

EPIC Wk 4 Conversion and Councils: Time Period: 313 – 499 AD

Previously:

The Great Persecution started with Emperor Diocletian in 303 AD and continued for over 10 yrs. Christianity was illegal and many people died horrific deaths rather than give up their faith. He also divided the Roman empire into two parts: East and West in the early part of the 4th century. This division affected The Church for over seven centuries and led to **The Great Schism** that exists even today. Diocletian (Ruler of EAST) dies

CONVERSIONS: In this study, we discuss two of four conversions: 1. Roman Empire, 2. The Germanic pagan tribes who converted to Christianity (Through the heresy of Arianism).

ECUMENICAL COUNCILS (Total of 21 Councils and 8 were held between 325-909 AD)¹:

We will discuss two of the four councils (325 and 381) and see the Holy Spirit at work in The Church. These two councils prayed, discussed and determined important issues to help better understand the theology of The Church and the development of the *doctrines* of The Church

Council of Nicaea (325-337): Terminology to use to describe who is Jesus

Council of Constantinople 1 (381): Language to use to when talking about Jesus

NOTE: See Timeline Chart², SG pg.205 - Highlights importance of this time period.)

FYI: Only 33 Doctors of the Church in 2000 years of Church history; 13 in this time period

POLITICS of the time:

Diocletian divides Roman Empire into a Tetrarchy³ (293 AD) which consisted of four different rulers, two head emperors (originally Diocletian and Maximina) and two junior emperors (originally Constantias and Galerius). These four *Emperors* split the empire into four districts, and each ruled separately for a time until Constantine reunited the Empire.

MILVIAN BRIDGE: Constantine defeats Maximilian after seeing Christian God's cross in sky and believing in Christianity (Ref HO: MILVIAN BRIDGE). He becomes sole Augustus of the West and attributes success to the Christian God⁴. Becomes sole ruler of the west.; changes policies towards Christians and even gives the *Lateran Palace* to the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, and remains the basilica of the Pope today.

Edict of Milan: Agreement between Emperor Constantine and Emperor Licinius in 313 that allowed freedom of religion to all, including Christians. NOTE: Constantine DID NOT make Christianity the religion of the Empire, he only *legalized* the faith.

Politics and Religion: Constantine takes instruction to become Christian but does not convert until just before his death. However, became deeply involved in Church affairs (*Caesaro-papism*) by appointing bishops, sits in on theological disputes, tries to govern the Church⁵, and exempted the Church from taxation, supported Church with state funds from state taxes. He also legislated Christian morality into Roman law (Ex: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pater_familias, a form of infanticide if the father rejected the newborn child)

Reasons for Church's Growth:

1. Empire is at peace: People free of external persecutions and have more time to meet, learn, discuss, and debate. Many new converts and many would *interpret* Scripture of their own accord. Church continued to wrestle with how to help new converts understand who is Jesus and the *mysteries of the faith* and address **internal heresies** (Arianism) Four *ecumenical* councils called during this time: Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon.

Even today that is the case. St Jerome wrote that doctors, builders, carpenters, metal/wood workers all learned their art from a teacher. One would not debate with a professional regarding lab test, or woodworking or a master builder. Same is true for Scripture.

2. Roman Army: Cement that held Empire together and are throughout the Empire; Emperor is commander-in-chief. Heresy of *Arianism* adopted by Eastern Church.

HERESEY: Arianism: Charismatic priest from Alexandria, Egypt teaches God *created* the son (second nature of the Father, not the same substance, the first and most perfect creature) Many *Roman nobles*

who had converted to Christianity wanted to remain separate from *common people*, so they accepted Arianism. Roman Army was solidly Arian, and they were spread throughout Empire
Constantine wanted the Empire to be united and called the first Ecumenical Council with consent of then Pope Sylvester (Different from the Council of Jerusalem which only involved the Apostles). Included bishops from all over the Christian world

