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It was the purpose of this dissertation to examine the origins and reasons for the Emperor Constantine's relationship with Christianity. In church history, Constantine was a figure of great importance. During his reign Christianity became a legal religion and grew in wealth and prestige. This study attempted to determine the reasons for Constantine's supporting the Christians and to explain the emperor's interference in matters which pertained to church doctrine. It has been hypothesized that he was guided by superstitious beliefs in supporting the Church. The victory over Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge in 312 was the key to understanding these beliefs. The victory convinced Constantine that his own and the Empire's prosperity was linked with the Christian Deity. If Constantine had been beaten in battle or had encountered strong opposition to his support of the Christians, then he would have withdrawn his assistance.

In this paper Constantine's conversion has been examined in the light of primary and secondary sources. Next the legal position of Christianity in the Empire both before and after the Edict of Milan (313) was studied. The Donatist and Arian controversies have been discussed in detail. Constantine was determined to retain God's favor, therefore, the emperor's interference in matters of church doctrine was prompted more by a concern for church unity and correct worship than for the finer points of Christian theology. The final section dealt with the building of churches and the creation of Constantinople as important symbols of the emperor's alliance with the Church.

CONSTANTINE AND CHRISTIANITY

by

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INTRODUCTION

The world of the early fourth century was a world in transition. The Roman Empire in its wars with the barbarian hosts was everywhere on the defensive. The manifold military threats that pressed upon the realm required the emperor's presence at many places. The problems of defense and administration prompted the Emperor G. Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus to a drastic step. In order to save the Empire Diocletian split it in half. In each half an Augustus was to rule, in the east Diocletian and in the west M. Aurelius Valerius Maximianus. Each Augustus also had his respective successor called a Caesar. Constantius Chlorus, the father of Constantine, was the western Caesar while G. Galerius Valerius Maximianus held the same position in the east. Diocletian hoped that his division of authority would avert civil war upon the death of an emperor, improve administration, and make defense against the barbarians more effective. With a divided state the city of Rome was no longer the center of an imperial government. Rome was still perhaps the spiritual and sentimental capital but Augusta Treverorum (Treves) and Nicomedia became the new imperial headquarters.

The early fourth century also saw the last effort of the Roman Empire to stamp out Christianity. Diocletian, who believed he was under the protection of Jupiter, tried to restore the glory of the Empire by gaining the favor of the gods. Christianity was seen as a

threat to the state and was therefore harshly suppressed. From 303 until Diocletian's retirement in 305, life was made very unpleasant for Christians. In the east persecutions continued off and on until 324. Diocletian's effort to crush Christianity had been a failure and a young man at Diocletian's court was impressed by the futility of attempting to destroy the faith.

Upon Diocletian's retirement it became evident that all his efforts to provide for an orderly succession had been for naught. Maximian retired only under pressure from Diocletian. M. Aurelius Valerius Maxentius, the son of Maximian, decided he wished to succeed his father. Meanwhile Fl. Valerius Severus and G. Galerius Valerius Maximinus (Daia) had been named as the new Caesars. When Constantius Chlorus died in 306 his troops proclaimed Fl. Valerius Aurelius Constantinus as his father's successor. Galerius ruled in the east.

Maxentius killed Severus and occupied Rome. Galerius refused to recognize Maxentius and so on November 11, 308 he appointed Valerius Licinianus Licinius to the position held by the late Severus. Maximian confused the situation further by reclaiming his title. The orderly scheme of Diocletian had been completely upset. Constantine marched south to do battle with Maxentius and on the way Constantine's affair with Christianity began.

CHAPTER I

THE CONVERSION OF CONSTANTINE

According to tradition as Constantine marched toward Italy in 312 to contend with Maxentius for control of the western half of the Empire he had a vision which convinced him that the God of the Christians was favourable to his cause. Socrates Scholasticus (380-450) recorded in his History of the Church that Constantine saw a pillar of light in the sky in the shape of a cross and the words "By this Conquer."[1] Socrates further reported that Christ appeared to Constantine in a dream. Sozomen (400-450) also wrote a History of the Church. He said that Constantine saw a cross in the sky and heard angels say "O Constantine! by this go forth to victory!"[2] The cross was used as a standard in battle and no soldier who carried this standard was ever harmed in any way in battle.[3]

The earliest account of the incident was recorded by Lactantius (240-320). Lactantius made no mention of a vision in the sky but did say that Christ appeared to Constantine in a dream. The most famous of the early histories of the Church was that of Eusebius (fl. 4th century). Following the account of Lactantius, Eusebius said nothing about a vision, but he did say that the future emperor called upon God and Christ to assist him in the war against Maxentius. Eusebius went on to say that after the victory over Maxentius, Constantine had a statue erected in Rome showing the Savior's sign in Constantine's right hand.

In a rational age historians have often attempted to explain away miracles in a most entertaining fashion. A. H. M. Jones said Constantine's vision was a phenomenon caused by ice crystals falling across the rays of the sun. Often this effect takes the form of rings of light or even a cross.[4] Jones drew the conclusion that Constantine viewed this phenomenon as a sign of favor from the sun. The sign in the symbol of the Christian Savior meant Christ was to be his patron.[5] However, Constantine had still not separated the Son from the sun in his thinking.

The new standard employed by Constantine was the labarum. The labarum was a cross structure. Near the top of the pole was the Chi-Rho symbol of Christ. The Greek letters Chi and Rho form the first two letters of the name Christos. From the cross bar hung a portrait of Constantine and later on, of his sons also. The labarum became a distinctive feature in imperial heraldry.

Norman H. Baynes accepted the vision of the cross. When against the advice of his generals and the augurs Constantine attacked and defeated Maxentius at the Milvian bridge just beyond the walls of Rome, Constantine became convinced that the Christian God was his benefactor.[6] With the monogram of Christ on his soldiers shields, Constantine crushed Maxentius. According to Baynes after the victory over Maxentius Constantine openly sided with Christianity and tied the prosperity of the Empire to the fortunes of the Church.[7]

Jacob Burckhardt said Constantine's conversion was a mere political ploy. Burckhardt pictured Constantine as a Machiavellian figure. A clever and scheming man, Constantine used a disaffected minority for his own political purposes. Burckhardt contended that had Constantine met with resistance in Italy toward his friendship with Christians and his blatant use of Christian symbols then without doubt Constantine would have dropped the Chi-Rho symbol.[8] Burckhardt did credit Constantine with being tolerant toward monotheism in general and probably correctly stated that this tolerance derived from Constantine's family background. Be that as it may according to Burckhardt, Constantine was a true Machiavellian and consequently experienced no conversion.

