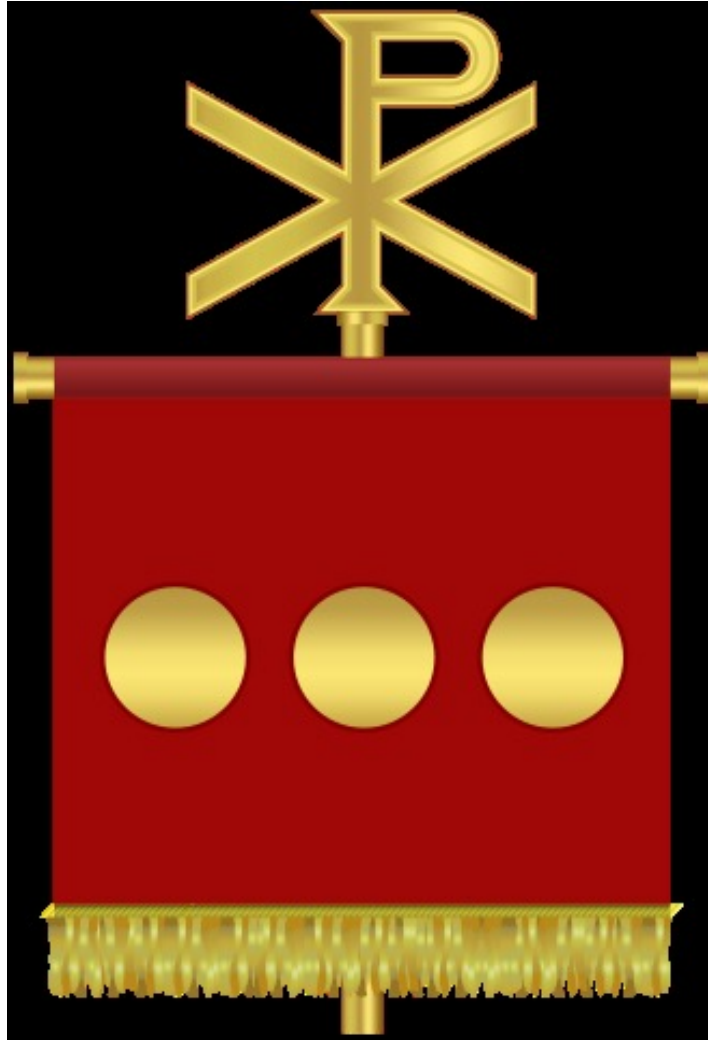


Church and State Unite In Rome



Impact of the First Jewish War

- **The Sadducees, and the Essenes are gone. Judaism as Christ and the Apostles knew it, is no more**
- **Johanan ben Zakkai saves Pharisaic Judaism**
- **A Jewish Sanhedrin meets and formally declares Jewish Christians to be Heretics by issuing the Birkat haMinim v'Nozrim**

Christianity and Judaism

Dr. David Novak is a rabbi. He also holds the J. Richard and Dorothy Shiff Chair of Jewish Studies as Professor of the Study of Religion and Professor of Philosophy at the University of Toronto. Rabbi Novak made a very interesting observation.

But Christianity did not come out of Judaism, whether for good or for ill. In truth, both Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism come out of, and thereby supersede, a religion based on the Hebrew Bible.

This religion could be called “Hebraic Monotheism.” It is neither Judaism nor Christianity, at least as we know them from the second century on. Judaism and Christianity have been continually superseding this ancient religion. Both have done so without forgetting their ever-present, ever-necessary foundation in Hebraic Monotheism.

Christians and Jews accept the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible as interpreted by Second Temple Jewish theology to be their foundational revelation. This is what we have in common. In addition, both Christians and Jews have a “new testament.”

For Christians, this “new testament” is the book by that very name. For Jews, our “new testament” is the “Oral Torah” written down in the Talmud (and related canonical rabbinic texts) but constantly being extended as tradition up until the latest Jewish teachings. So, just as the Talmud could be called the “Jewish New Testament,” so also the New Testament could be called the “Christian Talmud.”

<https://www.firstthings.com/article/2019/02/supersessionism-hard-and-soft>

The Second Jewish War

- In the year 118 CE, Hadrian changed his mind about a third temple. He will instead build a temple to Jupiter in the place of the old Jewish Temple.
- In the year 132 CE Simon bar Kokhba rebels against Rome. captured 50 fortresses and over 900 unfortified towns and villages. Rome's first two counter-attacks by the procurator in Syria Palestina and then by the Roman Governor in Syria fail. The third attack by the experienced general, Julius Severus, succeeds
- The final battle took place in 135 CE in the town of Bethar, where Simon bar Kokhba, the Sanhedrin and the Nasi (literally, Prince, here, the Head of the Sanhedrin) had taken refuge. At the end of the battle, every Jew in Bethar was killed. A prominent Rabbi, Rabbi Akiva, was also martyred.
- After the second revolt, Aelia Capitolina was built. No Jew was allowed to live in the city. This included Jewish Christians. This was one of the last times that Jewish Christians would be mixed in with traditional Jewish believers.

