARIENSI SIS, p. 96, 106–110, 111.
52 Par. gr. 344, f. 78v; EHAI gr. 384, f. 330; Vatopediou 1667, f. 182r.
In a canon, it is mentioned that Saint Constantine had placed one of the nails used to crucify Christ in the bridle of his horse:

Σὺ χαλινὸν προφητικῶς* τὸν τοῦ ἵππου κατεσκεύασας, παμμάκαρ,* ἐκ τῶν τιμίων ἠλων* τῶν ἐμπαρέντων χερατν* ἀγίας Χριστοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν* καὶ τούτο ὅπλον εὗρες* κατ’ ἐχθρῶν ἐν πολέμους53.

This event is mentioned by historians Socrates Scholasticus, Theodoret of Cyrus and Sozomen and is correlated with prophet Zechariah of the Old Testament54. There are many references to the baptism of Saint Constantine55. However, in the hymnographic texts the name of the person who baptized him, Sylvester, is mentioned only in two instances56. A canon reads:

Ναὸς γενόμενος Θεοῦ* τῇ θεογενεσία* <υυυυυυυυ>* τοῦ σιλβέστρου βαπτισμῷ* καὶ τῶν εἰδώλων βωμοὺς* καταστρέψας,* ἄναξ Κωνσταντῖνε σοφέ57.

• From the life of Saint Helena

Saint Helena58, the Equal-to-apostles59, “ἡ πανάγαστος ὄντως βασίλισσα” and “ἐφεργέτις πιστῶν”60, led a virtuous life. In the hymnographic texts, her name is
primarily associated with the discovery of the Holy Cross, the spear and the nails\textsuperscript{61}. A troparion reads:

\begin{verbatim}
Σὺ ἀνεδείχθης ἐν κόσμῳ* καρποφόρος ἐλαία,* Ἑλένη, ἐκβλαστήσασα ἡμῖν* πάσιν τὸ φῶς καὶ
tὸ ἔλεος,* τὸν ἱερόν τοῦ Κυρίου,* τὴν λόγχην καὶ τοὺς ἥλους, καὶ τὴν σὴν* ὑπερθαύμα-
stον μνήμην* τελοῦσθε ἑορτάζομεν\textsuperscript{62}.
\end{verbatim}

According to Eusebius, she rebuilt ruined churches in the Holy Land\textsuperscript{63}. In the Menaion of May, we find the troparion:

\begin{verbatim}
Ὡς θαυμαστὸς ὁ πόθος σου* καὶ ὁ τρόπος σου ἐνθεος,* ἔνδοξε Ἑλένη,* γυναικῶν τὸ καύχη-
μα* τοὺς τόπους γὰρ φθάσασα,* τοὺς τὰ σεπτὰ παθήματα* ὑποδεξαμένους τοῦ Δεσπότου
tῶν ὀλων,* ναοὺς περικαλλέσσι* κατεκόσμει βοῶσα.* Λαὸς ὑπερψυσήτε Χριστὸν εἰς τοὺς
αιώνας\textsuperscript{64}.
\end{verbatim}

Eusebius mentions that Constantine the Great converted his mother to Christianity, but in a troparion of the canon of Cyril Lavriotes the reverse idea is expressed:

\begin{verbatim}
Τρωθείσα τῇ ἀγάπῃ τοῦ Κτίστου σου* ταύτη καὶ τὸν νῦν μετερρύθμισας,* Ἑλένη θεία,
kosmopoθητε\textsuperscript{65}.
\end{verbatim}

**Political ideology and hymnographic texts**

Although no Byzantine texts containing systematized views on the characteristics of the emperor have been handed down to us, we can locate and derive relevant information from other genres, such as the mirrors for princes, ceremonial speeches, preambles to laws, hagiological and historical texts\textsuperscript{66}. In the same


\textsuperscript{62} Par. gr. 344, f. 80r; EHAI gr. 384, f. 332; Vatopediou 1667, f. 183r.