Ferdinand Lot disagreed completely with Burckhardt. In the fourth century there were no religious skeptics and unbelievers as Burckhardt contended.[9] Religion and superstition whether pagan or Christian was typical of the time. Lot refuted Burckhardt's argument that political motives inspired Constantine's support of Christianity. The western portion of the Empire was the most pagan area. If political motives were important then logically one of the eastern leaders should have adopted Christianity. The Christians were much stronger in the east than in the west. The army was pagan and devoted to the cult of the sun, Sol Invictus. Surely for a western leader to adopt Christianity was political folly.[10] Lot concluded that Constantine's conversion was done on impulse as an act of superstition.[11] If the conversion was an act of superstition then Constantine was not converted in a Christian sense.

It has been charged against Constantine that since he delayed baptism till on his death-bed he probably really was not a Christian. What some historians have failed to realize is that such practices were quite common in an age that took baptism very seriously. Many Christians believed that serious sin committed after baptism would not be forgiven. To wait until one was dying to be baptised would virtually assure entry into the Kingdom of God. The fact remains for Lot that whether or not Constantine was converted in the Christian sense, Constantine's action was not politically inspired.

C. D. Coleman agreed that Constantine came from a monotheistic but not necessarily Christian background.[12] Constantine was like most people looking for success in life. In the contest between paganism and Christianity Constantine opted for Christianity. The religious revolution that swept the Empire under Constantine was not unknown in Roman history. The cult of Apollo had been supported by Diocletian and Julian supported Neoplatonism. Constantine's revolution proved to be a more lasting revolution.

Ramsay MacMullen[13] in his study of Constantine stressed victory in battle as the important aspect of Constantine's conversion. Constantine had seen a miracle in the sky and had next been victorious in battle. It was simple cause and effect. MacMullen then also saw Constantine's conversion as a superstitious action.

The Battle of the Milvian Bridge then becomes one of the most crucial battles in history. What would have happened to Christianity

had Maxentius won instead of Constantine? MacMullen in his study of Constantine saw the Milvian Bridge clash as a war between two worlds.[14] The Sibylline oracle was vague enough to encourage Maxentius to leave the safety of Rome and risk all in a fight beyond the walls. Supposedly a number of owls, an unlucky omen, perched on the walls as Maxentius marched out for battle.[15]

Andrew Alföldi wrote that the basis of Constantine's religious belief was grounded in the limitless power of Jesus Christ.[16] The might of Christ was demonstrated at the Milvian Bridge. Constantine's victory ushered in a new world. Christianity had triumphed. Paganism did not die immediately upon Constantine's victory, but paganism was now on the defensive. Constantine did not interfere with the religious traditions of Rome but neither did he support nor encourage the old faith. The emperor Julian, who tried to bring about a religious revolution of his own, called Constantine a "wicked innovator."[17]

With his victory at the Milvian Bridge Constantine was master of the west. Maxentius was dead and Maximian had been permitted to commit suicide. In the east Galerius had died in 311 and only Licinius and Maximinus Daia were left to deal with. Constantine allied with Licinius in establishing the legal position of Christianity within the Empire. With Constantine's conversion western man entered a new world. Constantine was a turning point in history. Whether an actual Christian or not Constantine made Christianity the idealogy of the future.

Notes

1. Socrates Scholasticus, History of the Church (London, 1874), p. 3.
2. Sozomen, History of the Church 324-440 (London, 1855), p. 13.
3. Ibid, p. 15.
4. A. H. M. Jones, Constantine and The Conversion of Europe (London, 1948), p. 96.
5. Ibid.
6. Norman H. Baynes, Constantine The Great and The Christian Church (London, 1930), p. 9.
7. Ibid, p. 29.
8. Jacob Burckhardt, The Age of Constantine The Great (New York, 1949), p. 295.
9. Ferdinand Lot, The End of the Ancient World (London, 1931, p. 30.
10. Ibid, p. 31.
11. Ibid, p. 32.
12. Christopher Bush Coleman, Constantine The Great and Christianity (New York, 1914), p. 74.
13. Ramsay MacMullen, Constantine (New York, 1969)
14. Ramsay MacMullen, "Constantine and the Miraculous," Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies, IX (Spring 1968), p. 87.
15. Hans Lietzmann, From Constantine To Julian A History of The Early Church Vol III (New York, 1950), p. 74.
16. Andrew Alföldi, The Conversion of Constantine and Pagan Rome (Oxford, 1948), p. 21.
17. Ibid, p. 31.

CHAPTER II

THE LEGAL POSITION OF CHRISTIANITY

In February 313 Constantine went to Milan and there consulted with his colleague Licinius. The most important outcome of that meeting was the edict granting freedom of worship and toleration to Christians. Maxentius had been somewhat tolerant of Christianity and had established formal relations with Pope Miltiades. Maxentius had even caused some church property to be returned to the pope.[1]

Maxentius' toleration of Christians and the Edict of Milan were not the first acts of toleration extended to Christians. On 30 April 311 Galerius proclaimed a limited measure of toleration in the eastern half of the Empire. Galerius was dying from a painful disease from which his pagan gods had failed to cure him. In exchange for the prayers of his Christian subjects he granted a limited measure of toleration. However, no property was restored to the Christians and the freedom of worship applied only to those already Christian.[2] When fate threatened Maximinus Daia during May and June 313 he too gave up persecution in return for Christian prayers.[3] In the cases of Constantine, Galerius, and Maximinus superstition was more a factor in granting toleration than political motives.

Unlike the actions of Galerius and Maximinus, Constantine's Edict of Milan was more a reward for success than a supplication for aid.

The Edict was designed to appease God and protect the Empire. The Edict was to ensure that

> "the godhead on the heavenly throne, whoever he may be, might be propitious and merciful to us and our subjects."[4]

The wording of the Edict was vague enough to be acceptable to both Christians and pagans. Baynes in his study of the Edict said that the actual Edict may be fictitious but the agreement on policy between Constantine and Licinius towards Christians was no fiction. On either 13 or 15 June at Nicomedia Licinius issued a separate declaration of toleration.[5]

The original text of the Edict of Milan has not been preserved but a letter from Constantine to the governors of provinces in Asia Minor gave rules for treating Christians and placed Christians under the protection of the government.[6] The Edict of Milan was not an innovation and not for Christians alone. Further the Edict did not make Christianity the state religion but merely granted it toleration. The Edict did provide for freedom of worship and such freedom was of great importance for the future of the faith. The Edict of Milan was a major step forward in the fortunes of the Church. The Church had come from a persecuted minority under Diocletian in 303 to a position of equality with the old religion in 313. Licinius was still inclined towards paganism but Constantine was obviously sympathetic toward Christianity. In ten years Christianity had reached a position few churchmen could have ever dreamed possible.

