

## Chapter 1 : Constantine - Church History Timeline

*Constantine's decision to cease the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire was a turning point for early Christianity, sometimes referred to as the Triumph of the Church, the Peace of the Church or the Constantinian shift.*

From the time that the Bible ended about the year A. Indeed, his influence was so vast that it continues to tower over Christendom in this our own time. It is for that reason that this biography has been prepared. Here is the man who changed history. If you are a Christian, you will want to read this brief story, for it will explain many things to you. Without a clear understanding of what took place during the life of Constantine, it is difficult to understand the simple, pure life, doctrines, and church government that the people of God had before he came on the scene of action. After the crucifixion, the followers of Christ carried the good news of salvation to lands near and afar off. But that message was carried in spite of the rulers of Rome who worshiped heathen deities and frowned on the new religion. In the years between A. Fortunately, each period of persecution was short-lived or the faithful followers of Christ would have been blotted from the earth. Yet, as it always does, persecution had a purifying effect on the Christians, whether they were located in the wicked cities or out in the farm lands. In the providence of God, problems and trials were needed, for many of the Christians were gradually uniting with the world in the observance of heathen belief and practices. A surprisingly large number of the pagan concepts that entered the Christian Church in the first three centuries of the Christian Era originated in Alexandria in Egypt or in the city of Rome. For some reason, those two local Christian churches were more modernizing than the other congregations. At that time, Alexandria was one of the largest cities in the Roman Empire. A worldly Christian seminary was located there, and its faculty occupied itself with an ongoing new-modeling of the Christian faith. Heathen ideas from pagan religions in Egypt, Babylon, Persia, and Asia Minor were explored, adapted, and taught to the ministerial students at the seminary. From there the ideas had a way of going to Rome, where the leaders of the local church there divided their time between copying worldly customs and trying to urge their adoption by all the other Christian congregations of the Roman Empire. In brief, Alexandria was surprisingly innovative in transforming Egyptian, Persian, Babylonian, and Greek paganism into Christianity, and Rome was amazingly bold in seeking to require acceptance of those new ideas by the other Christian churches. What were some of those beliefs that began infiltrating into the Christian religion between A. Let us consider a few: Because pagan priests cut a circular bald spot on top of their heads in honor of the solar disc the sun god. Christian leaders, first at Alexandria and Rome, copied this hair style, called the tonsure Lev. It is still used today by certain monastic orders. At about the same time, so-called "holy water" began to be used for baptism, which itself soon degenerated into a mere sprinkling instead of immersion Acts 8: A large part of what would later become basic Roman Catholic liturgy came into the church at that time, as the Alexandrian church copied the Egyptian worship of Isis, the Egyptian Queen of Heaven Jer. Every day there were two solemn offices [services], at which white-robed, tonsured priests, with acolytes and assistants of every degree, officiated. The morning litany and sacrifice was an impressive service. The crowd of worshipers thronged the space before the chapel at the early dawn. The priest ascending by a hidden stairs, drew apart the veil of the sanctuary, and offered the holy image to their adoration. He then made the round of the altars, reciting the litany [mystic words in an unknown tongue], and sprinkling the holy water from the secret spring. When this concept entered the church, it was accompanied by the idea that Mary was to be worshiped as the "mother of God. Images statues of Isis holding Horus had already been accepted for worship by pagans all over the Roman Empire, for they were patron gods of Roman sailors. But then in the fifth century a very significant thing happened. The names "Isis and Horus" totally disappeared, and in their place appeared Mariolotry--the worship of the Virgin Mary holding her Child Mark 3: It is interesting to note that the very same thing happened to Mithra. Just as soon as the essential aspects of Mithraism had been officially brought into the Christian church,--Mithra disappeared within a century! Mithra was no longer needed, for his worship was now within the Christian church. In the Roman Empire, he was the most important pagan god of the first three centuries after the time of Christ. In order to better understand Mithraism, we need to go back in history. The various days of the week