\textsuperscript{63} Eusebius Caesariensis, p. 101.

\textsuperscript{64} MR, V, 143; A. Luzzi, *Il canone*..., p. 284.


The Hymnography in Honour of Saints Constantine and Helena...

perspective we might also consider hymnographic production, which has been a popular research subject in recent years. Many of those virtues were attributed to the two saints as early as the 4th century, mainly by Eusebius, while others relate to the political ideology of Byzantium.

Eusebius, principally through his two works *Life of Constantine* and *Tricennial Oration*, was the founder of the political theology of the Church, adding the Christian teachings to the concepts that had existed since the ancient classical and Hellenistic times.

By studying the contents of the relevant hymnographic texts, one can clearly identify the images, traits and qualities of the two saints.

God crowned Saint Constantine as emperor and granted him the imperial authority. These views are present in many hymns. As an example, we cite the following troparion:

Ἐπέγνως τὸν ἄφθαρτον βασιλέα* τὸν τὰ ἐπίγεια σκῆπτρα* τῇ σῇ δεδωκότα χειρὶ* καὶ γέγο-
νας ὑπήκοος* θεράπων, Κωνσταντῖνε, χριστοῦ70.

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67 ι. ΚΑρΑγιΑννολοσ, Το βυζαντινό... p. 39–49; E. ΚΟΥΝΤΟΥΡΑ-ΓΑΛΑΚΗ, Ο Μέγας Κωνσταντίνος στο αγιολογικό ἔργο του Κωνσταντί
νοῦ Ακροπολίτη: Ιδεολογικές επαναλήψεις και νέες προσεγγίσεις, [in:] Αυρεια. Αφιερωμένους τόμου
στον καθηγητή Ευαγγ. Χρυσό, ed. Τ. ΚΟΛΑΙΑΣ, Κ. ΠΙΤΣΑΚΗΣ, Κ. ΣΥΝΕΛΑΣ, Αθήνα 2014, p. 679–704;
T. ΠΡΑΤΣΧ, Κωνστάντινος η Μεγάλη στην μεταβυζαντινή εποχή, [in:] Προσοποποιήσεις και Εργαζόμενοι στην
μεταβυζαντινή εποχή, Αθήνα 2015, έργα 65–83. More information about the field of historiography

68 H. G. ΒΕΛΚ, Η βυζαντινή χιλιετία, Αθήνα 2000, p. 105; Ε. ΓΛΥΚΑΤΖΗ-ΑΡΒΕΛΕΡ, Η πολιτική ιδεολο
γία..., p. 21–22.

S.N.C. ΛΙΕ, D. MONTSEBARRA, From Constantine..., p. 97–99; C. ΡΛΦ, Imperial Ideology..., p. 685–695; eadem, Old Testament Models..., p. 182; B. ΦΕΛΙΑΚ, Έκκλησιατική Ιστορία..., p. 326;
Κ.Δ.Σ. ΠΑΙΛΙΑΣ, Η θεματική των βυζαντινών «Κατοίκων των Πηγών» της πρώτης και μέσης περιόδου (398–1085), Αθήνα 2017, p. 298; for a different perspective, cf. A. KALDELLIS, The Byzantine Repub
ΣΙΑΛΗ, Η καινοτομία των Μονοδοξιών στην Χρυσή Αρχαιότητα, Αθήνα 2018, p. 115–122.

70 Alex. Patr. 93, f. 75v (θεράπον in cod.); Par. gr. 1566, f. 64r (Ἀπέγνως in cd); Sin. gr. 637, f. 62v (πιστώτατε (sic) θεράπον Χριστοῦ in cod.); Sin. gr. 670, f. 190v (θεράπον in cd.).
and the exapostilarion:

Οὐκ ἔξ ἀνθρώπων εἶληφε τὸ βασίλειον κράτος* ἀλλ’ ἐκ τῆς θείας χάριτος Κωνσταντίνος ὁ μέγας* σὺν τῇ μητρὶ ούφρανόθεν...

