

# CHURCH AND STATE

EARLY CHURCH HISTORY – FALL 2023

## CONSTANTINE I

- Constantine was the son of Flavius Constantinius, one of the four members of the Tetrarchy, who ruled in the region now known as France, Brittan, and Germany.
- After a series of civil wars, Constantine ended the Tetrarchy and reunified the Roman Empire.
- Constantine apparently converted to Christianity in October, 312 AD, at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge.

“About the time of the midday sun, when the day was just turning, he said he saw with his own eyes up in the sky and resting over the sun, a cross-shaped trophy formed from light, and a text attached to it which said, "By this conquer." (τούτω νικά) Amazement at the spectacle seized both him and the whole company of soldiers which was then accompanying him on a campaign he was conducting somewhere, and witnessed the miracle.” - Eusebius

- Constantine spent most of his life as a catechumen, postponing baptism until shortly before his death in 337 AD.
- By the end of his reign, Constantine had begun tearing down pagan Roman temples.

## THE EDICT OF MILAN

- February 313 AD
- Granted Christianity legal status and ended state persecution.
- Initiated by Constantine
- Some historians believe the edict was politically motivated, but most historians believe Constantine was genuinely converted to Christianity.

## THE FIRST COUNCIL OF NICAEA

- Convened by Constantine in 325 AD
- All 1800 bishops in the known world were invited. About 300 attended from every region in the empire.
- Settled the nature of Christ and his relationship with the Father
- Banished Arius and two bishops who sided with him
- Published the Nicene Creed
- Established the date of Easter, separate from the Jewish calendar
- Published rules for ordination and church discipline

## THE EDICT OF THESSALONICA

- February 380 AD by Theodosius I
- Made Nicene Christianity the state religion of the entire Roman Empire.
- Threatened state punishment of heretics

## THE BEAST AND THE HARLOT

- Quick Guide to Revelation – Symbolic (no single fulfillment), Cyclical (repeat fulfillments)
- The beast of Revelation 13 represents world governments, beginning with Rome
  - Direct assault on the church – persecution
- The harlot of Revelation 17 represents the counterfeit church
  - “the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth”
  - She is “drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus”
  - dressed in purple and scarlet, holding a golden chalice
  - holds great wealth, rides on the back of the beast
- Some possible parallels here to Rome’s relationship with the Roman Catholic Church??
  - The church essentially replaced the empire, holding power over the state for a 1,000 years (500s to 1500s)
  - Many, many people were executed by church leaders during this period for “heresy”
  - Priests and bishops literally wear purple and scarlet. They literally use golden chalices for the Eucharist.
  - The Roman church is extremely wealthy, most of it gained prior to the Reformation.
  - Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Knox all believed this interpretation.

Mike prefers the interpretation of Augustine:

*“Babylon is confusion, Jerusalem a vision of peace. How can those two cities be distinguished? Can we now separate them from each other? They are mingled, and from the very beginning of mankind they run on unto the end of the world. Two loves make up these two cities: love of God makes Jerusalem, love of the world makes Babylon. Therefore, let each one question himself as to what he loves: and he shall find of which he is a citizen.” - Augustine*