were in ancient times called "the first day, the second day," etc. Those were their Bible names. But just before the birth of Christ they were given new names: This was known as the "planetary week. It was his day, the day of the sun, and all the worship of the week had its focus on the worship of the sun on the first day. Now, although these names for the week were relatively new, the worship of the sun god was not. It was one of the most ancient forms of worship and is represented by solar-disc worship found on nearly every continent in the world. Fausset tells us that "sun worship was the earliest idolatry. The Arabians appear to have worshiped it directly without using any statue or symbol Job Abraham was called out of all this when he went to the promised land. Ra was the sun god in Egypt, and On Heliopolis was the central city of sun worship in ancient Egypt. Entering Canaan under Joshua, the Hebrews again met sun worship. Later came the Persian sun god, Mithra also known as Mithras. Shemish was an especially important sun god in the middle east. Later, in Egypt, the god of the sun disc was known as Aton. The temple at Baalbek was dedicated to sun worship. By associating with sun worshipers, the Israelites frequently practiced it themselves Lev. King Manasseh practiced direct sun worship 2 Kg Josiah destroyed the chariots that were dedicated to the sun, and also removed the horses consecrated to the sun worship processions 2 Kg Sun altars and incense were burned on the housetops for the sun deity Zeph. This was done by facing eastward to the rising sun Ezek. All during that time, there was no particular day that was set aside for this heathen worship. But within a few years, prior to the birth of Christ, the various days of the week were dedicated to specific pagan gods: All through Bible times, and for several centuries thereafter, the sacred day of the people of God was the Seventh day, the Bible Sabbath. It was the memorial of Creation and the only weekly Sabbath given in the Bible. The sacred day of paganism was the memorial of the sun-god, the first day of the week. His day was called "the venerable day of the sun. By the beginning of the first century, Mithraism had become the largest sun-worship cult of the Western World. Within the next two hundred years, it had become the largest pagan religion in the Roman Empire,--surpassing all others. The Romans called him by a new name: Sol Invictus, "the Invincible Sun. And Mithraism was an outstanding counterfeit. It had such features as a dying, rising saviour-god, special religious suppers, a special holy day in the weekly cycle that was different than that of the Christians--the Sun Day, an introductory baptism of its converts in the blood of a slain bull , as well as several other similarities. It counterfeited the religion of the true God more cleverly than did any other religion up to that time in history. Mithra was especially worshiped by the Roman soldiers, and wherever they went throughout the empire, they spread the worship of Mithraism. When Augustus Caesar became emperor several decades before the birth of Christ , Mithraism was already spreading westward from Asia into Europe, and throughout the Roman Empire. Since it was the Roman generals that frequently took command on the death of an emperor, this hastened the spread of Mithraism. As might be expected, with the passing of time the more worldly Christians of the Roman Empire began keeping the first day as well as the seventh day. By the middle of the second century, Mithric sun worship was very popular among the influential Romans. Antoninus Pius emperor from A. The emperor Aurelian , whose mother was a priestess of the Sun, made this solar cult the official religion of the empire. His biographer, Flavius Vopiscus, tells us that the priests of the Temple of the Sun were called "Pontiffs". They were priests of their dying-rising saviour, Mithra, and reigned as his vicegerents. Sun worship continued to be the official religion of the empire until the time of Constantine. Cumont, Olcott and other scholars clearly show that December 25 was the yearly date of the annual birth of Mithra. On that date, his followers held a special celebration of the fact that the sun was beginning to rise again higher in the sky. It was lowest at the winter solstice, December 21, and not until the 25th could its rising be clearly seen. This birthday of the sun-god was made an official holiday in the Roman Empire by Aurelian about the year Here is what Williston Walker, a well-known church historian, has to say about this: The Christians living in the larger cities of the empire were gradually leaning toward pagan practices, while their rural brethren more carefully maintained the true faith. The people of God were gradually nearing a crisis, and only the intermittent persecutions kept them relatively pure. But then Constantine entered the picture--and the Christian Church has never been the same since. Here is how it came about: The Decian persecution of Christians began in A. He became emperor in , and the next year he appointed three men to help him manage the government: Maximian, Galerius, and Constantius Chlorus. In February, , he began an intense persecution of Christians.

Four edicts followed one another in quick succession, each more severe than the one preceding it. The fourth, in , ordered all Christians to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods or be slain.

**Chapter 2 : Church History: Constantine, an Emperor Who Defied God - Life, Hope & Truth**

*Ante Pacem @ Google Books" A critical review & re-examination of the evidence presented in "Ante Pacem". The following is a brief and critical review of the evidence presented by Graydon F. Snyder in his book entitled "Ante pacem: archaeological evidence of church life before Constantine".*

Some Evangelicals have been told by their well-meaning pastors that Constantine "invented" the Catholic Church in A. Ignatius, the disciple of John, describes the Church as "Catholic" in A. It was during the journey to Rome in A. This was 20 years after John wrote his Gospel. That of "ekklesia katholicos," which means "Universal Church". The terms "holen ten ekklesian" which means "The Whole Church" and "ekklesia kathholes" which means "The Church throughout the whole of" were also in use by the Apostles and others in the early Christian community. What did Constantine do? We must remember that Constantine did not actually become a Christian until he was an old man on his death bed. That was when he was baptised and professed that Jesus is Lord. During his life he did not surrender to Christ. He simply changed the law so that it was no longer illegal to be Christian. This was quite prudent of him given that Christianity was steadily growing and might have turned into an ugly rebellion against him. In China, there is great oppression against the Church. This is a terrible situation and many Christians have become martyrs to change it. Assume a leader came into power in China who recognized Christianity and made it legal. Imagine what a great day that would be, a celebration! Christians could go out freely and preach the Good News from the housetops as Jesus commanded. They would be able to freely gather and convert people to the life giving faith in Christ. He would be instrumental in the salvation of millions and perhaps billions. The situation of the early Church in Rome was not unlike modern day China. Christians were being thrown to the lions, torn limb from limb. They were under great persecution. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed from the housetops. I tell you my friends, do not fear those who kill the body and after that can do nothing more. It is clear that the persecution of Christians in the Roman empire was not what Jesus wanted and that it had to change. Constantine was the fulfillment of prophecy Lk Despite any personal defects we might attribute to Constantine, he performed one of the greatest feats of any man in history. He brought the Church out from under the yoke of oppression and allowed people to preach the gospel from the housetops which is what Christ commanded and prophesied. This action by Constantine saved millions of lives and more importantly, it saved millions of souls. If you are "saved" today you may want to be thankful for what Constantine did. Many Christians, including Evangelicals, would not be Christian today if it was not this providential twist in history. After the crucifixion, the apostles passed to the Early Church Fathers, the Faith. Later Emperors and Monarchs accepted the Creed; their subjects followed. By around [AD], key features of Christianity had taken shape-an organized priesthood Christians were having "Catholic" Masses long before this "legalization" of Christianity. Three hundred years before Constantine, Christians believed in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist , honoured Mary , had elaborate ceremonies, prayed for the dead , respected the Church hierarchy , baptized babies , recognized Peter as the Rock , built the Church upon him with successors and followed a rich tradition of Christianity. That was the Christianity of the early days of Christianity and that is the Catholic Church of today. They were also sometimes in Catacombs. The martyrs died so that Christians could get out of their homes and have their worship services in public The martyrs longed for the day when Christians could hold their services in public where they could be a better witness and provide a public venue that was welcoming to strangers. People who grew up in communist Russia during the cold war know what it is like to have the Church forced out of the public square and into their homes. And they celebrated when they could go back to public churches after communism fell. Let us not get nostalgic and romantic about Christian oppression. I surrendered my life to Jesus that day. When Jesus saw money changers in the temple. They became widespread after the Enactment of Milan in AD when it finally became possible for the Church to emerge completely from the underground. Today there are huge Evangelical Churches springing up all over the world. When I was in Guatemala there was a beautiful 7, seat Evangelical Church being built. The "Dream Center" in Los Angeles is another example. Evangelicals are

building big beautiful Churches as fast as they can get the money to build them. Catholics just have a year head start: Let us all pray for China. Save your people in China, move the hearts of the leadership, rise up a courageous soul who will rewrite the laws of that land. Oh Lord let your Word be proclaimed from the housetops in China, that all men and women of that country may see the light and receive salvation, Amen. We have absolute confidence that you can bring your people together, we give you absolute permission to move.

