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**ABSTRACT**

on dissertation for awarding PHD degree

**THE ARIAN DISPUTES DURING THE REIGN OF THE EMPEROR  
CONSTANTIUS II**

(historical-dogmatic research)

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The dissertation on "The Arian Controversies in the Reign of Emperor Constantius II" consists of 197 (one hundred and ninety seven) pages and includes: Title Page, Table of Contents, List of Abbreviations, Preface, Introduction, Three Chapters, Conclusion, Declaration of originality of the text and References. The bibliography contains 193 titles in Bulgarian, Russian, English, French, Italian, Portuguese and Turkish from source texts, scientific interpretive literature, studies in periodicals and internet sources.

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## INTRODUCTION

The cultural and religious crisis that the Roman Empire experienced in the 4th century is one of the most important moments that world history has ever experienced. The ancient pagan culture collided with Christianity, which, recognized by St. Emp. Constantine I the Great at the beginning of the IV century, was declared at the end of the same century by St. Theodosius the Great as the dominant state religion. Indeed, it may seem that until then the main religion of the empire - the pagan - could only by God's permission or a miracle be replaced by the Christian one. But let us not forget that continuity in history is a very important moment in the series of events filling its course. And we see how reality shows the true face of events: Christianity and pagan Hellenism little by little merge into one whole and create a Christian-Greek-Oriental culture that fits perfectly into the Byzantine one, with its center being the new capital of the Roman Empire - Constantinople.

The main role in creating a new beginning and a new way of life in the empire belongs to St. Constantine I. Under him, Christianity received official recognition for the first time and the former pagan empire began to be Christianized, while the two religions were still on an equal footing.

Usually the conversion of peoples or countries to Christianity happens during the first steps of their historical life. The so-called conversion initiates their state existence when their past has not yet created solid, established foundations, or has created some foundations in crude, primitive images and forms. In such a case, the transition from crude paganism to Christianity could not produce a deep crisis in the state.

But this is not what the IV century represents in the history of the Roman Empire, which has a centuries-old world culture that has achieved perfect forms of statehood for its time and, therefore, has behind it a great past, with ideas and views to which the population is accustomed. This empire was transformed in the IV century into a Christian state, i.e. takes the path of contradiction with the past, and sometimes of its complete denial. The empire is experiencing an extremely acute and severe crisis - the ancient pagan world, at least in the religious sphere, no longer satisfies people's needs. New searches, and new desires appear, which, due to a number of complex and diverse reasons, Christianity manages to satisfy.

With the new conditions of church life created at the beginning of the IV century, the Christian Church experienced a time of intense activity, which was particularly pronounced in the field of dogmatics. In the 4th century, dogmatic questions were no longer considered by individuals, as it was in the 3rd century, for example by Tertullian or Origen, but by entire, numerous, well-organized communities. The emperor, out of respect for the clergy, convenes a large number of saints from their dioceses, and they together, conciliary and publicly, instead of in separate concelebrations and visits or through correspondence, invoking the Holy Spirit, consider and solve complex, important and sublime theological problems.

Councils in the IV century became commonplace and were perceived as the only means of resolving controversial ecclesiastical issues. But already in the conciliar movement of the IV century, a new, extremely important feature for the entire subsequent history of the relations between the spiritual and secular authorities, between the church and the state, was noticed. After the reign of St. Constantine the Great, the state authority intervened in the dogmatic movements and directed them at its own discretion. In the latter case, state interests do not always coincide with ecclesiastical ones.

For a long time, the main cultural center of the East was the Egyptian capital - Alexandria, where intellectual life was at its height. It was the Alexandrian presbyter Arius who gave his name to the most significant heretical teaching from the time of St. Emp. Constantine I.

Arius presents the idea that the Son of God was created in time, that He is a creature and does not have the same nature as his God - the Father, and is also capable of vice and virtue. The Arian heresy spread rapidly, not only in Egypt, but also beyond its borders, causing confusion among the Christians and inflicting the first serious wound on the Church of Christ. Condemned at the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, Arius continues to influence the minds of his adherents. Arianism does not die down, but on the contrary – flares up with even greater fervor and strikes hard at the core of the Christian Church.

The sons of St. Imp. Constantine I had different views on religious policy in the state. In the West, Emperor Constans was a pillar of the Nicene faith, in the East, Emperor Constantius II, on the contrary, supported the Arians. Arianism was finally

condemned at the Second Ecumenical Council, but it did not disappear - it spread among the barbarians. After all, the first Christian preachers were sent to the East Germans from the Eastern Roman Empire when it was ruled by Imp. Constantius II. It is clear that they preached the Creed in which they themselves believed. And here we cannot fail to mention the activity of the Gothic religious enlightener - the Arian bishop Ulfila, who baptized the Goths in the Bulgarian lands in the IV century and translated part of the holy Bible in the Gothic language. Thus Arianism became the national religion first of the Goths and then of the other Germanic peoples. In fact, the Arian dispute was finally resolved only in the 7th century with the conversion of the barbarians to Niceneism.