His reign is characterized by the principles of justice, gentleness and sympathy:

Τὴν βασιλείαν σου ἐνδόξως κατεκόσμησε* δικαιοσύνη καὶ πραότης καὶ συμπάθεια* ορθοδοξία λάμπουσαν,* οθὲν αἰώνιζε ή μνήμη σου.

and

Ὁ πορφυρίδα ἐνθέως* τὴν συμπάθειαν <υ> στολισθεὶς* καὶ ὁ χλαμύδα {τὴν} καλλίστην* τὴν πραότητα <κατα>κοσμηθείς* βασιλεύς ὁ θείος,* ύμνει ὁ Κωνσταντῖνος* {τὸν} Χριστόν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.

He is full of sympathy, love and compassion, traits that are also mentioned in the troparion:

Ὡς πορφυρίδα, ἔνδοξε,* στολισθεὶς τὴν εὐμένειαν* καὶ ὡσπερ χλαμύδα* τὴν καλὴν συμπάθειάν* στεφάνῳ κεκόσμησαι* τῶν ἀρετῶν τελείῳ νοΐ* καὶ μετατεθεὶς ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς εἰς τὰ ἄνω* βασιλεύς κραυγάζεις˙* Ἱερεῖς εὐλογεῖτε, λαὸς ὑπερυψοῦτε* Χριστόν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.

Saint Constantine abandoned the patriarchal fallacy, a fact that is mentioned numerous times in hymnography. Quite typical is the troparion cited below:

Τῷ φωτὶ ἐλλαμφθεὶς* τοῦ ζωηφόρου σταυροῦ* εἰδώλων πᾶσαν κατέλιπες* καὶ τὸν χριστὸν πάντων Θεὸν ὄντα προέκρινας <υυ>* διὸ καὶ δεδόξασαι* ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ, πάνσοφε.

He was a victor and conqueror with the help of faith and the Cross. Hymnographer Nikolaos Malaxos writes:

Νικήσας ἐχθρῶν* παρατάξεις, μάκαρ, διὰ πίστεως* συνεστήσω τρόπαια* κατα αἰσθητῶν καὶ νοουμένων τε* δυσμενῶν ἐσπερίους* δι’ ἀμφοῖν θαυμαζόμενος.

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71 MR, V, 144.
72 Alex. Patr. 93 f. 76; Par. gr. 1566, f. 66r; Sin. gr. 637, f. 64r; Sin. gr. 670, f. 197v–198r.
73 Lavrae Ω 111, f. 184r.
74 MR, V, 143.
75 Lavrae Ω 111, f. 183r; on the same issue, cf. also MR, V, 144 “Ὁ βασιλεύων τῆς κτίσεως…”; Eusebius Caesariensis, p. 29 “τὸν δὲ πατρὸν τιμῶν μόνον φέτο δεῖν Θεόν”; Β. Φειδας, Ἐκκλησιαστική Ἑτορία…, p. 321.
76 A. Luzzi, Il canone…, p. 280.
In another canon we read:

Ὁ πάλαι τὴν νίκην διὰ σταυροῦ σου* κατὰ βαρβάρων παρασχὼν* τῷ σῷ Κωνσταντίνῳ* αὐτὸς τῷ βασιλεί ἡμῶν* καὶ τὰ νῦν ἐπικούρησον77.

He subdued his passions and had pious thoughts78. These qualities are also displayed in the troparion:

Θεόστεπτε,* εὐσεβεῖ λογισμῷ κυβερνώμενος* καὶ ἀνδρείως* τῶν παθῶν αὐτοκράτωρ γενόμενος* ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ* τὸν λαὸν τοῦ Θεού ἐκυβέρνησα79.

Both he and his mother, Saint Helena, despised the pleasures of the world:

Κοσμίους πάσας τὰς ἡδονὰς,* καίπερ βασιλεῖς τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς,* ὅλως ἐλογίσασθε ἅγιοι,* Κωνσταντῖνε μάκαρ σοφέ,* Ἑλένη σεπτή,* διὸ ἐπαξίως ἀεὶ ἀγάλλεσθε80.