**Chapter 3 : Christian Images Before Constantine - Orthodox Reformed Bridge**

*Without a clear understanding of what took place during the life of Constantine, it is difficult to understand the simple, pure life, doctrines, and church government that the people of God had before he came on the scene of action.*

His words have proven true throughout the centuries, and especially during the fourth century in the Roman Empire. Another article on Church history discusses the loyalty of Polycarp and Polycrates in their defense of the New Testament Passover being kept on the 14th day of the first month of the Hebrew calendar. But persecutions continued against the Church. This article focuses on the decrees Constantine made regarding his interpretation of religious doctrine and the aftermath of his pronouncements. Persecution toward the Church in the years prior to Constantine, a number of Roman emperors had persecuted the Church Jesus established. One such campaign was sanctioned by Emperor Trajan after he received a letter from Pliny A. Pliny was a young lawyer and governor over the territory of Bithynia and Pontus, along the southern edge of the Black Sea where some in the Church had originally settled 1 Peter 1: For who can better give guidance to my hesitation or inform my ignorance? I have never participated in trials of Christians. I therefore do not know what offenses it is the practice to punish or investigate, and to what extent. I interrogated these as to whether they were Christians; those who confessed I interrogated a second and a third time, threatening them with punishment; those who persisted I ordered executed. For I had no doubt that, whatever the nature of their creed, stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy surely deserve to be punished. For it is not possible to lay down any general rule to serve as a kind of fixed standard. They are not to be sought out; if they are denounced and proved guilty, they are to be punished, with this reservation, that whoever denies that he is a Christian and really proves it—that is, by worshiping our gods—even though he was under suspicion in the past, shall obtain pardon through repentance. This persecution continued, but the Church of God remained firm and loyal. Persecution by Diocletian Later, more persecutions took place. According to the historian Eusebius in his Ecclesiastical History Book 8, chap. It is also interesting to note that one of those trained at the court of Diocletian, who was also present in Nicomedia during the persecution in A. He eventually became a great general and, after many victories on the battlefield, was hailed by his troops as the next Augustus and later became emperor. The reign of Constantine In A. Constantine claimed to have had a vision on the way to Rome, during the night before battle. In this dream he supposedly saw the Chi-Rho symbol, the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ, which some believed was a symbol of Christ, shining above the sun. Seeing this as a divine sign, it is said that Constantine had his soldiers paint the symbol on their shields. Following this, Constantine went on to defeat the numerically stronger army of Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. Religiously, Constantine was still a pagan who worshipped the gods of Rome, including the sun god. In one of his first major decisions as emperor, Constantine issued the Edict of Milan in A. It basically ended any further persecutions of the Christians. Even though the edict gave Christianity legal status, Christianity did not become the official religion of the Roman Empire until Emperor Theodosius I in A. In his readiness to resolve this matter through peaceful debate, he also revealed a desire to insert himself into religious issues concerning doctrine. Over bishops of the Roman church convened to discuss a number of theological questions. One of the decisions reached was that Easter should be observed instead of the Passover. According to the historian Theodoret, Constantine wrote: By rejecting their custom, we establish and hand down to succeeding ages one which is more reasonable. They boast that without their instructions we should be unable to commemorate the festival properly. This is the highest pitch of absurdity. For how can they entertain right views on any point who, after having compassed the death of the Lord, being out of their minds, are guided not by sound reason, but by an unrestrained passion, wherever their innate madness carries them. By the unanimous judgment of all, it has been decided that the most holy festival of Easter should be everywhere celebrated on one and the same day, and it is not seemly that in so holy a thing there should be any division. This decision had far-reaching effects. The faithful held fast As a result of these man-made edicts, a large portion of the world has been following false decrees, but not all people changed their beliefs to worship on Sunday. As persecutions over the Sabbath intensified, members of the Church of God migrated to the west,

and history reveals that the Church thrived in the Balkans and Eastern Europe. But that is another story for another article.

**Chapter 4 : REVIEW of Ante Pacem: archaeological evidence of church life before Constantine (calendrier**

*Scholars relying on literary evidence have little to say of daily life in the Christian church before the "peace" of Constantine halted the persecution of Christianity in the empire. "It is only in nonliterary data," Graydon Snyder writes, "that one can catch a glimpse of what actually happened."*