Since the majority of the population of the Empire was still pagan, Constantine made no serious attempts to interfere with the pagan cults. The emperor continued to be the Pontifex Maximus and it was his duty to maintain the goodwill of the gods both pagan and Christian. Constantine believed that harmony among the religious was essential for the prosperity of the Empire. The desire to preserve harmony was the prime reason for Constantine's intervention in church affairs during the Donatist and Arian controversies.

Pagans continued to serve the state under Constantine. Sacrifices preceding senate debate were still made at the altar of Victory. Few temples were closed; the ones that were such as the temple of Aesculapius at Aegae and the temple of Aphrodite at Heliopolis had acquired bad reputations as houses of ill fame.[7] The temples Constantine did not destroy, he stripped of their riches. Only the temples in Rome were left intact.[8] The shift from paganism to Christianity was gradual. The triumphas arch erected in Rome in honor of Constantine's victory at the Milvian Bridge cited neither Sol nor Christ as the bestower of victory but rather the highest divinity. The old gods such as Hercules and Jupiter still appeared on the emperor's coins as late ad 323.[9] Sol Invictus lasted the longest on the imperial coinage. Alföldi said this was because the emperor had been personally devoted to the cult of the sun and could not immediately sever every link with the world of his youth.[10] Furthermore it was difficult for the ancient mind accustomed to polytheism to conceive of only one God. Even some churchmen accepted the reality of pagan gods as evil forces.[11] It was

quite likely that Constantine was unclear himself of the difference between the sun of the sky and the Son of the Resurrection.

Alföldi approached the relationship between Constantine and the Church as a three part development.[12] From 312 until 320 paganism was left pretty much intact. The coinage for example attested to the high rank still accorded the old gods. However, during that period Christianity was elevated to an equal legal position with paganism and did receive the support of the emperor. The next ten years saw an increased attack upon paganism and also upon deviation within the Christian community. The final years of Constantine's reign witnessed overt hostility towards pagans. Constantine would surely have outlawed paganism had not death stopped him.[13]

It was not unusual that Constantine wanted to exalt the religion of his choice and to actively encourage conversions. Through an effective use of propaganda, Constantine let all know where his sympathy lay. Statues, paintings, and coins depicted Constantine looking toward heaven as the source of his prosperity. The inscriptions on the coins boldly proclaimed the aid of Christ in giving Constantine victory.[14] Constantine was not yet in a position to outlaw paganism, but he did create the impression that paganism was an inferior faith.

Constantine was zealous in his propaganda activities on behalf of Christianity. Christian soldiers were given leave time to attend worship services, whereas the non-Christian soldier spent his day on the parade ground.[15] Christians were favored at court and favored with

rich rewards. Rents and properties were heaped upon the Church, usually at the expense of pagan institutions. Financial assistance was given to the churches to ensure that the clergy be able to give proper service to God. Constantine believed proper worship of God brought countless benefits to the state. The building of churches became an especial passion with Constantine.

Constantine favored Christianity in many other areas. In March 321 he decreed that "the venerable day of the sun" was to be a day of rest.[16] The day of the sun as it was styled was to be free from government business and legal transactions. In 325 Constantine prohibited gladiatorial combats and in 331 tightened the divorce laws.[17] Despite Constantine's favors towards Christians, he did not command his subjects to adopt Christianity.

Constantine's alliance with Christianity caused many changes within the Empire. Perhaps the most significant change was the new role given the emperor. For three hundred years the emperor had been a figure of worship. Christianity changed all that. The emperor was no longer a god, but an instrument of God.

> "in the likeness of the Kingdom on high, the emperor, the friend of God, holds the tiller of all earthly things and steers them in imitation of the Mighty One."[18]

Constantine viewed himself as a means whereby the faith might be spread. God had prepared a holy mission for Constantine. Emperor worship had been a focal point of the pagan cults. The termination of

such worship crippled paganism. Constantine forbade the erection of statues to himself and the worship of such statues in pagan temples. State officials were not permitted to participate at pagan sacrifices.[19]

Constantine's actions toward Christianity and paganism often seem equivocal. Constantine retained the pagan title of Pontifex Maximus yet he changed Invictus to Victor so that no one would be reminded of Sol Invictus.[20] He displayed both Christian and pagan symbols on his coins. He favored Christians, yet pagans still held high positions in government. Outwardly it might have appeared as if nothing had really been changed by the Edict of Milan. A Roman could have looked upon the Edict as a good example of the Empire's ability to assimilate different cultures. Coleman insisted that there was no sharp break within the pagan past until after Constantine's death.[21] Nevertheless, it was a break with the past for a Roman emperor to adopt Christianity. As Huttman remarked "whether Constantine was or was not religious, (that is Christian) he passed for such."[22] With Christianity, the culture with the aid of the emperor assimilated the Empire. With the strength and prestige of the imperial office behind him, Constantine ensured the victory of Christianity.

In the east Galerius was dead, Maximinus Daia had been vanquished, and Licinius was supreme. Only Constantine and Licinius were left to contend for the place of sole emperor. Licinius had not allied with the Christian community as had Constantine. Licinius feared that the large number of Christians in the east were secret supporters of Constantine and therefore a danger. In the ten years since the Edict of Milan Licinius had drifted into a policy of petty persecution.

Licinius removed Christians from high offices in the court and army. Bishops were forbidden to meet together and church meetings were to be held outside the city (Nicomedia).[23] Probably at heart a pagan, Licinius had sought Christian support only when he thought such support of value. He evidently felt himself strong enough to antagonize his Christian subjects and Constantine simultaneously. This was a grave error in judgment.

The war between Constantine and Licinius had developed into a religious war between paganism and Christianity. Constantine marched into battle under the protection of the labarum. Licinius called upon the old gods to assist him in the contest.[24] In September 323 at Chrysopolis (the modern Turkish city of Uskudar) Licinius and with him paganism were beaten. Constantine and Christianity were triumphant in the Roman world. Except for a pagan resurgence under Julian in 361, paganism was on a steady and swift decline. By the fifth century pagans were a minority in the Empire and by the sixth century they had virtually disappeared.[25]

The years following Constantine's victory over Licinius witnessed increased discrimination against pagans. Constantine credited heavenly favor as the reason for his victory over Licinius. A significant break with the pagan past occurred in 325 when Acilius Severus, a Christian, was made governor of Rome.[26] For a Christian to rule the city where Peter and Paul had been martyred was more astonishing than even a Christian emperor. The pagans must surely have felt the icy wind of

change when a Christian became governor of the citadel of paganism. Constantine condemned the worship of Apollo and even prohibited private or home sacrifices.[27] Even after the defeat of Licinius, Constantine was careful toward his pagan subjects. Constantine's assault upon paganism was unlike Diocletian's assault upon Christianity. Pagans became the victims of poverty and neglect rather than overt persecution.