## **GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISSERTATION**

The present work examines the period from the reign of St. Emp. Constantine the Great – 274 (end of the 3rd century) until the death of Constantius II in 361 (IV century). It is an overview of the era of the Roman Empire with the growing great crisis and the rule of the last soldier emperors. The important political and economic events, which are described by the mentioned sources, have been traced, in order to restore the historical picture in more detail and from a church perspective, which also examines the spiritual processes - an organic part of the socio-cultural ones.

The period from the beginning of the IV century is saturated with numerous events that marked the path of religious change and led to the conversion to Christianity in the empire. Following its inevitable course, history records its examples of the successes of some rulers and the failures of others; reveals their role and confirms their example, accepts them as innovators in the past, who set models for the future. We have also tried to present a great emperor, whom John Norwich calls "the most influential man in all history," and whom the court biographer Eusebius describes as "such an emperor that all history" so far "does not know." But the picture could hardly become clear, regarding the very history of St. Constantine I, if that of his predecessor - Diocletian, is not clarified at least briefly. To begin with, the dissertation traces the internal process of change of the Roman statehood in the Imperium Romanum. Along with this, the steps towards the appearance of the permitted religion - the Christian one and its correct teaching, in comparison with

the genesis of the heresy of Arius, concerning the oneness of God the Son and God the Father, are clarified. Even if the question was resolved under St. Constantine I, his sons, and especially under Constantius II, the dispute with Arianism was again revived as an insurmountable problem in the empire.

The period when, in this spiritual and political climate with so much struggle for power and intrigue, the doctrine of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity - God the Son - was formed and confirmed. The experience of the Church in the dogmatic interpretation and shaping of the canons is described in contrast to the many manifestations of the absence of church unanimity - a disjointed opinion, caused by the Arian heresy, regarding the essence of God according to the Trinity dogma and soteriology itself, as a primordial, holy and orthodox rule of faith. Indeed, it is difficult to describe the strength, courage and efforts of the Alexandrian bishop - St. Athanasius and of the Cappadocian holy fathers, through which, figuratively speaking, the whole spiritual tree of the Church blossomed, as an expression of a new understanding of the Christian faith in the Holy Father forward thinking.

The text traces the military and religious policy of the reign of Emperor Constantius II with the accompanying threats from the Persians, barbarian raids and usurpations. As a true follower of his father's policy, he persecuted the pagans, forbade their sacrifices and closed their temples. Although he actively supported Christianity, the emperor (infatuated with Arianism), as a true connoisseur of theology, tried to resolve the religious disputes that arose in the empire, which in turn gave rise to incessant conflicts. He convened numerous councils, excommunicated and exiled Orthodox bishops, and was even threatened with war by his brother Constans if he did not stop these actions. The ancient historian Ammianus Marcellinus, as a direct witness of the events, presents the emperor Constantius II as a suspicious and distrustful person; although a ruler with good "self-control" and "morality", he unfailingly listened to the advice of his close associates and especially to his beloved eunuch - Eusebius, which defines him as a weak character. Furthermore, the emperor was often cast in the shadow of his father St. Constantine I the Great and his successor Julian, with the goal of being remembered as an insignificant and inglorious figure rather than a worthy heir to the throne.

## 1.1 Relevance of the topic and state of research

The topic of the dissertation, "The Arian Controversies during the reign of Emperor Constantius II", in its historical-dogmatic aspect, represents an endless interest for research in the field of the colorful spectrum of the entire "academic genre". The comprehensive interest in the subject of St. Constantine I the Great, the Arian controversy in the IV century and the reign of Emperor Constantius II are an invariable part of the view of many scholars in the fields of history, theology, clergy, philosophy and a number of others. Their works in themselves determine not only the relevance of the issue under consideration, but also the need for a synergistic study of all issues on the given topic.

We should consider all the main points on the topic of the dissertation research and, with reason, highlight their relevance:

- Usually, when talking about Christianity in the early centuries, the first thought that comes to mind is to start with St. Imp. Constantine I, as a bright dividing line in the history of Christianity. Although described in a different way by many authors, his name is immortalized and closely connected with the recognition of the Church of Christ. The name of the holy emperor forever remains associated with the construction of the new Christian capital of the Roman Empire - Constantinople. The theme also reveals his key role in the Christianization of the empire, as well as the subsequent construction of the conciliar character of the Church in the struggle against Arianism. Of fundamental importance is the First Ecumenical Council convened by St. Imp. Constantine in Nicaea, which remains as a model and church tradition in the history of the Church. And the very contribution of this council to the Church was the drafting of the Nicene Creed and the protection of Orthodoxy from heresies.
- The life path and work of St. Athanasius the Great has always excited the reader. His life destiny, filled with many trials, indicates the difficulties faced by the Church in the first years of permitted coexistence with the state. Especially when at the head of the empire stands a ruler sympathetic to heretical teaching, in the person of Constantius II. Accused, for whatever reason, and acquitted at the Council of Serdikia, he connects his name with today's Bulgarian capital and with the oldest monastery "St. Athanasius" in



Europe founded by him (near the village of Zlatna livada in Chirpa). The council held in our capital - Serdica, in addition to adopting the Nicene Creed, also played a key role in the early development of church law with the canonical rules created for it. It is these Serdician canons that give reason to consider them as a church rule, which was subsequently shaped by the example of Roman law. And precisely in these characteristics lies their uniqueness and importance.