In addition to the three dimensional statue, this same passage also contains a description of the custom among Christians of making images of Christ and the Apostles. Nor is it strange that those of the Gentiles who of old, were benefited by our Saviour, should have done such things, since we have learned also that the likenesses of his apostles Paul and Peter, and of Christ himself, are preserved in paintings, the ancients being accustomed, as it is likely, according to a habit of the Gentiles, to pay this kind of honor indiscriminately to those regarded by them as deliverers Church History 7. It is not clear from these accounts that images could be found in places of Christian worship. The chief significance of these accounts is that they refute the notion that early Christianity was aniconic or universally hostile to icons. Protestants learning of these early accounts may be dubious about the relatively late date of the written records and skeptical of the reliability of Christian oral tradition. First, the historical gap between the events and the written records is not all that huge from the standpoint of mainstream historiography. Second, the hostile attitude towards Christian oral tradition reflects a bias inherent in the Protestant theological principle sola Scriptura. Sola Scriptura is intrinsically biased. Oral Tradition, of necessity, prevailed during the early decades before any New Testament Scripture were written down much less widely copied and distributed. Instead he explained Isaiah drawing on the oral Tradition he received from the Apostles in Jerusalem. The Apostles preached the Gospel, baptized converts, planted Churches, devised liturgies and ordained priests to serve the Church without a handbook to instruct them Acts It would be centuries before a recognized New Testament comprised of 27 books came into existence. The 27 book New Testament we know today reflects the dynamic development of Christian Tradition over several centuries. The Protestant bias against oral Tradition is largely an emotional reaction to medieval Roman Catholicism. There is good reason to suspect that Protestant iconoclasm was rooted in a similar reaction. We exhort our Protestant readers: Read your Bibles with a mind open to Oral Tradition! A more rational approach would be to have an open mind and heart to early church history. Let us be clear here: It is, in fact, impossible to establish or disprove their historicity p. More recently, however, ethnographic, anthropological, biblical and historical studies have given researchers a more open mind about the possibility of gathering historical information from oral traditions that were written down at a considerable period of time after the events or people described p. As part of his survey of early Christian sources, Steven Bigham examines two major figures who held to a rigorist interpretation of the Second Commandment. He notes that Tertullian handled the self-contradictory implications of his rigorist position by creating a listing of items exempt from the Second Commandment, e. Another early Christian writer is Clement of Alexandria who resorted to allegorizing in order to account for the construction of cherubim and other images in the Old Testament Tabernacle pp. In addition to Christian sources, he surveys sources of dubious theological provenance that point to early use of images among quasi-Christian groups see pp. Map of Elvira and early Spain The Council of Elvira In recent debates between Protestants and Orthodox Christians over the legitimacy of icons the Council of Elvira has been cited not a few times by those who oppose icons. Placuit picturas in ecclesia esse non debere, ne quod colitur et adoratur in parietibus depingatur. It has seemed good that images should not be in churches so that what is venerated and worshiped not be painted on the walls. Bigham notes that the meaning of Canon 36 is not as clear as iconoclasts presume. First, it is not clear what was being depicted on church walls. Second, we know nothing of the circumstances giving rise to this canon. Were the bishops afraid that these images could become subject to profanation by pagans, or were the bishops concerned about superstitious attitudes by members of their flock? The Council of Elvira was not a major council. The canons of this council were adopted by other councils but interestingly not Canon 36 p. This is further supported by the fact that paintings on church walls were encouraged among the Franks. This leads Bigham to suspect that Canon 36 was a corrective action intended for a particular time and place; it was not intended as a universal prescription. In

any event, two conclusions can be deduced from Canon 36. The biggest problem for the iconoclast is that Canon 36 does not support the argument that early Christianity was universally hostile to icons. At best it can be claimed that some early Christians were opposed to images. As a minor council the Council of Elvira faded from view until the iconoclast controversy erupted during the Protestant Reformation some one thousand years later. The Mind of the Church Opponents of icons claim that their opposition to icons are not just their opinion but reflect the mind of the early Church. Of their research of ancient Christian sources Bigham notes: The result is, therefore, a potpourri of witnesses. In assessing early Christian sources Bigham notes that these can be divided into three groupings: The last usually emerges during times of conflict and controversy. This points to the dynamic nature of Christian Tradition. We have argued that Christian art passed through several stages in the course of its historical development: We have also stated that Christian art was a tradition that the Church adopted and adapted to its own needs p. The dynamic nature of Christian Tradition can be seen in Christology. Early Christianity prior to Constantine shared a common Faith transmitted through its bishops. Irenaeus attested to the common faith shared by Christians across the Roman Empire. Having received this preaching and this faith, as I have said, the Church, although scattered in the whole world, carefully preserves it, as if living in one house. She believes these things [everywhere] alike, as if she had but one heart and one soul, and preaches them harmoniously, teaches them, and hands them down, as if she had but one mouth. The articulation of official theological dogmas stated in precise language would not emerge until the Ecumenical Councils beginning with Nicea I in 325. Over the next several centuries controversies would lead to rulings by Ecumenical Councils settling these matters decisively. One thing inquirers will find in Orthodoxy that is strikingly absent in Protestantism is the understanding of the Holy Spirit being active in the early Church. Many Protestants believe that the early Church fell into error and spiritual darkness shortly after the passing of the Apostles. In Orthodoxy pneumatology is integrated with ecclesiology, but in Protestantism pneumatology is for the most part independent of ecclesiology. Interestingly, it was not until the seventh century that the use of images in Christian worship became a major theological issue warranting a conciliar response. The Church formulated its attitude toward non-idolatrous images, and expressed that attitude, not in the pre-Constantinian period, but some four centuries later. In the fire of a crisis, during which the iconoclasts openly repudiated the tradition of Christian images, calling icons idols and veneration idolatry, the Church, and not just certain Christians, affirmed the legitimacy of this tradition by appealing to history and theology: Protestant iconoclasts suffering from historical amnesia have reached the mistaken conclusion that icons are a later addition. It then becomes something of a shock when they encounter historic Orthodoxy which claims to have kept the Apostolic Faith without change for the past two millennia and which defends images icons as part of the historic Christian Faith. Assessment Father Steven Bigham deserves credit for his unflinching examination of the early evidence relating to images in early Christianity. Reading this chapter will expose the reader to a wide range of sources: He is to be commended for working with evidence that is at times sparse, ambiguous, and at times of dubious provenance. While it is difficult to argue for the full fledged veneration of icons early on, the evidence Bigham surveyed pretty much refutes the notion of universal hostility to images among early Christians. The significance of Chapter 3 is that it significantly weakens the historical basis for the iconoclastic position. If true, this leaves Protestant iconoclasts clinging to theological bias as the sole ground for their opposition to Orthodox icons.