If paganism still had many adherents in the fourth century, then why was the old religion unable to stop the policies of Constantine? Constantine's apparent political folly had triumphed because of the absence of unity among the pagans. Unlike Christianity there was no unity of doctrine, no holy books aside from such works as the oracles, and no clergy.[28] The Roman religions had been political in nature and lacked the mystic appeal of Christianity. There was no organized body that could resist the Christian tide once it had the support of the emperor. The end of emperor-worship was a mortal wound for paganism. A strong organization possessed with a powerful ideal has always shown itself to be unbeatable unless faced with an equally strong organization and ideal.

With each passing year Constantine became more and more united to the Church. The court was predominantly Christian. The imperial palace was said to be more like a church than the residence of a Roman emperor. The emperor prayed daily and attended church services regularly.[29]

As has been stated, Constantine was not converted to Christianity in a Christian sense. Success in battle had led Constantine to embrace

the Christian Deity. Constantine was a superstitious man in a superstitious age. The Christian Deity brought Constantine and the Empire good fortune; therefore, Constantine supported the Church. If the old gods of Rome had given the victory to Constantine, then, no doubt, he would have supported paganism.

To an authoritarian such as Constantine, the organization of the Church was of great value. The hierarchy of the Church with its powerful propaganda and teaching functions was highly compatible with Constantine's absolutism. Constantine's relation with the Church was similar to Napoleon's deals with the Church following the French Revolution.[30] Constantine was able to make the bishops cooperative state officials. Pagan leader by law, Constantine as a Christian was able to rule over the souls as well as the bodies of his pagan and Christian subjects. The church councils showed that Constantine believed he was the head of Christendom. It was his duty to settle church differences. As the future revealed Constantine was far more tolerant of pagans than of Christian heretics.

Notes

1. Hans Lietzmann, From Constantine to Julian A History of the Early Church Vol III (New York, 1950), p. 76.
2. M. A. Huttmann, The Establishment of Christianity and the Proscription of Paganism in the Roman Empire (New York, 1914), p. 34.
3. Ferdinand Lot, The End of the Ancient World (London, 1931), p. 28.
4. Lietzmann, p. 77.
5. Lot, p. 28.
6. A. A. Vasiliev, History of the Byzantine Empire (Madison, 1964), p. 57.
7. Lot, p. 29.
8. A. H. M. Jones, The Later Roman Empire, 284-602 (Oxford, 1964), p. 92.
9. A. H. M. Jones, Constantine and the Conversion of Europe (London, 1948), p. 94.
10. Andrew Alföldi, The Conversion of Constantine and Pagan Rome (Oxford, 1948), p. 55.
11. Ibid, p. 57.
12. Ibid, p. 30.
13. Ibid.
14. Lot, p. 33.
15. A. H. M. Jones, The Later Roman Empire, 284-602, p. 91.
16. Ibid, p. 81.
17. Ibid, p. 92.
18. Ibid, p. 93.
19. Alföldi, p. 89.

20. Ibid, p. 59.

21. Christopher Bush Coleman, Constantine the Great and Christianity (New York, 1914), p. 65.

22. Huttmann, p. 14.

23. Lietzmann, p. 80.

24. Jones, The Later Roman Empire, 284-602, p. 83.

25. Lot, p. 41

26. Alföldi, pp. 100-101.

27. Lot, p. 35.

28. Ibid, p. 41.

29. Ramsay MacMullen, Constantine (New York, 1969), p. 163.

30. Lot, p. 30.

CHAPTER III

DONATISTS AND ARIANS

More so than any edict issued or church built, Constantine's intervention in doctrinal questions clearly revealed his belief that God had appointed him to protect and uphold the unity of the Christian faith. If Constantine believed that his prosperity and that of the Empire depended upon the proper worship of God, then it was only logical for Constantine to strive to keep church unity intact. Just as the pagan emperors had believed that correct worship of the gods was essential to Roman prosperity so Constantine now believed that proper Christian worship was required for prosperity.

The Donatist controversy which erupted in 313 was the first of two serious issues to divide the Church during Constantine's reign. Gibbon said the Donatist controversy hardly deserved a place in history but was productive of a memorable schism.[1] The setting for the crisis was Numidia in North Africa. The origin of the controversy went back to the persecution of Christians by Diocletian in 303. Churches were destroyed, Christian books confiscated, and clergymen were slain during the persecutions. Many Christians refused to surrender their books and were either imprisoned and often tortured or martyred for their refusal. There was disagreement among the faithful as to which books could and could not be given up to the government. One party held that books such

as Bible commentaries could be surrendered without betraying the faith. A more zealous group insisted that no Christian books could ever be surrendered. The church in North Africa became divided between traditors, those who had given up some Christian books, and confessors, those who had suffered because of their refusal to surrender any of their books.[2]

With the end of the persecutions the differences between the Christians in North Africa reached a fever pitch. The confessors or radicals accused Caecilian, the Bishop of Carthage, with not being properly ordained. The confessors charged that Felix, the man who had ordained Caecilian, was a traditor.[3] Therefore, Felix was not properly a member of the Church and thus had no authority to ordain anyone. Caecilian and the moderates were also charged with behaving harshly toward those who had suffered for the faith.[4]

Caecilian offered to be reconsecrated but the radicals rejected his offer and forced him from office. A new bishop was elected but he died shortly thereafter and was in turn succeeded by Donatus.[5] Initially Constantine remained aloof from the fray and proclaimed toleration in Africa. However, toleration was not to be a trademark of religious debate.

As the controversy became heated, Constantine desired a quick settlement of the crisis. The controversy gave pagans plenty of material for attacks upon the Church. Constantine gave monetary support to Caecilian and the moderates. He was determined to support the Church against all rebels. Of what Donatism was about, Constantine was basically ignorant. What knowledge he had he owed to his religious

advisor Hosius. Hosius came from a wealthy Spanish family and had joined Constantine in 312.[6] The dignity and power of the Church government was of great importance to Hosius and so he had no difficulty persuading his imperial Master to feel likewise.

Unity in the Church was essential, thought Constantine. What made the situation in Africa even more complex was the fact that division between moderates and radicals often involved class distinctions. The radicals enjoyed the support of the peasants and poorer people in the towns whereas the moderates represented the upper classes and the Church establishment.[7] With the class issue also involved in the Donatist crisis, a divided Church meant a divided Empire.

In the spring of 313 the Donatists appealed to the emperor to appoint judges to settle the controversy. Constantine appointed Pope Miltiades and three Gallic churchmen to decide the matter. The pope however enlarged the imperial commission into a Church council by inviting the Bishops of Autun, Arles, Cologne, and fifteen from Italy to attend the hearings.[8] Constantine did not question the right of a council to decide Church affairs. However, he did retain the right to call a council on his own initiative and to invite the bishops of his own choosing.[9] The emperor also reserved to himself an appellate jurisdiction in church disputes. With fateful consequences for the future, the state was inexorably pre-empting the right to determine Christian orthodoxy.