- The beginning of the Arian controversies, which arose in the age under review by the presbyter Arius, inflicted the first wound on the Church, which waged a long struggle with them forkeeping Nicene Orthodoxy. The question of the function of the councils in the processes of defending the Nicene symbol is essential, often commented on, it always remains relevant to this day. And despite the rich patristic experience, there is always something more to say about the great Cappadocians - fathers of the Orthodox faith. Cappadocian theology, unlike Alexandrian, Antiochian, Latin, and even Carthaginian, has not yet been sufficiently studied. And it reveals its significant role, defining the entire spiritual life of the Orthodox Church from the 4th to the 20th century.
- The rule and religious policy of Constantius II is essential for the continuity of the model established by his father St. Constantine I in church politics and as a key moment for his attitude to the Christianization of the Church in the empire. This pattern of convening councils to settle ecclesiastical disputes and banish dissenters continued through the reign of Constantius II. This is the foundation of his policy, which significantly influenced the reign and subsequent generations of emperors. In order to fully understand his policy of government, the main points have been studied and illustrated, revealing the innovations in the manner of continuity and change that served as the main basis, compared to that of St. Imp. Constantine I the Great.

The state of research shows that, regardless of the number of authors who have written in depth on one or another issue of the mentioned topic, the facts, especially related to the religious policy of Constantius II - one of the longest reigning emperors of the Roman Empire, until now, there is a lack of research on the specific topic of the developed dissertation in theological science.

## **1.2. Object, Subject, Scope and Structure**

*Object of study* – the Christianization of the Roman Empire during the reign of St. Constantine I the Great and his successors Constantine II, Constantius II and Constans.

*The subject of the research* is the Arian disputes during the reign of Emperor Constantius II.

The dissertation research is structured in three chapters: first chapter - introduction to the era of the Roman Empire, attitude of the state rule towards Christians and the rule of St. Constantine I; second chapter – the Arian controversy, the First Ecumenical Council, the theology of St. Athanasius of Alexandria and the work of the Cappadocian fathers; and the third chapter - the management of emp. Constantius II, Council of Serdicia (343), other important councils and consequences.

## **1.3. Purpose, tasks and expected results**

*The main goal* of the study is to make a comprehensive historical-dogmatic analysis of the reign of Constantius II and the Arian disputes that arose. For this purpose, the reign of St. Constantine I the Great and his role in the glorification of Christianity is presented. The essence of Arianism as a theological and ecclesiastical phenomenon is studied. Emphasis is placed on the reign of Constantius II and his religious policy, as well as his attitude towards Arianism. Characteristically, during the first period of his reign, he behaved rather moderately towards the clergy and the believing people, but after the death of his other two brothers, he managed to establish his dominance over the entire empire and thus changed the situation in the Arian disputes.

*The first task* of this study is: through the review and analysis of historical sources and scientific literature, to investigate, systematize and present the relationship between the reign of St. Emp. Constantine I the Great and his role in the supremacy of Christianity over paganism and the gradual imposition of Arianism under the protection of Constantius II.

*The second task* is to present the essence of the Arian heresy, the role of St. Athanasius of Alexandria and the holy Cappadocian fathers, as well as the role of the councils in defending the Nicene crede.

*The third task* is a study of the reign of Constantius II, his religious policy and his attitude to the Christianization of the Church and in particular to Arianism.

The research confirms the hypothesis of the key role of the ecclesiastical-historical IV century with its personalities - heroes, chroniclers and saints, with its events - phenomena and processes, for the establishment of European civilization through the Christianization of the Roman world as a basic content structuring reality and achievement conditioned by the disputed overcoming of Arianism, though under the patronage of the imp. Constantius II.

The tasks formulated in this way lead to the hypothesis that: the IV century played a huge role in the fate of the Christian religion, the ancient world and the subsequent development of European civilization. This role is largely determined by the process of Christianization of the Roman Empire, which is perhaps the main content of this era in terms of prospects for historical development and influence on the future appearance of Europe. But this process is not easy, as one of the serious obstacles is the Arian heresy, which involves in a key poratorical ecclesiastics; here the patronage of the imp exerts a great influence. Constantius II.

#### **1.4 Methodology**

*The research methods* are in the field of theological and historical analysis, systematization and summarization of scientific data. Comparative-historical, comparative-analytical and historical-critical methods of research were used in order to carry out an essential comparison of the studied sources and sources. Through the method of analysis, the research object (the Christianization of the Roman Church) was decomposed into several parts; identification of constituent phenomena and processes, as well as the interactions between them; identifying specific characteristics and qualities. Other methods of theoretical research, biographical and causal methods were used. Synthesis - unification of various elements and aspects of the studied object into a complete system.