**Chapter 5 : Constantine the Great - OrthodoxWiki**

*Even before he became emperor, Constantine was well aware of the reach of Christianity. Numerous religions had found a place in the Roman Empire, but they tended to be localized and, as long as the emperor was worshiped, posed no challenge.*

Modernized and introduced by Stephen Tomkins. Edited and prepared for the web by Dan Graves. Introduction Throughout its first three centuries, the church went through unimaginable persecution from the Roman Empire, though all the time growing and spreading. So imagine what an extraordinary turn of events it was when the Roman Emperor himself became a Christian. This account is from a biography written by Eusebius, the Bishop of Caesarea in Palestine. He was a great historian, the first to make a significant contribution to church history, and his major work was *The History of the Church* which took him 25 years to prepare. He also knew Constantine personally, so in many ways it is a thoroughly reliable account. But he was obviously a devoted fan of Constantine, both personally and politically, which should caution us to watch for bias in his account. Constantine chooses Christianity Because of the wicked magical enchantments so diligently practiced by the tyrant [Maxentius, who was in control of Rome], Constantine was convinced that he needed more powerful aid than his military forces could give him, so he sought the help of God. He believed arms and soldiery less important than the help of the power of the invincible and unshakeable God. So he considered which god he could rely on for protection and help. It occurred to him that, of the many emperors who had preceded him, those who had put their hope in a multitude of gods and served them with sacrifices and offerings had been deceived by flattering predictions and oracles promising prosperity and come to a bad end, without one of their gods warning them of the impending wrath of heaven. On the other hand, the one who alone had condemned their error, honoring the one Supreme God throughout his whole life [i. Reflecting on this, he decided it would be great folly to join in the idle worship of those who were no gods, and to err from the truth after such convincing evidence. And while he was thus praying with fervent entreaty, a most extraordinary sign appeared to him from heaven – something which it might have been hard to believe had the story been told by any other person. But since the victorious emperor himself long afterwards declared it to the writer of this history, when he was honored with his acquaintance and society, and confirmed his statement by an oath, who could hesitate to believe it, especially since other testimonies have established its truth? In his sleep, the Christ of God appeared to him with the same sign which he had seen in the heavens, and commanded him to make a likeness of that sign which he had seen in the heavens, and to use it as a safeguard in all engagements with his enemies. Making the Standard of the Cross At the break of day he rose and told his friends about the marvel. Then he called together the workers in gold and precious stones, sat in the midst of them, and described to them the sign he had seen, telling them to represent it in gold and precious stones. And this representation I myself have had an opportunity of seeing. What the Standard looked like It was made in the following manner. A long spear overlaid with gold with a transverse bar laid over it formed the figure of the cross. From the cross-bar of the spear was suspended a cloth, a royal piece, covered with a profuse embroidery of most brilliant precious stones; and being richly interlaced with gold it presented an indescribable beauty to the beholder. This banner was square, and the upright staff, whose lower section was of great length, bore a golden half-length portrait of the pious emperor and his children on its upper part, beneath the trophy of the cross, and immediately above the embroidered banner. The emperor constantly made use of this sign of salvation as a safeguard against every adverse and hostile power, and commanded that others similar to it should be carried at the head of all his armies. Constantine is taught by the church These things were done shortly afterwards. But at the time when he was struck with amazement at the extraordinary vision, and resolving to worship no other God than him who had appeared to him, he sent for those who were acquainted with the mysteries of his doctrines, and enquired who that God was, and what the vision meant. They affirmed that he was God, the only begotten Son of the one and only God: They told him about how he came to be born, and explained to him the true account of his incarnation. Constantine was in awe of the divine manifestation he had seen. Comparing the heavenly vision with the interpretation he was given, he

found his judgment confirmed. Believing this knowledge had been given to him by God, he decided to devote himself from then on to the reading of the inspired writings. Moreover, he made the priests of God his advisers, and thought it his duty to honor the God who had appeared to him with all devotion. Then, being strengthened by this hope in God, he went quickly on to fight the fire of tyranny. He showered them with every possible honor, treating them favorably as people who were consecrated to the service of his God. He let them join him at table, even though they were dressed so plainly, because he did not look at the outer man, but saw the God within him. They accompanied him on his travels, believing that the God they served would help him as a result. He gave vast amounts of money from his own personal treasury to the churches of God, for the enlarging and heightening of their sacred buildings and for decorating the sanctuaries of the church. Giving to the Poor. He gave a great deal of money largely to those who were in need, even to non-Christians, who had no claim on him. Even the miserable, idle beggars in the forum he provided with money, food and good clothes. To those who had fallen from earlier prosperity he was even more generous. When churches in different regions had a disagreement, he, like some bishop-of-bishops constituted by God, called his ministers to a conference. He was not above sitting with them in their meeting, and even took part in their discussions, taking charge of everything that concerned the peace of God. He took his seat in the midst of them as one individual amongst many, dismissing his bodyguards and soldiers because he was protected by the fear of God and surrounded by the guardianship of his faithful friends. Those whom he knew to be calm, conciliatory and sound in judgment received his highest approval, because he delighted in harmony and agreement, and did not look kindly on the unyielding and dogmatic.

**Chapter 6 : Constantine the Great and Christianity - Wikipedia**

*Constantine claimed to have had a vision on the way to Rome, during the night before battle. In this dream he supposedly saw the Chi-Rho symbol, the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ, which some believed was a symbol of Christ, shining above the sun.*