On October 2, 313 in the Lateran Palace, the council began debate.[10] The decision of the council went against the Donatists. They were accused of falsely branding Felix a traditor. In a special inquiry, no evidence was found against Felix. Donatus and his followers were also charged with creating division within the Church and of anabaptism.[11] Anabaptism or second baptism was not considered to be orthodox Christianity. The Donatists refused to accept the verdict reached at Rome and appealed for a larger council.

A council of western churchmen was convened at Arles on August 1, 314. Approximately thirty-three bishops attended that gathering.[12] The second council confirmed the decision of the Roman council. Besides confirming the verdict against the Donatists, the Council of Arles enacted several important canons. The Church recognized its debt to the state by excommunicating anyone who refused military service. The council also excommunicated actors and charioteers. Priests were ordered to remain in the city in which ordained.[13] The close interworking of Church and state was revealed when heresy was made a civil crime and torture was made permissible against Christian dissidents.[14] Episcopal courts were given the right to hear civil cases. Such courts were courts of no appeal. The seeds of intolerance and persecution had been sown. Church doctrine became in the words of Gibbon, "a theology incumbent to believe and impious to doubt."

The Council of Arles did not settle the Donatist controversy. The Donatists appealed to Constantine. In July 315 Constantine decided to

conduct an inquiry of his own into the affair.[15] Constantine summoned Caecilian to court. In September shortly after Caecilian arrived, Constantine was called away because of military problems on the Rhine. Finally, in the autumn of 316 Constantine made up his mind in favor of Caecilian and the moderates.[16] The Donatist churches were to be confiscated and their bishops exiled. The violence which resulted from Constantine's measures against the Donatists led him in 321 to agree to a general policy of toleration in North Africa. Constantine had probably ended the persecution for fear of civil war in North Africa. He was beginning to learn that more than imperial command was necessary to settle Church differences.

The second controversy to rock Christendom in the early fourth century was far more serious than the Donatist controversy. The setting of the Arian dispute was in the more philosophical and intellectual eastern half of the Empire. The eastern church had a long heritage of theological debate. Influenced by the Greek schools of philosophy, eastern theologians were known for their cleverness and diversity of opinion. Arius was a true product of his culture. It was inconceivable that such a thing as the Arian controversy could occur in the more superstitious and far less intellectual west. In the west, doctrine was accepted on faith, but in the east, doctrine was settled only after debate.

In 318 in the city of Alexandria, Arius shook the Christian world. Arius was a talented and expert logician, superb Origenist Scholar, and

a man of ascetic and blameless habits. He had been a pupil of the martyred Lucian of Antioch and was not unacquainted with persecution.[17] The enemies of Arius accused him of intellectual arrogance and a lack of religious feeling. Origen, who strongly influenced Arius, was the most important of the Christian philosophers prior to St. Augustine. Origen viewed the Word or Christ as the means by which all things were created; at times though, Origen seemed to make Christ and the Holy Spirit subordinate to God the Father. Origen was thus carried in his thinking to the precipice of heresy. It was for Arius to go over the edge.

Arius, with his passion for logical clarity, insisted that the Son could not be equal to the Father and was therefore posterior to God the Father. He was saying in effect that God created Christ and then through Christ the world. The horror of Arius' sin was that by denying the equality of God the Father with God the Son the crux of Christianity was destroyed. If Christ was created by God, then mankind did not receive salvation through God but through a mortal who became a type of God. If Christ was just a super-hero as Arius' logic implied, then Christianity was really no different from the pagan cults with their god heroes. To deny that God assumed human form to rescue man from sin wrecked the redemptive nature of Christianity. Without redemption there was no Christianity. Redemption and Resurrection were the focal point of the faith.

Under the leadership of Alexander Bishop of Alexandria an Egyptian church council excommunicated and expelled Arius from Egypt. In the

fourth century people rallied behind religious causes as do moderns around political parties. Egypt was soon divided between Arians and anti-Arians. Arius went first to Caesarea and thence to Bithynia. It seemed wherever Arius went he received a warm welcome. Eusebius of Nicomedia and the more famous Eusebius of Caesarea rallied to Arius' cause. In 323 under the leadership of Eusebius of Nicomedia the bishops of Bithynia endorsed the Arian position. Needless to say Alexander was furious at this action and soon eastern Christendom was divided into two hostile camps.

Constantine was surprised and annoyed by the new controversy. His first reaction to the controversy was: why could not the two parties just agree to differ? If the various pagan religions could agree to disagree peacefully then, so reasoned Constantine, surely the Christian disputants could adopt a similar policy. For "few are capable of either adequately expounding, or even accurately understanding the import of matters so vast and profound." Constantine then rebuked Arius and Alexander as the cause of the trouble; however, this measure only made matters worse. Constantine had no talent for metaphysical speculation, and in matters of basic Christian doctrine he was in over his head. His plea for toleration failed.

In an effort to resolve the crisis Constantine sent Hosius to the troubled area. From the outset Hosius was not favorably disposed toward the Arians. The death of the bishop of Antioch presented Hosius with a pretext for summoning a council of bishops who looked upon Antioch

as their spiritual capital to elect a successor and to settle the Arian problem.[18] Eustathius, an opponent of Arius, was elected to fill the vacant see. The Antioch meeting comdemned Arius and his followers. One might wonder why one council should condemn Arius shortly after another council had exonerated him. The answer was: the churchmen had no settled views on the issue and changed their opinions constantly. It was only the action of the emperor that forced the churchmen to reach a final decision. However, even that seemingly final verdict would waver as the emperor changed his mind. The decision reached at Antioch prompted a call for a large eastern council to be held at Ancyra. The area around Ancyra was notorious for its rabid anti-Arianism. At that juncture in the controversy Constantine intervened. The primary reason for his intervention was the desire to see a victory by neither extreme.[19] Constantine therefore proposed that an ecumenical council be held in Nicaea to settle the Arian question once and for all.

Despite Constantine's intellectual limitations, he did not, and for that matter, most churchmen doubt his right to influence Church affairs.

> "I considered that before everything else my aim should be that among the most blessed congregations of the Catholic Church there should be observed one faith...unsullied by discord."[20]

Constantine believed that an ecumenical body of Christians would be a God inspired council and could therefore reach the proper solution. On the 20th May 325 at Nicaea the first ecumenical Church council was convened.

The city of Nicaea, which means victory in Greek, dates to the fourth century before Christ. In 37 B.C. Catullus visited Nicaea and found it to be unbearable. Pliny the Younger was governor there during the winter of 111 and the historian Dio Cassius was a native of the city.[21] Hardly could it have been expected that this city in Asia Minor would give its name to one of the principal expressions of the Christian faith.