## **Historiography**

The history of the Church in the IV century attracts the attention of researchers of various profiles: historians, theologians, philosophers, etc. The importance of this era - a period of rapid Christianization of the ancient world and the formation of a dogmatic and theological tradition - in the history of Christianity cannot be overestimated, no matter how much it is emphasized. Most of the scientific work on the church history of the period under consideration is devoted to the study of the Arian disputes, which undoubtedly determined the vector of development of the Christian tradition and social life during this historical time and determined its development for centuries to come.

### **Sources:**

As the first source for this research, we should rightly mention the church historian *Eusebius of Caesarea* and his *Church History*. Moscow, 1993, or *Ecclesiastical History*. Penguin, 1981, taking its place among the most important primary sources for this 4th century era. His work provides important information on both the creation and development of Christianity. As a direct witness to the persecutions, he describes in detail, in a remarkable late-antique narrative, the unfolding of historical episodes, as a contrasting picture of the age, revealing the causes and consequences of each action. In his panegyric *The Life of Constantine the Great* or *De Vita Constantini*, Eusebius, besides describing the life and work of St. Emp. Constantine I, also provides important information about the previously unprecedented church forum held in Nicaea - the First Ecumenical Council.

For the life and religious policy of Constantius II, the main source is: *Ecclesiastical History Ermia Sozomena Salaminskago*. St. Petersburg, 1851, or *Historia ecclesiastica*. Berlin, 1960, of the early Christian writer-historian *Ermius Sozomen*. Chronicling events over the course of a century, Sozomen's History is an invaluable source for the reigns of the emperors St. Constantine the Great, Constantius II, and Julian the Apostate. Sozomenes provides us with the important religious and political issues of the age from 324 to 439. It also includes important ancient letters and edicts that circulated among heretics, emperors, and saints, such as Antony of Egypt, Ambrose of Milan, and John Chrysostom.

The most complete assessment of Constantius II is given by the Greco-Roman historian *Ammianus Marcellinus* in his *Roman History (Res Gestae)*. Kyiv, 1906, or *Roman History*. London–Wohn, 1862. The chief contemporary historian of events from the fourth century Ammianus provides an objective account of the history of the Roman Empire and neighboring nations, as well as details of the Roman crisis. From his writings we derive important information about key events, as a participant in many military campaigns under the emperors Constantius II and Julian.

We also find detailed information about the emperor in **Sekhtus Aurelius Victor**, *Epitome de caesaribus*. Teubner, 1911, or *On the Caesars*. Sextus Aurelius Victor (c. 320–c. 390) is one of the most notable pagan historians. In its brief but famous history of the Roman Empire, it was important for this work to draw information from the era of the Tetrarchs, the reign of St. Constantine, and that of Constantius II and Julian.

The first complete attempt to defend Christian theology in Latin was that of *Lactantius*. *The divine institutes* or *O smertyah persecutors*. St. Petersburg, 1998. which takes its place among the most important primary sources for this age of transition, turmoil, and consolidation. Lactantius is best known for his seminal work of early Christian apologetics, entitled *Divine Instruction* or *Divinae institutiones*, which he dedicated to his admirer, St. Constantine. This treatise, consisting of seven books, is the first attempt at a systematic exposition of the essence of all Christian doctrine. As history, *On the Death of the Persecutors* is a key source for Diocletian's Tetrarchy, the Great Persecution, and the rise of Constantine. In this work, Lactantius creates a hybrid of history and apologetics, arguing for the truth of the Christian religion based on the fates of those emperors who were the worst persecutors of Christians. Based in Diocletian's imperial capital Nicomedia and later in Gaul in dvora of Constantine (where in 315 he became the teacher of Crispus, the son of St. Constantine), Lactantius was ideally placed to record these important events.

Chronicling events over the course of a century, Sozomen's History of Ecclesiastical History Ermia Sozomen of Salamis or Ecclesiastical History (Sozomen) is an invaluable source for governing the fateful reigns of the emperors St. Constantine the Great, Constantius II, and Julian the Apostate. In his work, he presents the important religious and political issues of the 4th century era. He also

includes verbatim reproductions of various ancient letters and edicts that circulated among heretics, emperors, and saints, such as Antony of Egypt, Ambrose of Milan, and John Chrysostom. His works cover the period 323-425, and in them he preserved valuable information about the history of Christianity in Armenia and the Sassanid Persians. Sozomenes' second work, Ecclesiastical History, Book V, covers church history influenced by contemporary events from the death of Constantius I to Julian, but is biased against Julian

**Blessed Augustine** Bishop of Hippo, born in the 4th century (354 – 430), is one of the central figures in the history of Christianity, and his work *On the City of God*. Sofia: Zachary Stoyanov, 2008 or *The City of God*. Cambridge University Press, 1998, stands as one of the most influential documents in the development of Christianity. It was written as an eloquent defense of the faith at a time when the Roman Empire was on the verge of collapse. It examines the ancient pagan religions of Rome, the arguments of Greek philosophers, and the revelations of the Bible. In *The City of God*, Augustine lays out a vision of the purpose and end of history. His overarching philosophy of human history is that everything is connected to the will and providence of God. The city of God and the earthly city as intertwined and inseparable in the present age, but destined to be separated at the last judgment.