Sources[ edit ] Constantine was a ruler of major importance, and he has always been a controversial figure. These are abundant and detailed, [8] but they have been strongly influenced by the official propaganda of the period [9] and are often one-sided; [10] no contemporaneous histories or biographies dealing with his life and rule have survived. Each emperor would have his own court, his own military and administrative faculties, and each would rule with a separate praetorian prefect as chief lieutenant. The division was merely pragmatic: Each would be subordinate to their respective Augustus senior emperor but would act with supreme authority in his assigned lands. This system would later be called the Tetrarchy. According to Lactantius, Galerius was a brutal, animalistic man. He may have attended the lectures of Lactantius, a Christian scholar of Latin in the city. Constantine was nonetheless a prominent member of the court: In the months that followed, churches and scriptures were destroyed, Christians were deprived of official ranks, and priests were imprisoned. In a parallel ceremony in Milan, Maximian did the same. Constantine and Maxentius were ignored. They assert that Galerius assigned Constantine to lead an advance unit in a cavalry charge through a swamp on the middle Danube , made him enter into single combat with a lion, and attempted to kill him in hunts and wars. Constantine always emerged victorious: His career depended on being rescued by his father in the west. Constantius was quick to intervene. After a long evening of drinking, Galerius granted the request. He rode from post-house to post-house at high speed, hamstringing every horse in his wake. Before dying, he declared his support for raising Constantine to the rank of full Augustus. The Alamannic king Chrocus , a barbarian taken into service under Constantius, then proclaimed Constantine as Augustus. Along with the notice, he included a portrait of himself in the robes of an Augustus. He strengthened the circuit wall around the city with military towers and fortified gates, and he began building a palace complex in the northeastern part of the city. To the south of his palace, he ordered the construction of a large formal audience hall and a massive imperial bathhouse. He sponsored many building projects throughout Gaul during his tenure as emperor of the West, especially in Augustodunum Autun and Arelate Arles. He probably judged it a more sensible policy than open persecution [85] and a way to distinguish himself from the "great persecutor" Galerius. Galerius refused to recognize him but failed to unseat him. He offered to marry his daughter Fausta to Constantine and elevate him to Augustan rank. Constantine now gave Maxentius his meagre support, offering Maxentius political recognition. Over the spring and summer of AD, he had left Gaul for Britain to avoid any involvement in the Italian turmoil; [96] now, instead of giving Maxentius military aid, he sent his troops against Germanic tribes along the Rhine. In AD, he marched to the northern Rhine and fought the Franks. When not campaigning, he toured his lands advertising his benevolence and supporting the economy and the arts. His refusal to participate in the war increased his popularity among his people and strengthened his power base in the West. In attendance were Diocletian, briefly returned from retirement, Galerius, and Maximian. Maximian was forced to abdicate again and Constantine was again demoted to Caesar. The new system did not last long: Constantine refused to accept the demotion and continued to style himself as Augustus on his coinage, even as other members of the Tetrarchy referred to him as a Caesar on theirs. Maximinus Daia was frustrated that he had been passed over for promotion while the newcomer Licinius had been raised to the office of Augustus and demanded that Galerius promote him. Galerius offered to call both Maximinus and Constantine "sons of the Augusti", [99] but neither accepted the new title. He announced that Constantine was dead, and took up the imperial purple. Constantine soon heard of the rebellion, abandoned his campaign against the Franks, and marched his army up the Rhine. He disembarked at Lugdunum Lyon. It made little difference, however, as loyal citizens opened the rear gates to Constantine. Maximian was captured and reproved for his crimes. Constantine granted some clemency, but strongly encouraged his suicide. In July AD, Maximian hanged himself. According to this, after Constantine had pardoned him, Maximian planned to

murder Constantine in his sleep. Fausta learned of the plot and warned Constantine, who put a eunuch in his own place in bed. Maximian was apprehended when he killed the eunuch and was offered suicide, which he accepted. He could no longer rely on his connection to the elder Emperor Maximian, and needed a new source of legitimacy. Instead, the orator proclaims that Constantine experienced a divine vision of Apollo and Victory granting him laurel wreaths of health and a long reign. In the likeness of Apollo Constantine recognized himself as the saving figure to whom would be granted "rule of the whole world", [] as the poet Virgil had once foretold. In his early reign, the coinage of Constantine advertised Mars as his patron.

**Chapter 7 : Constantine Did Not Create The Catholic Church | Walid Shoebat**

*Constantine has earned a place in history for many reasons – not least because he brought to an end the persecutions of Christians by the pagan Roman Empire.*

According to Church tradition, it was during the reign of Nero that Peter and Paul were martyred in Rome. Their refusal to participate in Imperial cult was considered an act of treason and was thus punishable by execution. The most widespread official persecution was carried out by Diocletian. During the Great Persecution – , the emperor ordered Christian buildings and the homes of Christians torn down and their sacred books collected and burned. Christians were arrested, tortured, mutilated, burned, starved, and condemned to gladiatorial contests to amuse spectators. Constantine commanded his troops to adorn their shields with a Christian symbol the Chi-Rho , and thereafter they were victorious. The Roman coins minted up to eight years after the battle still bore the images of Roman gods. The Edict of Milan went a step further than the earlier Edict of Toleration by Galerius in , returning confiscated Church property. This edict made the empire officially neutral with regard to religious worship; it neither made the traditional religions illegal nor made Christianity the state religion , as occurred later with the Edict of Thessalonica of . The Edict of Milan did, however, raise the stock of Christianity within the empire and it reaffirmed the importance of religious worship to the welfare of the state.

State church of the Roman Empire

The accession of Constantine was a turning point for early Christianity. After his victory, Constantine took over the role of patron of the Christian faith. He supported the Church financially, had an extraordinary number of basilicas built, granted privileges e. Unlike "old" Rome, the city began to employ overtly Christian architecture, contained churches within the city walls, and had no pre-existing temples from other religions. Men from leading Roman families who declined to convert to Christianity were denied positions of power yet still received appointments; even up to the end of his life, two-thirds of his top government were non-Christian. Crucifixion was abolished for reasons of Christian piety, but was replaced with hanging , to demonstrate the preservation of Roman supremacy. On that day markets were banned and public offices were closed, [22] except for the purpose of freeing slaves.