He was admitted to the heavenly kingdom because he reigned in piety, based on the laws of the State, and was subject to God81. He acquired the confidence (parrhesia) to intercede to God, while his tomb works miracles82. These attributes are expressed in the troparia cited below:

Εὐσεβῶς βασιλεύσας* καὶ ἐννόμως ἰθύνας* λαὸν τὸν ὑπήκοον* ὡς Θεῷ ὑπήκοος,* βασιλείας οὐρανῶν* κατηξιώθης, βασιλεύ θεόστεπτε83.

and

Ἡ ἐκκλησία τὰ σὰ* ἀνδραγαθήματα βοᾷ, ἔνδοξε˙* ἡ ὑπὸ σοῦ* καινισθείσα πόλις* θαυμάτων τὰ τερπνά,* ἡ λάρναξ σου βρύει* πηγὴν τῶν ἰάσεων84.

77 Alex. Patr. 93, f. 75v; Par. gr. 1566, f. 65r; Sin. gr. 637, f. 63v; on the same issue, cf. MR, V, 134; on the characterization of the enemies as “barbarians”, cf. A. Spanos, Political Approaches…, p. 67–68; on the connection of the Cross with hymnography, especially that of 14 September, cf. ibidem, p. 69–72.
79 Alex. Patr. 93, f. 76v; Par. gr. 1566, f. 66r; Sin. gr. 637, f. 64v; Sin. gr. 670, f. 199v.
80 “Ἀγιορειτική Βιβλιοθήκη” 23–24, 1937–1938, p. 179.
81 MR, V, 139.
83 Sin. gr. 637, f. 66r.
84 Par. gr. 344, f. 74v; EHAI gr. 384, f. 328.
St. Constantine is often compared to figures of the Old Testament. In a troparion from the canon of Nikolaos Malaxos we read:

ὡς Μωσής φανερωθείς ὁ Σταυρός σου προετύπου δὲ τὴν ἀλήθειαν τῶν ἄνθρωπων διὰ τόν Παῦλον καὶ τῶν Ἀποστόλων τῆς Χριστιανῆς...86

The parallelism to Moses is particularly emphasized in the reference to the appearance of the Cross. A sticheron of the Vespers reads:

Κύριε,* ὥσπερ τῷ Μωσῆ φανερωθείς ὁ Σταυρός σου* προετύπου δὲ τὴν ἀλήθειαν* τροπούμενα τά ἥθη*... 86

The strong and gentle spirit of David and the wisdom and prudence of Solomon also constitute characteristics of Saint Constantine. At Vespers there is again a relevant troparion:

τοῦ Σταυροῦ σου τὸν τύπον* ἐν οὐρανῷ θεασάμενος* καὶ τῶν Ἀποστόλων τῆς Χριστιανῆς...90

Among the figures of the New Testament, a parallelism between Saint Constantine and Paul the Apostle is drawn. Several times the saint is called Equal-to- Apostles and successor of the Apostles. The vision of the Cross was seen as a direct divine call, following Paul's case, and this is directly mentioned in the apolytikion:

τοῦ σταυροῦ σου τὸν τύπον* ἐν οὐρανῷ θεασάμενος* καὶ τῶν Ἀποστόλων τῆς Χριστιανῆς...90