By the 4th century, the decrees (or constitutions) of the Roman emperors, which during the first two centuries of the principle had little influence on legal relations, became an important source of law. The Codex of Theodosius is therefore a necessary addition to the study of the reign of Constantius II. *Codex Theodosia* or *Codex Theodosianus*: Theodosiani Libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis et Leges novellae ad Theodosianum pertinentes, t. I-II. T. Mommsen (ed.). Berlin, 1971, includes all imperial constitutions from the reign of St. Imp. Constantine I the Great onwards.

An important author on the subject of this work is the 4th century Roman senator *Julius Firmicus Maternus*. *De Errore Profanarum Religionum*. Houston, 2009, which gives us valuable information about the nature of pagan religion, about its struggle and replacement with Christianity. In addition to this, he seems to create a verbal bridge, revealing the relationship between the Christian Church and state power in the Roman Empire in the 4th century.

For the construction of Constantinople, as well as for its benefactor - St. Imp. Constantine I - the Byzantine historian *Socrates Scholasticus* is also a comprehensive source. *A History of the Church*. London, 1844.

A complete picture of the work of St. Athanasius the Great, filled with numerous messages and apologies, we find in *S. Athanasius. Historical Tracts of Athanasius. Library of the Fathers*. Oxford, 1843.

The focus for the development of this research is given by the light that found an echo in the Acts of the Ecumenical Councils - *Acts of the Ecumenical Councils, vol. I*. Kazan, 1887. Here, under the name council acts, we mean not only individual acts or documents related to the history of the councils, as the epistles of the councils, or of the fathers who were present at them, letters of the sovereigns convening them, conciliar declarations of faith, etc., but the very orders of conciliar meetings and acts, with all particulars.

*Theodorit*, epic. Kirsky. *Church history*. Moscow, 1993 or *Theodoret. A History of the Church. London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854* is a history of the Church in five books, from 332 to the death of Theodore of Mopsuestia in 427, and a continuation of the history of Aesevius of Caesarea. From his work we draw information about important dogmatic issues, he presents materials from councils, episcopal messages and other important documents. Theodoret was a student of the Antiochian School of Theology and actively participated in maintaining the purity of the faith and denouncing the heresies that arose at that time.

### **Interpretive Literature and New Research:**

Of the Bulgarian authors and of the Cyrillic authors in general, the monograph of *Alexander Omarchevsky* is of fundamental importance for this study. *Saint Emperor Constantine I the Great (306 – 337)*. Sofia: "St. Kliment Ohridski", 2016. In this extremely valuable historical work, he comprehensively and in detail examines the period from the transition of paganism to the Christianization of the Roman Empire during the reign of St. Imp. Constantine I the Great. The study also traces the genesis of the triadological disputes during the era, as well as their

interrelationship with their development, escalating into the Arian heresy, which was distinguished as a doctrine and a movement.

Of particular importance in the present study is the work of **Georgi Bakalov**. *The medieval Bulgarian ruler*. Sofia, 1995, which describes all the important features in the development of the main periods of Roman Byzantine imperial power. The rule of St. Constantine the Great and his successors is also reflected in the works of: **Pavel Pavlov**, **Elena Shtaerman**, **Jacob Burkhardt**, **Mikhail Posnov**, **Petar Malitsky**. **Prot. Alexander Schmemmann** seems to have tried most carefully to make a comprehensive and generalized analysis of the conversion to Christianity of St. Constantine. **Fyodor Ouspensky**. *History of the Byzantine Empire, Period I (to 527)*. Sofia, 2001, focuses on the many aspects of the hierarchical arrangement in the empire. **Vasily Bolotov**. *Lectures on the history of the ancient church, item IV*. Moscow, 1994, presents us with a serious study of the history of the Church in the period of the ecumenical councils.

For the early stage of the development of the historiography of the Arian disputes, the works of: **V. Bolotov**, **A. Spassky**, **G. Florovsky**, **A. Lebedev** were used. We should mention **Anton Kartashev**. *Ecumenical Councils*. Moscow, 2006, who provided constant support for the development of this research.

The essence of Arianism in the perspective of dogmatic theology is revealed quite comprehensively in the works of: **St. Rybolov**, **A. Brilliantov**, **A. Sidorov**, **D. Dyulgerov**, **T. Koev**. Of the listed authors, **Svetoslav Rybolov** is of irrevocable help and of key importance for this research. *Jesus Christ - ascetic or savior*. Sofia, 2014.