COUNCIL of the EAST: The Council of Nicaea (325 AD) Pope: Sylvester

1. Established: Jesus Christ as true God and true man. **“One in being (consubstantial; homoousias = same substance) with the Father⁶.** 2. Permanently established date when Easter was to be celebrated. 318 Bishops attended; 316 approved (unlike movie *The DaVinci Code* who stated was a close call) **NOTE: The two who dis-approved were banned by Emperor; 1st time this is done but will return at a later time.**
3. Formulated the *Nicene Creed* we use at Mass every Sunday (w/exception of the last paragraph of the Holy Spirit – added at 2nd Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381)
- NOTE:** We have been saying this creed for 1700 years. It is what we believed from the beginning)
4. Created *Discipline Doctrines*: i.e., priest could not have any women in home who was not a relative to ensure promise of *celibacy*.

MONASTICISM⁷: Without persecution of Church, some wanted another way to demonstrate their faith and live an *intense relationship* with God (to some extent, helped end Arianism in the Eastern Church)

St Anthony (250 – 356 AD): lived solitary life in city of Alexandria, Egypt; **had constant satanic attacks and fought them off through prayer and fasting**; removed himself to desert w/only 2 trips back into city to support Christians who were being persecuted; learned that holy life attracts others. When others joined him, he gathered them for prayer times, but all lived in their own isolation in caves

St Pachomius (290-348 AD) organized monks into community and founded several monasteries Egypt

St Benedict (WEST): wrote rules of monastic life for his community

St Basil the Great (Doctor of the Church): Father of Eastern monasticism wrote rules of monastic life as contemplative and active lifestyles – mainly known for two rules of order

1. Institution of the *novitiate*: Had to live in common with community for a specific time to determine if you were meant for this type of life

2. Restricted number of monks in each community: 30 – 40 max

Advocated spirit of moderation and more balanced life between activity and contemplative lifestyle
Men living lives of monks grew to 10,000+ (mostly in Egypt, Palestine and Syria) by end of 4th century

NOTE: For more info on types of monasticism⁷: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_monasticism

¹ Ecumenical Councils: <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/the-21-ecumenical-councils>

² Time Chart Categories:

YEAR	POPES	TIMELINE EVENTS	WORLD RULERS & SAINTS	CULTURE/POLITICS	PERIOD
33 - 99 AD	POPES: 5 Martyrs: 2 Ecumenical Councils: 0 Doctors of the Church:0	9	Roman Rulers: 7 Saints: 9	-Josephus' writings - Colosseum done	MUSTARD SEED
100 – 312 AD	POPES:12 Martyrs: 2 Ecumenical Councils: 0 Doctors of the Church: 0	5	Roman Rulers:10 Saints:15	- Roman <i>Pantheon</i> - Hadrian's Wall - Aurelius' <i>Meditations</i> - Tertullian <i>Apology</i> - Origen writings - Last revolt of Jews	PERSECUTION

				-Diocletian reforms Roman government	
313-499 AD	POPES: 7 Martyrs: 0 Ecumenical Councils:4 Doctors of the Church-	13	Roman Rulers:17 Saints: 18	<u>CULTURE</u> -Eusebius-Historian -Ecclesiastical History -Basilica of St John -Old St Peter's -St Paul Outside Walls -St Jerome's Vulgate -St Augustine: Confessions, City of God	CONVERSION and COUNCILS

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85 ³ The Tetrarchy was the system instituted by Roman Emperor Diocletian in 293 to govern the ancient
86 Roman Empire by dividing it between two senior emperors, the augusti, and their juniors and
87 designated successors, the caesares. This marked the end of the Crisis of the Third Century. [Wikipedia](#)

88 ⁴ Constantine has soldiers paint the monogram of Christ (Chi Rho Alpha Omega Early Christian
89 Symbol) on their shields prior to marching into and winning the battle

90 ⁵ Constantine's interference with Church affairs planted the seed for the *Great Schism* (Eastern Church
91 breaking away from the Western Church in 1054 AD)

92 ⁶ **Consubstantial:** Word had been used as part of a heresy back in time of St Paul; some at Council of
93 Nicene had issue with using that word even though the word was used in a very different way in the
94 heresy by describing the relationship between Father and Son.

95 ⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_monasticism