85 A. Luzzi, Il canone..., p. 288, where the saint is also compared to Abraham.
88 MR, V, 141 “Οὐρανόθεν ὡς Παῦλον σε” πάλαι σαγηνεύει Χριστός ὁ Κύριος...”.
89 Kafsokalyvion 171, f. 447; Par. gr. 344, f. 78v; EHAI gr. 384, f. 330; Alex. Patr. 93, f. 76v; Par. gr. 1566, f. 66v; Εὐσεβίου Καίσαρειας, Βιογ., p. 646; G. Dagron, Emperor..., p. 135–143; B. Φείδας, Ἑκκλησιαστική Ἑστίασις..., p. 327; O. Gordon, Constantine the Great – ὁ Ἰσαάκτος τῆς Ιουλίας, ΙΣ 10, 2013, p. 60–61; H. Drake, The Emperor as a “Man of God”: the Impact of Constantine the Great’s Conversion on Roman Ideas of Kingship, Hi (Sao Paolo) 35, 2016, p. 5–8; A. Luzzi, Da en βασιλεύσαι ἀπόστολος α ἱσαάκτος tout court. Note sull’ epiteto isapostolos e sulla sua originaria associazione al nome dell’ imperatore Costantino il Grande, [in:] “Ἀνατολὴ καὶ δύσις” Studi in Memoria di Filippo Burgarella, ed. G. Strano, C. Torre, Roma 2020 [= TSB-N, 21], p. 255, 267–275.
90 MR, V, 139; A. Luzzi, Da en βασιλεύσαι ἀπόστολος..., p. 272.
and in a troparion of the canon composed by Nikolaos Malaxos:

Ἀρίστως διαπρέποντα* σὲ ὁρῶν ὁ ὕψιστος* ἐν θεαρέστοις,* οὐρανόθεν ὡς παῦλον
κέκληκε* δι’ ἀστέρων σταυρόν σοι προδεικνύμενος91.

Furthermore, in a sticheron of the Vespers, St. Constantine is characterized as priest and king:

...ιερεύς τε χρισθεὶς καὶ βασιλεὺς* ἐλαίῳ ἐστήριξας τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ...92

He is an earthly angel and at the same time a heavenly man, a temple of the Holy Spirit. In the third ode of the canon contained in the manuscript Θ 32 of Great Lavra monastery, we read:

Ναὸς γεγένησα* τοῦ θείου Πνεύματος,* Κωνσταντίνε παμάκαρ,* ὡς ἀληθῶς...93

and in the sixth ode:

Ἐπίγειος ἄγγελος* ἀνεδείχθης ἀληθῶς* καὶ οὐράνιος ἄνθρωπος,* παμάκαρ Κωνσταντίνε,
μῦστα Χριστοῦ...94

Quite often the expression of these characteristics includes the concept of light: he shone the light of righteousness in the world95, he was “λαμπρὸς κομήτης ἐσπερώτατος”96, “φωστήρ τῶν ἐσκοτισμένων”97, “μέγας φωστήρ”98, “σέλας φαινότατον”99. In a kathisma we read:

91 A. Luzzi, Il canone..., p. 276; and in a sticheron of the Vespers “Κύριε, ὥσπερ κατὰ Παῦλον τῷ σῷ
Κωνσταντίνῳ ἀνώθεν ὤφθης...”; Τ.Π. ΘΕΜΕΛΗΣ, Τὰ μηναία..., p. 533.
92 MR, V, 139; Π. ΧΡΗΣΤΟΥ, Ὁ βασιλεὺς καὶ ὁ ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸ Βυζάντιο, Κλη 3, 1971, p. 13; G. DAGRON,
93 Lavrae Θ 32, f. 313r.
94 Lavrae Θ 32, f. 313v.
95 A. Luzzi, Il canone..., p. 274; cf. EUSEBIUS CAESARIENSIS, p. 55–56 “μα τοῦ παντὸς ἄρχη ὡσπερ
τινὶ κεφαλὴ τό πάν κατεκοσμεῖτο σώμα μοναρχικῆς ἐξουσίας διὰ πάντων ἡκούσης, λαμπραί τε φω-
tός εὐσεβείας μαρμαραγιαν”. He is also compared to the sun by Eusebius: cf. EUSEBIUS CAESARIENSIS,
p. 38 “Ὡσπερ δ’ ἀνίσχων ὑπὲρ γῆς ἡλίου ἀφθόνως τοις πᾶι τῶν τοῦ φωτὸς μεταδίδωσι μαρμαρ-
γών, κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ δὴ καὶ Κωνσταντῖνου ἄμα ἡλίῳ ἀνίσχων τῶν βασιλικῶν οἰκῶν προσφανῶμενος,
όσινε συνανατέλλων τῷ κατ’ οὐρανόν φωστήρι, τοῖς εἰς πρόσωπον αὐτῶ παριοῦσιν ἀπασὶ φωτὸς
ἀγάς τῆς οἰκίας ἐξέλαμπε καλοκαγαθίας”. On the connection of the symbol of the sun with the
imperial idea, cf. H. HUNGER, Proomion. Elemente der byzantinischen Kaiseridee in den Arengen
96 A. Luzzi, Il canone..., p. 280.
97 MR, V, 141.
98 S. GASSISI, Innologia Graeca..., p. 71.
99 MR, V, 139.
In addition, this image of light is also conveyed to us by Eusebius in his narrative. While describing the first time he saw emperor Constantine as the latter was entering the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, he mentions:

αὐτὸς δὴ λοιπὸν διέβαινε μέσος οἷα θεοῦ τις οὐράνιος ἄγγελος, λαμπρὰν μὲν ὥσπερ φωτὸς μαρμαρυγαῖς ἐξαστράπτων περιβολὴν, ἁλουργίδος δὲ πυρωποῖς καταλαμπόμενος ἀκτῖσι, χρυσοῦ τε καὶ λίθων πολυτελῶν διαυγέσι φέγγεσι κοσμούμενος.

This event is recorded in the third book of his work *Life of Constantine*. But even in the first book of the same work it is emphasized that the bearer of the royal power must be the chosen of God and reign over the entire world according to God's will. In the *Tricennial Oration* the reinforcing element of the vision is also mentioned as an indication of God's favor. The emperor must rule with loyalty to the law and paternal stewardship, and he must lead his subjects to the knowledge of God. The peace, security and salvation of the subjects, which all constitute primary goals of the sovereign, are also reflected in hymnography. We read in a troparion:

Στερέωμα ἡμῖν καὶ τεῖχος ἄρρηκτον καὶ ὅπλον ἐγένου καὶ σωτηρία τοῖς ἐν κόσμῳ, θεοπρόβλητε, Κωνσταντίνε, παμμακάριστε.

The convening of the Council of Nicaea and the fight against heresies are also placed in the context of the political pacification of the state.
Eusebius was the first to associate Constantine the Great with the highest piety, a virtue ascribed to him almost simultaneously with the vision of the Cross and the victory against Maxentius. The defense of the true faith, beneficence, gentleness and calmness are qualities that have been attributed to Saint Constantine since the beginning of the 4th century.

One of the goals of the empire is to spread Christianity to the Gentiles and create one flock under one shepherd. Hence, in a troparion we read:

Τὸ βασιλέων ἐγένου ὑπέρλαμπρος* καὶ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ποιμὴν καὶ διδάσκαλος* καὶ ιερεῶν καυχήμα* ὀρθοδόξων τε πάντων καλλωπισμά.

Constantine the Great was posthumously canonized in the East and many of his successors tried to imitate him or link their dynasty to him. This was also the case with some empresses who sought to associate their reign with Saint Helena.

Through this emperor the work of Divine Providence was accomplished, as imperium Romanum was transformed into imperium Christianum.
### Index of codicum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITY</th>
<th>MANUSCRIPT</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>Alex. Patr. 93</td>
<td>without date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athos</td>
<td>Vatopediou 1667</td>
<td>18th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lavrae Θ 32</td>
<td>16th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lavrae Ω 111</td>
<td>1789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kavsokalyvion 171</td>
<td>1892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>Par. gr. 344</td>
<td>15th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Par. gr. 1566</td>
<td>14th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sina</td>
<td>Sin. gr. 637</td>
<td>11th–12th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sin. gr. 670</td>
<td>13th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sofia</td>
<td>EHAI gr. 384</td>
<td>14th century</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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