As an author in Cyrillic and important for this study, we should also mention the works of **Veselina Vachkova**. *Serdica is my Rome*. Sofia, 2012, and *the Council of Serdiki – 1670 years of history and interpretations*. Sofia, 2013. For the prerequisites and convening of councils in the Church, we also find comprehensiveness in the used works of: **P. Malitsky**, **M. Posnov**, **P. Gramatikov**, as well as other authors.

Works and publications of: **A. Spassky**, **B. Piperov**, **St. Rybolov**, **V. Pandurski**, **T. Koev**, **T. Sabev**, **P. Todorov**. **Il. Panchovski** et al. Particularly important information about the life and activities of St. Athanasius and the Cappadocian Fathers is obtained from **Ilia Tsonevski**. *Patrology - lives, writings of church leaders*,



*teachers and writers*. Sofia: SI, 1986. Of interest is the work of Prot. **Georgi Shavel'ski Saint Athanasius – saint of the Church and luminary of Orthodoxy**, Sofia: Synodal Publishing House, 1924.

The controversial religious policy of Constantius II and his attachment to Arianism have been studied by **V. Samuilov, M. Kazakov, P. Gramatikov** and others.

Of Latin studies, **Simon Corcoran** is first. *Before Constantine*. Boulder, 2005, which describes the overall crisis in the 3rd century, as well as the strong tetrarchy axis of the imperial system, which ensured the necessary stability in the state. Important to the topic of the developed work is another study of his - *The Empire of the Tetrarchs, Imperial Pronouncements and Government 284-324*. Oxford, 1996, which fully covers the structure of tetrarchian rule in an important and complex period of the Roman Empire. The author takes a broad look at imperial governance of cooperation and rivalry in the period from the persecution of Christians to tolerance in the state.

**Arnaldo Marcone** is also a major source of information on the subject. *La politica religiosa: dall'ultima persecuzione alla tolleranza. – In: Storia di Roma. Vol. II*. Torino, 1993, which reveals important episodes of persecution of Christians by state power, elucidates the conflict that arose and the relationship between the Roman state and Christianity.

With new research and publications by **Stephen Mitchell**. *A History of the Later Roman Empire, A.D. 284–641. Second Edition*. Oxford, 2015, shines a light on an important period from the dawn of ancient history to the fall of the Roman Empire in 466, examining the profound transformations along the way. In **Manlio Simonetti's** comprehensive study. *La crisi ariana nel IV secolo*. Roma, 1975, also traces the development of the Arian controversy in the 4th century.

For the imperial persecution, exile and flight of the bishops, a comprehensive source is the work of **Jennifer Barry**. *Bishops in Flight: Exile and Displacement in Late Antiquity*. California, 2019.

**Leslie Barnard**. *The Council of Serdica 343 A.D.* Sofia, 1983, presents a comprehensive and thorough study of the Council of Serdica of 343. This work is an important source for the development of this dissertation. The works of: **A.**

*Pariben, P. Maraval, N. Belayche, C. Mango, H. Hamilton, C. Hefele, V. C. De Clercq, J. Barry, H. Chadwick*, as well as other authors.

About the life and complex relationships between the sons of St. Imp. Constantine I, we get valuable information from *Rierre Maraval. I figli di Costantino*. 21 Editore, 2015, and by *Jill Harries. The Sons of Constantine. Imperial Rome A.D. 284 to 363: The New Empire*. Edinburgh, 2012, which examines the reign of the Imperial heirs in detail.

To the main body of used scientific literature in Latin we should add the following authors: *P. Brezzi, J. Burckhardt, Timothy Barnes, L. Tillemont, W. Hamilton*.

An insight into this topic that brings clarity to the dissertation research is also found in the studies of: *S. Corcoran, P. Maraval, A. Schmemmann, C. Pietri, M. DiMaio, R. Burgess, F. Sampoli, M. Sordi, J. Norwich, T. Barnes, J. Mansi, Prot. J. Meyendorff, F. Kolb, A. Marcone, V. Moss*, and others.

## MAIN CONTENTS

### Dissertation research structure

The dissertation on *"The Arian Controversies in the Reign of Emperor Constantius II"* consists of 186 (one hundred and eighty-six) pages and includes: Title Page, Table of Contents, List of Abbreviations, Preface, Introduction, Three Chapters, Conclusion, Declaration of Originality of the text and References. The bibliography contains 165 titles in Bulgarian, Russian, English, French, Italian, Portuguese and Turkish from source texts, scientific interpretive literature, studies in periodicals and internet sources.

## 2. DISCLOSURE

**The preface** briefly presents the history of the study. **The Introduction** sets out the reasons for choosing the topic, its relevance, the subject, the goals, the tasks and the methodology that determine the structure of the essay, as well as a brief presentation of the research devoted to the topic.