When the Council of Nicaea convened there were between 250 and 300 church representatives present. Despite the large number of churchmen, the pope did not attend and only a half dozen bishops from the west were present.[22] The only Italian bishop present was Marcus of Calabria. Hosius attended in the role of the emperor's advisor. Constantine attended the council and presided over the debates. The men who attended the council were a diverse group. Paphnutius, James of Antioch, and Paul of Neocaesarea were survivors of the persecutions of Diocletian.[23] Most of the churchmen represented small congregations and were not known for intellectual brilliance. The deliberations, however, were destined to be lively.

The council was patterned after a town council with the emperor in the role of magistrate. Constantine asked members their views, he stopped debate whenever he wished, and he selected the motions to be proposed.[24] He wanted the council to devise a creed that would be both inclusive yet allow for differences of opinion on the interpretation of the creed. Eusebius of Caesarea proposed a statement of faith based on the creed of the church at Caesarea. His statement was turned down by

the anti-Arians and Constantine. When Eusebius of Nicomedia spoke on behalf of Arius, the anti-Arians or Catholic party tore his document to pieces. Furthermore, in the rather more superstitious and less philosophical west Arianism was completely unacceptable. In the east the Catholic forces had found a strong and fanatical leader in the person of Athanasius. He emphasized feeling rather than intellect and stressed the essential position of redemption in Christianity. At the crucial moment when Christianity seemed to be on the verge of splitting into two irreconcilable camps, the emperor decisively took command.

Constantine had Eusebius of Caesarea offer again the creed of Caesarea but with the addition of the term consubstantialem patri.[25] The term consubstantial or in Greek homousios meant one in essence. It was an expression of rather obscure origin. Prior to Eusebius' inclusion of consubstantial, the word had never been used by the opponents of Arianism. The word expressed equality with God but did not imply a second God or ditheism which was the charge Arians held against the orthodox. The expression was disliked in the east. In 268 Paul of Samosata had been condemned for using the term consubstantial.[26] After the death of Constantine in 337 the word was dropped from the creed.

Despite misgivings the anti-Arian party and many theologically ignorant bishops accepted "consubstantial" as a part of the creed. Arius and a small number of supporters refused to accept the new profession of faith. Under the threat of excommunication all but Arius

and one supporter accepted the decision of the council. Along with the Arian problem, the council had to deal with the Melitian controversy. The Melitians were an Egyptian sect similar to the Donatists. The origin of the problem was the question of how to deal with those Christians who had lapsed in their faith during the persecution in 303.

During the persecution Melitus had insisted that before a lapsed Christian could be admitted to repentance the persecutions would have to cease. Peter of Alexandria had urged a policy of leniancy because he feared a harsh policy would drive the lapsed forever away from Christianity.[27] Unfortunately for Christian harmony the followers of Melitus were temporarily in the majority. In 306 after Peter had been freed from prison, he took a mild stand toward the lapsed. Peter's action sparked Melitus to revolt. Melitus was excommunicated until a council could determine the validity of his case. For the time being he was forced to do hard labor in southern Palestine. Nevertheless, he continued to ordain his followers and called his group, "the Church of the martyrs."[28]

The Novatians, another rigorist group, held that there could be no forgiveness for mortal sin after baptism. Since those who had lapsed were guilty of blasphemy, the Novatians refused communion with anyone who had faltered during the persecutions. The Novatians also held remarriage to be a sin.[29] The Nicene council was very generous in dealing with the Melitians and Novatians. Constantine was determined not to repeat the mistakes made during the Donatist controversy. The

sects were permitted to retain their clergy if they rejoined the Catholic Communion. Further, the sects had to agree to have fellowship with the lapsed and the remarried. Though the Melitians were allowed to keep their bishops, the bishops had no real power. The sects were eventually absorbed into the Church.

The problem of when to celebrate Easter was also settled by the council. Some churches celebrated Easter on the Jewish Passover. To Constantine such a policy was dreadful. He was always very much the anti-Semite. It was therefore decided that the Egyptian date for Easter was to be used throughout the Empire.[30] The authority of bishops was confirmed at the council. The bishop of a metropolis was declared to be superior in authority to the provincial bishops.[31] The bishop of Alexandria was confirmed in his authority over Egypt and Libya and the bishop of Antioch was given authority over all the east except Egypt.[32]

At the conclusion of the council Constantine invited all the participants to a celebration in honor of God and harmony. He gave presents to his guests and was very pleased with the work of the council. The emperor believed himself to be triumphant; however, there were things still only partially settled.

The use of the term consubstantial only superficially settled the crisis. Consubstantial was understood in a mystical sense with no effort at analysis.[33] The Arians had suffered only a minor setback and were preparing to counter-attack. In 328 the Arians won a major victory when Arius was forgiven. Then Eustathius the anti-Arian

bishop of Antioch became an object of Arian revenge. Eustathius was slandered, accused of heresy, and deposed in 330. Apparently Constantine cared little for Eustathius for the emperor did not intervene in the matter. Athanasius fought back furiously. In 328 he had succeeded Alexander as bishop of Alexandria. Athanasius had not altered his opinion of Arius and flatly refused to accept Arius back into the Church. The opponents of Athanasius accused him of obtaining his election by force and of denying the Melitians their rights under the Nicene agreement. In 332 Athanasius refuted these charges before the emperor.[34] The enemies of Athanasius were determined to discredit and ruin him. Eusebius of Caesarea persuaded Constantine to convene a council to investigate the charges made against Athanasius. The council which opened at Tyre in early 335 was packed with the enemies of Athanasius.[35] The situation at Tyre prompted him to go to Constantinople to plead his case before Constantine. In the meanwhile he had been condemned in absentia by the council. Unfortunately the enemies of Athanasius had the emperor's support and the good churchman was banished to Treves. Constantine had originally been well disposed toward Athanasius but because Constantine was never able to penetrate the depths of the Arian crisis, he found the continued intransigent position of Athanasius towards the Arians unacceptable. The emperor did not understand the concept of the Trinity and was quite willing to adopt an heretical position if that helped to preserve peace. He swung back and forth in his efforts to prevent extremism in Church issues. How incredible it was that Constantine now favored the faction he had condemned at Nicaea!

The Arians had won a significant victory. Their missionaries converted the major barbarian tribes, with the exception of the Franks, to Arian Christianity. The emperor when on his death-bed was baptised by an Arian bishop, Eusebius of Nicomedia. Ironically, Rome, the seat of the old religions, became the bastion of Christian orthodoxy. This was the result of several factors, notably the removal of the emperor to Constantinople.

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CHAPTER IV

CHURCHES AND A NEW CITY

Along with Constantine's involvement in the church councils, his building program was an excellent example of the new relationship that existed between Church and State. There were two parts to his building program. The first was the large number of churches built by either Constantine or his family. The second was the founding of Constantinople as the Christian capital of the Empire.