Early Christian Bibles[ edit ] Main article: Little else is known. It has been speculated that this may have provided motivation for canon lists , and that Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus are examples of these Bibles. Emperors considered themselves responsible to the gods for the spiritual health of their subjects, and after Constantine they had a duty to help the Church define orthodoxy and maintain orthodoxy. In , Constantine was asked to adjudicate in a North African dispute between the Donatist sect who began by refusing obedience to any bishops who had yielded in any way to persecution, later regarding all bishops but their own sect as utterly contaminated. More significantly, in he summoned the First Council of Nicaea , effectively the first Ecumenical Council unless the Council of Jerusalem is so classified. Until Nicaea, all previous Church Councils had been local or regional synods affecting only portions of the Church. Nicaea dealt primarily with the Arian controversy. Constantine himself was torn between the Arian and Trinitarian camps. After the Nicene council, and against its conclusions, he eventually recalled Arius from exile and banished Athanasius of Alexandria to Trier. Just before his death in May , Constantine was baptised into Christianity. Up until this time he had been a catechuman for most of his adult life. He believed that if he waited to get baptized on his death bed he was in less danger of polluting his soul with sin and not getting to heaven. He was baptized by his distant relative Arian Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia. Suppression of other religions[ edit ] See also: In fact, his coinage and other official motifs, until , had affiliated him with the pagan cult of Sol Invictus. At first, Constantine encouraged the construction of new temples [34] and tolerated traditional sacrifices ; [11] by the end of his reign, he had begun to order the pillaging and tearing down of Roman temples. Constantine is said to have written to Shapur II in and urged him to protect Christians under his rule. According to an anonymous Christian account, Shapur II wrote to his generals: You will keep him until he signs this document and consents to collect for us a double tax and double tribute from the Christians – for we Gods [41] have all the trials of war and they have nothing but repose and pleasure. They inhabit our territory and agree with Caesar, our enemy.

**Chapter 8 : Did Constantine Invent Catholicism?**

*The first Life of Constantine describes its subject as "resplendent with every virtue that godliness bestows." This praise-filled biography came from the hand of Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea in.*

All of these pictorial representations already have elements which cannot be so interpreted, such as the Orante and the "Good Shepherd". The presence of "New Testament" related symbolism is even more tendentious. Jesus as a small nude figure is stretching the imagination. At the end of the day, it will appear reasonable that none of the above pictorial representations have anything whatsoever to do with the Bible, since the Bible was not popularised until after the rise of Constantine. Some of the references, for example "Christ - Helios" have already been discussed, and all of the references are represented in the table above. Early Church Buildings 5. A suspected third rated category, namely a "Christian house-church", may have been located. However it was shipped back to the Yale Divinity College in the early 20th century. The pictorial representations on what is called a "baptistry" has been interpreted as "christian" on the basis or artistic appreciation when holding in mind very firmly the perceived importance of the narratives found within the Bible and new testament. As has seen in all the foregoing, these interpretations are without any merit. The description provided by Snyder runs as follows: To the left of the baptismal canopy, on the south wall, is the Woman at the Well and David and Goliath farther to the left, both on the upper register. To the right of the canopy, on the south wall we find on the upper register the Healer of the Paralytic and the Peter and Jesus walking on water near a boat. On the lower level are several women, approaching what appears to be a tomb. The probability that is contained other non christian figures such as the "Orante". Its walls were plastered, stronger than normal, and marked with religious graffiti. About the fourth century an insula was built around this hall, and through the fifth century it continued to be venerated as a holy place by pilgrims, who also left their graffiti. An examination of the graffiti indicates all are later than the "peace". Unfortunately the documentary evidence Liber pontificalis, pilgrim itineraries, etc does not in any case substantiate this assumption. Therefore one cannot assume that the presence of prior construction in an early church implies that the earlier building was also used as a place of assembly. Earlier Buildings Later Basilica 1. Giovanni e Paolo 4. Silvestri e Martini 5. Pudentiana In each case, the author admits that although at first glance these earlier structures might offer a fine example of a "Church House", a more thorough examination indicates that this is not possible. The use of the catacombs lasted about three centuries, from the end of the second to the end of the fifth. It is from these catacombs that much of the evidence for early Christianity has been gleaned. But this epitaph belongs to the late 3rd or early 4th century. So the supposed nucleus of the early patron [Acilius] actually has no christian history prior to the 4th century. Totally unconvincing "The 2nd section, that of the cryptoporticus does have an earlier Christian history. It contains the Capella Greca with its justly famous frescoes From this general area de Rossi took the inscriptions we will use as certainly pre-Constantinian see chapter 6. The Crypt of the Popes was discovered by de Rossi in " Summary: Bishop Damasius - CE built over the crypt a small basilica, which was enlarged by Bishop Siricius before the end of the century. The ancient nucleus of these catacombs were non-Christian cemeteries that were associated for various reasons with earlier Roman patrons. Damasius renovations were conducted here Totally unconvincing B Martyria p. Widespread as these must have been, there are only two martyria unrelated to the covered cemeteries that we can consider pre-Constantinian: Sts Cassius and Florientius "Actually there is nothing to prove the martyrdom was Christian. Totally unconvincing B2 Salona "These martyrs were buried in ordinary cemeteries in a style not readily distinguishable from the other burials. Agnese "Built in the 7th century by Pope Honarius I, although a prior building must have been erected between and CE. Any 3rd century elements, if they existed, can no longer be traced. Totally unconvincing C2 S. Lorenzo fuori le mura "The construction Catacomb of Cyrica underneath the church shows some elegance and appears to be Constantianian Totally unconvincing C3 SS. Marcellino e Pietro "It is not certain whether among these cemeteries were any 3rd century Christian catacombs. Totally unconvincing C4 S. Sebastiano "The first burials here were not Christian. One burial can be associated with a freedman of Trajan Totally unconvincing C5 St. We can say that the basilica was built over a non-Christian necropolis. Basically no signs