**The first chapter** presents an introductory study concerning the issues of reforms in the Roman Empire, the attitude of state power to Christianity and the imperial dynasty of St. Emperor Constantine I the Great. In order to create a complete picture of the conjuncture during the studied era, the three chapters of the dissertation research are divided into sections and subsections. In the first section of the first chapter, after the introduction to the age of the Roman Empire and its formation, the exposition moves on to an analysis of the transition from the administrative forms from the Principate to the Dominate and the religious policies that they developed. In the second section of the first chapter, the argument traces the circumstances surrounding the persecutions and the edict of the imp. Gallery as a transition to the rule of St. Imp. Constantine I, which is discussed in more detail in the next section. In the third section of the first chapter, the circumstances of his accession to the throne of the Roman Empire are analyzed. Then, from an ecclesiastical-historical point of view, the Christianization of the emperor and the construction of the new capital - Constantinople under Byzantium are traced as

socio-cultural phenomena. The presentation ends with the problems of the inheritance of power as a prerequisite for the development of new policies, including religious ones.

**The second chapter** of the dissertation study is devoted to the Arian controversy and deals with the essence of the Arian heresy. At the beginning of the second chapter, the origin and development of the heresy under consideration is clarified. The second section of the second chapter traces the discussion before the Council of Nicaea (318–325) and the period after it, examining also the First Ecumenical Council held in Nicaea. In the second subsection, the theology of St. Athanasius of Alexandria is examined in detail. The third section goes through the arguments and explanations of the Cappadocian Fathers and reaches the final victory of Nicaea with the Creed before the Council of Constantinople in 381.

**The third chapter** of the dissertation covers the reign of Constantius II, from the analysis of personality, position and politics, to an assessment of the degree of assimilation, modification and application of the socio-cultural model set by St. Constantine. In the first section, the initial attitude towards the development of the achieved religious tolerance to the idea of Christian socio-cultural dominance is examined, the exposition examines the real religious policy of Constantius II, which is expressed institutionalization of the Church led to biases and problems in the tradition. The second section moves on to an analysis of pro-Arian palace politics, which was regulated by church councils up to Nicaea. The second subsection dwells on the theological contradictions and opposition between the churches of the East and the West. In the third section, the Council of Serdicia in 343 and the role of St. Athanasius, in the context of power and social problems, are specifically examined. The fourth section traces the movements and clashes that arose as a civil war, before that the exiles of the bishops as a reflection in the Church. The study concludes with the changes in state power through the sharing of governing responsibilities by the Caesars and the death of the imp. Constantius.

### 3. CONCLUSION

By the time of St. Constantine's death in 337, the radical transformation of the Roman world was in fact already complete. The most visible signs of change for the people of the time (depending on their views) were: border security; a mighty, brilliant emperor who rules the world from his new and splendid capital in the East; the new religion of Christ seen everywhere in the building of churches and the mighty figures of bishops hastening to do their work as high spiritual officers; prosperous country estates and villas of large landowners, "feeders" in the form of civil services and rapidly spreading new titles, uniforms and ranks, an army of officials with endless censuses and recalculations of taxes and increased oppression of poor people and peasants. These changes turned out to be irreversible, and this is the main meaning of the reign of St. Imp. Constantine and his contribution to the Christianization of the Roman Empire. It is from this reign that the centuries-old history of European Christian monarchies and the history of Christianity as a world religion began.

The basic patterns of Christianization implemented by St. Constantine I and the Christianizing trends they gave rise to were continued in various ways by his successors. Before the Christian Roman Empire became a *fait accompli*, Christianization experienced ups and downs. The unevenness and inconsistency of this process is determined by a number of factors, among which the religious policy of the emperors is the leading one. It is determined not only by subjective reasons - the religious bias of one or another ruler of the Roman state, but to a much greater extent by objective historical conditions.

After the death of St. Constantine in 337, the Roman Empire was inherited by his sons, and the system of dominion seems to have been completed with the introduction of the principle of transmission of power by inheritance. On the other hand, it would seem that Christianization would proceed at a fairly rapid pace, and not only because St. Constantine himself gave it powerful impulses, but also because the emperor brought up his sons in a Christian spirit, and they should act according to the attitude towards Christianity in within the framework of his father's politics. But it does not happen or consciously achieve either. Almost immediately after the death of the great emperor-saint, his sons started a fratricidal war among themselves,

in which almost the entire large family of the pious St. King Constantine was destroyed.

The followers of St. Constantine at first did not take any steps towards Christianization - the rivals were too busy with mutual extermination, and the adherents of different religions and cults were perfectly content with the position of relative religious tolerance. Constantius II directly continued the line of St. Constantine to strengthen the legal status of Christianity and its institutions and to improve the financial condition of the Church and the social status of the clergy. This line was fully compatible with the Edict of Milan and did not attract much criticism from non-Christian religions and cults. In terms of securing the unity of the Church, Constantius acted fully within the framework of his father's policy in seeking to bring the church to unanimity and unity, even though the results of his actions proved to be directly opposite to his stated goals. This is largely due to the attachment of Constantius II to Arianism and his attitude towards the Church from the position of a true master - dominus.