Following the triumph over Maxentius, the Church was the recipient of many favors from Constantine. The new master of the west favored Christianity both legally and financially. The most obvious manifestation of the Church's new power was the building of many large and beautiful churches. Christians who had been constrained to worship in private homes found themselves in possession of some of the Empire's finest structures. The palace of the Lateran was given to Pope Miltiades.[1] In 313 the Lateran basilica was under construction. Originally called the Basilica Constantiniana, the church was dedicated to Christ.[2] The church was later renamed St. John Lateran in honor of John the Baptist. The church of St. John Lateran was the typical orthodox basilica and became the model for succeeding church buildings.[3]

Early church architecture was based on the basilican plan. The basilica was a rectangular structure with two rows of columns down the long axis of the building. At one end of the basilica was the apse,

a raised semi-circular platform. Very often the apse would be covered by a domed or semi-domed roof. Prior to becoming a form of church architecture, the basilica was used for government and judicial business. The place of the praetor in the apse was later taken over by the bishop's throne. In front of the apse was placed the Christian altar. The clergy were seated on a semi-circular bench behind the altar. Usually a low wall or screen separated the congregation from the clergy.[4] The church often had a courtyard and special court or atrium at the entrance to the building. The famous basilica of St. John Lateran was 250 feet long, 180 feet wide, 100 feet high, had two pairs of aisles with twenty-two columns, and had a central aisle or nave flanked by fifteen columns.[5] It was quite an imposing structure.

St. John Lateran was just one example of Constantine's munificence towards the Church. Between 324 and 330 he had a basilica erected over the tomb of St. Peter.[6] It was symbolic of a new world when Constantine had inscribed on the building: "Because you were the leader when the world rose towards heaven, Constantine the victor founded his hall in your honor."[7] This building was to survive until Pope Julius II tore it down in the early sixteenth century. The church of St. Peter was significant in that it was one of the first churches to combine the orthodox basilica with a martyrium.[8] The orthodox basilica such as St. John Lateran was strictly for worship services. A martyrium was usually associated with either the grave or site of the death of a martyr. It was a place of pilgrimage and not a site

for the celebration of the mass. St. Peter's combined both of these functions. In the fusion of the basilica and martyrium often the relics of a saint were placed beneath the altar stones.[9]

The basilican style was not the only design used by the Christian architects. Round, domed buildings were also used by the Romans. These domed structures were generally used as mausolea. Originally the burial site for pagan emperors, these tombs were taken over by the Christians. The domed roof was ideal for Christian symbolism. The dome came to represent the firmament and the divine heavenly realm. The tomb of Galerius at Salonika was converted by the Christians into the church of St. George. Santa Costanza in Rome was quite probably a tomb before it became a church.[10] Constantine very carefully linked the imperial mausoleum with the domed churches usually built over the graves of martyrs. Emperor worship though altered drastically had revived in a new guise. After all, beginning with Constantine, the emperor was God's agent on earth. The Church of the Holy Apostles was a mausoleum built to honor the twelve Apostles and to contain the remains of the thirteenth apostle, Constantine. Unfortunately the church was destroyed by the Turks when Constantinople was captured in 1453. The famous church in Venice dedicated to St. Mark was patterned after the Church of the Holy Apostles.

Constantine built several churches in Rome, Constantinople, and Palestine. At Rome, St. Paul's, SS Peter and Marcellinus, and St. Lawrence were built by the emperor.[11] St. Paul's had originally been

the main hall of the Sessorian Palace.[12] In Palestine the most famous church was the Church of the Nativity of Christ at Bethlehem built by St. Helena, the mother of Constantine.[13] Over the supposed spot of the Nativity was erected an eight sided martyrium. In the center of the building was an opening in the floor which permitted the pilgrim to look down upon the stable where Christ was born.[14] Extending from the martyrium was a long nave and four aisles ending in an atrium. Today only the foundation survives. At Jerusalem was built the Church of the Holy Cross. This church was especially sacred because it contained relics of the Cross.[15] Besides the Church of the Holy Apostles, Constantine also started the construction of the first Hagia Sophia at Constantinople. Very few churches were built in Gaul, Spain, and the west in general.

Slowly and inexorably Constantine was combining the role of priest and emperor into that fusion of power known as caesaropapism. Strong links were forged between State and Church. The bishop became an imperial officer representing the secular and spiritual overlord, the emperor.[16] The use of the basilican style was very significant. The basilica was a government building and symbolized the authority of the state. The use of this architectural plan in church building was therefore an expression of the symbol under which Christians had gained their freedom.[17] A further development of the basilican plan was the cruciform church. In the cruciform arrangement an aisle, called the transept, was placed at a right-angle to the nave thereby creating a

cross shaped pattern. The cruciform plan of the church was also symbolic. It symbolized the Passion, but also, it was derived from the cross shaped labarum under which Constantine had triumphed.[18] The emperor was seeking divine approval by building churches. Just as in the church controversies, Constantine was determined to maintain the favor of God through correct religious opinions and magnificent houses of worship. The churches built in Palestine were very important in that respect. The aim of the basilican style employed there was to give imperial dignity to Christ.[19] In exchange for state support against heretics, the bishops accepted imperial control. Church art and architecture reflected this new and rather strange partnership. In the church at Aquilica there was created a fascinating and quite beautiful mosaic. It depicts a black turtle contending with a rooster.[20] The symbolism shows the forces of darkness and heresy contending with the forces of light and orthodoxy. Created during the Arian crisis, the turtle represented the Arian heretics.[21] This church was also the site of a church synod in 381 which deposed certain partisans of Arius from church offices.[22]

The partnership between Church and State changed the imperial monarchy. The emperor was no longer worshipped, but he was above all other men. Constantine styled himself an equal of the Apostles. The imperial office became a holy position bestowed by God. Constantine's building program besides being an attempt to keep God's favor was also a means of propaganda.[23] The emperor did not build any pagan or

heretical houses of worship. It was the duty of the emperor to maintain unity within the Church and to win converts. The construction of churches aided this program. Old Rome with its strong pagan history was not the proper place from which to direct a Christian empire. A new capital was needed. The New Rome or Constantinople, the city of Constantine, was the result of that need.