of Christianity, with two exceptions These are discussed pp. If there had been a cult of Peter at the Vatican one would also expect that the graves of Christians would have been assembled around the aedicula Not one shows signs of a Christian burial" There follows the account of the "Bones of St. Peter" involving the professional gullibility of Professor Margherita Guarducci, the "switcharoo" of Monsignor Kaas to another grotto, and the summary "It is out of scientific hands". Peters as the historical bones of the apostle. It had no altar until Gregory; it had no priesthood. According to archaeological and literary evidence it was used for burials and meals with the dead. As with the other covered cemeteries except for S. Sebastiano , Constantine built over a site that does not in itself appear to have a prior Christian history, even though a causative factor, the Circus of Nero, may be close at hand. Other possible third century baptistries include A The House of the Fish in Ostia "Many believe it to be Christian because of the unusual mosaic symbol in its vestibule: Such a house fits the image of a house church Bit without any graffiti, or distinctive furniture, it would be difficult to make any claims about this house, other than it was possible Totally unconvincing B S. Totally unconvincing [Index] p. Inscriptions and Graffiti "Any statement about pre-Constantinian Christian inscriptions offers major difficulties. Most of the inscriptions we possess today come from burial slabs. The vast majority of these have been discovered in the catacombs of Rome The first four are correctly dated, but were considered Christian only because de Rossi found them in what he thought were early Christian areas. Later editors have dropped them. See the separate article about this totally unconvincing B Tituli of the Popes 6, 9, 11, 14, 15, 16, 31, 43 "Considering the antiquity The converse may also be true - the "Good Shepherd" is a non-Christian motif. The commencement of the translation of the inscription is given as This cannot be treated as an unambiguous ascription as non-Christians also held their children as "dear to God". Ditto the presence of "d n" is being translated as an abbreviation of "Our Lord" This is not ancient historical evidence of a pre-Constantinian Christian inscription. This is modern poetic licence seeking evidence when none exists. The idea that "JC" has now become so common as to warrant abbreviation is an absurd conjecture. So nicely you lived with me as a freed wife most innocent Cervonia Silvana. Eat the refrigerium with a holy spirit This is utterly conjectural and requires the use of "Christian Glasses". The reference to a "holy spirit" is also a non Christian concept. A The Inscription of Clodia Lupercilla 64 dated "3rd century". The translation is given as follows This is another example of "poetic licence". Juliana] "It cannot be determined to what extent Christianity participated in an inevitable social development or itself caused a democratic equalisation. This is utterly conjectural and again indicates some form of pathological "poetic license". These were not associated with the sarcophagi in the Vatican, they were not dated, and they were not listed in ICUR. A Inscription of Flavia Eutychia 3 of 25 The translation is given as The notes provided state There is absolutely nothing here that represents a Christian presence, and the reference to 1 Tim. Most ,, could not otherwise be identified as Christian. Indeed they may belong to a period in the history of the catacomb when it was non-Christian. Refer to The Christians for Christians Inscriptions of Phrygia - a review of data presented by Elsa Gibson This section also covers the Inscription of Abercius which is already dealt with in a separate article above link. See the separate article on Dura-Europos Summary: Summary "The so-called Christian culture became visible about CE His reasons for doing that may have been highly political, but the result is the same. This had appeared by CE. And how closely did he resemble Constantine? Is it the earliest known image of Christ?

### Chapter 9 : Constantine the Great - Wikipedia

*In the first of three lectures on the "birth" of Christianity, Professor Ehrman examines the life of Jesus of Nazareth, as referred to both outside the New Testament and within the Gospels themselves.*

Yet clear evidence for this is lacking. Even toward the end of his reign the emperor was open to new philosophical ideas: As bishop of Caesarea, Eusebius cast Constantine as very pro-Christian and proclaimed him the first Christian emperor. Unfortunately, it is less than objective. The Christian West has largely overlooked the numerous histories and accounts by profane, or secular, writers both during and after his life. Yet these, despite their lack of historicity, shaped the view of centuries of Christians toward church history. Following a half century of military anarchy, the emperor Diocletian â€” C. He served both Diocletian and Galerius in the East during this period and traveled with them throughout Syria, Palestine and Egypt. Whatever the reason, his time at court enabled the young man to learn under the finest educators as well as to appreciate the problems that existed in the empire. He emerges on the world stage as a man with a grand vision of reuniting the empire. A little more than a hundred years earlier, toward the end of the second century, Christianity had developed a mission unlike any that the empire had witnessed before. As the third century progressed, the movement was rapidly becoming a challenge to the institutions of state. Not all Christians were so devoutly committed, however. Both men took part in that campaign. He was compared favorably to the Greco-Macedonian conqueror Alexander the Great and was named victor and triumphator. Numerous religions had found a place in the Roman Empire , but they tended to be localized and, as long as the emperor was worshiped, posed no challenge. Christianity, on the other hand, had spread throughout the empire, and its adherents refused to participate in emperor worship. While Christians dwelled in every corner of the empire, they were not unified as is normally supposed. His first challenge was in North Africa, where rival groups were seeking his favor. In response, Constantine established synods for issue resolution. The church effectively became subject to the rule of the state in that an appeal from the synod went to the state. Already existing structures within the church appeared not to matter to the emperor. He put himself in a position to determine what kind of religion Christianity would be. Subsequently, in the East, he summoned the bishops of the church to the now-famous council at Nicea in and charged them with establishing, among other things, a uniform position on the place of Christ within the Godhead. This issue had created division, especially in the eastern area of the empire, as bishops debated the ideas of Arius of Alexandria. In fact, some of the wording used in the edict of the council was his own, both to show how well educated he was in the philosophical issues being discussed, and to establish a feeling for orthodoxy within the church, resolving some of the fractious schisms that had been a hallmark of the developing church up to that time. Church leaders now had access to the machinery of the state to exercise ecclesiastical control. But even more importantly, Constantine himself could establish priorities of bishoprics to suit his goals. Baptized or not, he played a major role in shaping traditional Christianity. The early New Testament church in apostolic times existed apart from the empire. Orthodoxy became the order of the day. The Man and the Legend.