Although the Council of Nicaea, as the highest ecclesiastical forum, condemned Arianism, and the emperor St. Constantine in special messages after the end of the council joined its decisions and thus gave them the character of state sanction, the history of Arianism does not end there. On the contrary, it is only the beginning of a long and fierce struggle, sometimes even reaching bloodshed. For the next half century, the Christian church was torn apart by continuous strife, leading to the accusations and expulsions of bishops, the unrest of parishioners and ascetics who were in conflict with each other and with the authorities. The struggle also affected the highest spheres of the Roman Empire and did not leave aside the emperors themselves, whose orientation prevailed over religious or political motives, which sometimes merged into one.

As a result of all this, during the reign of Constantius II, the contradictions in Christianity escalated to extremes. The warring Christian factions attacked each other with a fury that, according to Ammianus Marcellinus, surpassed that of wild beasts. Elements opposed to the government gathered under the banner of the supporters of the Nicene faith, and from this camp came demands for the independence of the church and fierce denunciations of Constantius.

At the same time, the fact of the frequent convening of church councils indicates an important change in the religious policy of the Roman emperors and a significant trend in the course of Christianization. In the middle of the 4th century, the authority of the imperial power alone was no longer sufficient to depose bishops and to hold a political line regarding the church. Constantius made every effort to sanction his actions with the authority of the councils, which became the main instrument of his religious policy, despite his obvious desire to become complete master of the Church, which heaven would not be spiritually permissible. In terms of the balance between Christianity and the other religions that legally existed in the state, Constantius acted equally unceremoniously and intolerantly. First of all, he became the first emperor to initiate a whole series of repressive measures against paganism, but not at all to give Christianity the advantage to dominate socio-culturally.

The most significant spiritual and civil heresy of the 4th century was Arianism. The fight against this heresy occupies a central place in the history of Christianity in the era of the first ecumenical councils. This struggle went far beyond purely dogmatic disputes, involved large masses of people, and played an essential role in the state politics of the Roman Empire. However, there are still different views, sometimes directly contradicting each other, about the history of the struggle against Arianism in the 4th century. The variety of approaches to Arianism shows the complexity of the problem and the need for a thorough analysis of the sources in their entirety.

The fight against Arianism also occupies a central place in the activity of the church fathers - the holy hierarchs: Athanasius the Great and Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa, who act against heretics, both in the theoretical and practical areas. Controversy with Arianism permeates most of their works, and the struggle against heretics as gospel and mission is a constant theme in their biographies.

The Christianized Roman state was interested in the unity of the Church, which sought earthly support in it. Imperial power in the 4th century often tried to assume the role of supreme arbiter in religious and dogmatic disputes, sometimes maneuvering between religious and political groups, sometimes taking the majority

view, but always trying to gain the politically advantageous position in these disputes.

#### **4. SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS**

The contribution of the present dissertation development is expressed especially in its benefit to the enlightened reader, in the field of theological and church-historical science. It may respond to the scientific and religious interest heightened by the growth of Christian pilgrimage today. The collected and systematized literature in the present work will supplement the available information that exists until now and will shed light on the considered period of the 4th century. The contribution of the developed dissertation allows us to look at one of the longest-reigning emperors, Constantius II, in the Roman Empire and especially the view of his religious politics.

1. First of all, it should be noted that a first attempt was made for a detailed study of the current topic, *"The Arian disputes during the reign of Emperor Constantius II"*, which is considered as a historical-dogmatic study.
2. For the first time, in the field of theological literature and Christian history, in the present dissertation work, source and scientific studies on the specific topic have been translated and systematized.
3. The third contributing point in the developed dissertation is that for the first time the subject of emperor Constantius II's rule is examined in full and new data on his religious policy is presented.
4. In the process of work, the conflicts and main points of reference for the rift between the Eastern and Western Churches were clarified, and the frameworks of the next steps for research were outlined.



## 5. PUBLICATIONS ON THE SUBJECT

1. Koleva, Nina. *"Disharmony as the beginning of the symphony. St. Emperor Constantine I the Great and His Successors"*. - In: Collection of reports "Harmony in Differences", with published reports from the Scientific Conference "Harmony in Differences" - 10.12.20 Sofia: Academic Publishing House, "About the letters", 2020, 261-275, ISSN ( print): 2367-7899.
2. Koleva, Nina. *"Emperor Constantius II and his motivations in expelling bishops from their sees in the context of his religious policy"*. - In: Collection of reports "Harmony in Differences", with published reports from the Scientific Conference "Harmony in Differences" - 10.12.2021 Sofia: Academic Publishing House "About Letters - About Letters", 2021, 236-248, ISSN (print ): 2367-7899.
3. Koleva, Nina. *"Authenticity and church-historical accents in the decrees of the Council of Sardicense (343)"*, Forum Theologicum Sardicense - Theological Thought, 1/2021, 69-86, ISSN (print): 1310-7909.