Sozomen recorded that Constantine had originally planned to build a Christian capital on the plain of Troy near the tomb of Ajax.[24] Supposedly, shortly after work had begun on the city, God told Constantine to go to Byzantium and build his new capital.[25] The historian Philostorgius (368-433) added to the story of divine intervention in the founding of the city. When Constantine was marking off the circuit of the new city walls his attendants thought he was measuring too great a distance. "How far, O prince?" Replied Constantine, "Until He who goes before me comes to a stop."[26] The New Rome was to be the first purely Christian city.[27]

Work on the city began in 324 and was essentially complete by May 330. The founding of Constantinople has been something of a mystery. It could not have been due to military needs. The military threats were in the west.[28] Milan or Treves would have been ideal if military considerations were predominate. Was it due to financial reasons? Probably not. The east may have been richer than the west in the early fourth century, but to an emperor who could command the resources of an empire, financial factors could little have affected

Constantine's move.[29] If comfort was a factor, Rome was far more civilized than Constantinople was or was to be for many years. In the past the absence of the emperor from Rome had been due more to necessity than to a deliberate policy to abandom the city. Constantine's creation was to be a rival to pagan Rome, not a replacement.[30] According to Lot, Constantinople was born on the spur of the moment.[31] The victory at Chryopolis prompted the birth of a new capital. The victory at the Milvian Bridge gave Christianity a legal status with the emperor as its sponsor. The result of Chrysopolis led to the creation of a Christian capital for the Empire. Licinius had fought under the emblems of the pagan gods. Constantine's triumph was the culmination of Christianity's war with paganism. Once again superstitious motives guided Constantine's actions. The old capital, seat of the pagan religions, was renounced in favor of the Christian capital. Rome became a city of the past. Constantinople was the door leading from the ancient to the medieval world.

On May 11, 330 the city of Constantine was dedicated. The inaugural festivities lasted forty days.[32] Constantinople was an enlargement of the Greek city of Byzantium. Situated on the major trader route from Europe to Asia and with excellent water transport facilities, Constantinople was in an ideal location. Constantine converted a small Greek trading city into the greatest and richest city of the medieval world.

Though Constantinople was to be a new city, it was patterned somewhat after Rome. Rome had its seven hills and so also did

Constantinople. The second Rome was to have its senate and noble families. Constantine was determined to make his city the equal of the old capital. In an effort to lure the wealthy to his city, he promised to provide a splendid residence for those wealthy who made the move to the new city.[33] For those of a lower rank, if they built their own houses, then Constantine promised them free food.[34] In a further effort to encourage building in Constantinople it was decreed that anyone owning crown lands in Asia Minor was to build a second residence in the new city.[35] The emperor had eight public and 153 private baths, two theaters, and 4388 homes built.[36] The city was provided with fourteen churches. The Hagia Irene had barely been finished when Constantine died and the first Hagia Sophia was begun. The Church of the Holy Apostles was built by Constantine to house his remains and to honor the Apostles. Adjoining the imperial palace was constructed a fabulous hippodrome. The Hippodrome at Constantinople became notorious for its chariot races and violent crowds. The city walls of Byzantium were moved more than a mile to the west to provide the great spaces necessary for Constantine's conception of a grand city. Eight aqueducts and cisterns were provided to meet the needs of the city.[37] The second Rome thus had its own laws, courts, senate, palaces, and hippodrome just like the old Rome.

Constitutionally Constantinople was an imperial residence as Milan or Nicomedia had been, but was far more magnificent and destined to be the new center of the Empire. The old gods had no role in the

new city. Holy relics, not Jupiter, protected the second Rome.[38] In the old part of the city two pagan temples were tolerated. One, dedicated to Castor and Pollux for the hippodrome workers, and one dedicated to Tyche or the spirit of the city.[39] The contrast between old and new Rome was best symbolized by the column erected by the emperor in the Forum of Constantine. Hidden within the porphyry column was a piece of the Cross. This relic was supposed to preserve the city forever.[40] The cities of Greece were stripped of their riches to adorn Constantinople. The famed Delphic tripod, symbol of Greek independence, was taken from the Temple of Apollo and set up in the Hippodrome.[41]

Constantine probably never realized the historical significance of the creation of Constantinople. It never occurred to him that within two centuries Latin would be a virtually unknown tongue and that the western half of the Empire would be considered semi-barbarous by the inhabitants of Constantinople.[42] Constantine's Christian capital rather than regenerating the Roman Empire, gave birth to the Byzantine Empire. Ironically, Rome, the city abandoned as too pagan, became the center of western Christendom.

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CONCLUSION

The rise to power of Constantine marked the beginning of a new age. The ancient world was slowly giving way to the medieval. Diocletian's efforts to save the Roman Empire had failed and the foundation was laid for the Byzantine Empire. In a twist of fate Christianity changed from being the object of imperial persecution into the strongest pillar supporting the Empire. Constantine was the principal figure in this strange transformation.

Constantine was never an especially religious man, either in his pagan beliefs or his Christian beliefs, but he did have a deep confidence in his destiny. At first Sol was his patron, but through the influence of either a vision in the heavens or a dream, Constantine adopted Christian symbols for his protection. The victory over Maxentius strengthened the hold Christianity had over Constantine. However, he probably never experienced a real conversion to Christianity. His relation to Christianity was based on superstition and not on repentance. Christian symbols were little more than good-luck charms. As long as God was properly worshipped, Constantine and the Empire would be protected.

In the Donatist and Arian controversies the proper worship of God was threatened and so Constantine intervened. The theological implications of the questions raised by these controversies were well beyond the emperor's understanding. He was interested solely with

preserving unity within the Church so as to insure correct worship and thus avoid the displeasure of God. There was also fear that a divided Church might lead to a divided Empire and civil war. Invariably in all Church debates Constantine supported the hierarchy against all rebels. This situation made the state the defender of Christian orthodoxy and forced the Church into a position of dependence on the state. In fairness to Constantine it should be said that his intervention in doctrinal matters, especially the Arian crisis, saved the Church at a critical moment. The Arian question caused such serious divisions among Christians that it might conceivably have permanently divided the Church. Perhaps without the intervention of the emperor, Christianity might never have recovered from these controversies.

In the area of architecture Christianity was glorified. Architecture became the primary expression of Constantine's fusion of priestly and kingly powers known as caesaropapism. The churches erected symbolized not only the majesty of God but also of God's agent on earth, the emperor. In church mosaics saints, prophets, Apostles, Christ, and emperor were always present. The churches became effective propaganda tools for both the Church and the State.

Constantine identified himself completely with the Church, but his faith was as flat and devoid of depth as any Byzantine mosaic. He thought that the Christian God would help bring about a revitalized Rome but such was not to be the result. The elevation of Christianity

to a position of power and honor within the Empire which began with Constantine marked the end of the Roman Empire and the beginning of the Byzantine Empire. The work begun by Constantine was continued when Theodosius (378-395) outlawed the pagan cults in 392 and completed when in 529 Justinian (527-565) closed the pagan schools in Athens. The sixth century saw the final extermination of paganism in the Roman world. The triumph of Christianity insured the destruction of the Roman Empire. Constantine who wanted nothing more than to preserve Rome was the unwitting agent of its death. Christianity proved itself to be far stronger than any mere good-luck charm and more lasting than any empire.

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