Two Extreme Christian Heresies

- **Marcionism Named after Marcion, a son of a Christian Bishop in Pontus (Turkey)**
 - **Claimed two deities; the True God and YHWH a demi-God (demi-urge)**
 - **Marcionite Scripture had an edited version of Luke and 10 letters of Paul**
 - **The Hebrew Scriptures described the actions of the Demi-Urge. The Christian Scriptures described the revelation of the True God**
 - **Jesus was the Son of the True God but only seemed (Docetism) to be a true human. Jesus an actual spirit that took on human appearance. Jesus was never really human, so his birth, death and resurrection only seemed to happen**
- **Ebionism Name means “the poor ones”?? Named after a man named Ebion?**
 - **Jesus was not divine, but a human chosen by YHWH just like Moses**
 - **Jesus was the third and final prophet of God after Abraham and Moses**
 - **Ebionites held only to an edited version of Matthew’s Gospel**
 - **They held James, the first Bishop of Jerusalem (not James the Brother of John) in very high regard**
 - **To the Ebionites, Paul was a heretic, and his writings were heresies**
 - **Jesus preached concern for the poor**
 - **Jesus sacrificed himself to end all animal sacrifices**
 - **Mohammed’s mother was said to once have been a Christian. Was she an Ebionite? Muslims see Jesus (Isa) as a true Prophet but not the final one. Mohammed was the final one.**

Important Writings of the Ante-Nicene Church (I)

The internet has made documents written by early Christian communities more available to readers than ever before. Yet these writings of the Apostolic Fathers remain obscure.

The Didache: Didache means “teaching” in Greek. The full title of this work is “The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles”. This work is perhaps the earliest of the post-Apostolic writings (@95-110 CE). The author is unknown however the Didache may actually have been written before the Book of Revelation or, at least, contemporary with it. The Didache served two purposes; it was the earliest Christian Catechism, and it was sort of a liturgical guide to Christian ritual.

The Letters of Ignatius of Antioch: Ignatius was a disciple of John and had been the Bishop of Antioch. Ignatius was accused of being a Christian and was led to Rome in 107 CE to be martyred. On his way, he wrote letters to seven Christian Communities. These seven letters were referenced in the writings of other early Christian authors.

The Letter of Clement of Rome to the Corinthian Church: This letter was written by the episcopos/presbyter of Rome to the Church at Corinth sometime around 95 CE. The author is most likely Clement the companion of Paul mentioned in Philippians 4:3.

Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis: Papias, like Ignatius, was the Bishop of Hierapolis and also knew the Apostle John. Only fragments of Papias’ writings remain but two segments are important. Papias confirmed that Matthew and Mark wrote the gospels attributed to them. He mentioned that Matthew may have written an early list of Jesus’ sayings (*logia*) in Hebrew. He mentioned that Mark wrote his gospel acting as Peter’s scribe.

Important Writings Ante-Nicene Church (II)

Polycarp: Like Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp was a disciple of John and also a Bishop of the Christian community in Smyrna. As a very old man, Polycarp traveled to Rome to come to some agreement with the Roman Bishop Anicetus about the timing of the celebration of the death and Resurrection of Jesus which differed in the East and the West. He met with the convert Justin while in Rome and became a mentor to Irenaeus. In the end, he was captured in Rome and refused to deny Christ and so was martyred. He wrote a letter to the Church at Philippi which survived. Another letter was written about his martyrdom by an anonymous author which also survived.

Justin Martyr: Justin was a Roman philosopher who converted to Christianity around 125 CE. He was accused of being a Christian and confessed that he was. As a Roman citizen, he exercised his right to appeal to the Emperor. His appeal was turned down and Justin was martyred but his defense, and other writings by Justin survived. Perhaps the most noteworthy of Justin's writings was his First Apology (First Defense). This Apology is a wonderful summary of Christian beliefs. Chapters 65 to 67 of this work give special attention to Christian liturgy,

Irenaeus: Irenaeus was the Bishop of Lugdunum (Lyon) in Gaul. He was a fervent Christian. We know a lot about the various heretical forms of Christianity that existed at the time from his book "Against Heresies". Both he and Polycarp were very much at odds with the heresy of Marcion.

The writings of these and many other Church Fathers can be downloaded for free at:
<https://www.holybooks.com/ante-nicene-fathers-vol-i-ix/>

The Nag Hammadi “Gospels”

Gnosticism is said to have been born in Persia. It generally believes that the material universe is evil or, at best, a mistake. Religion is best understood on a spiritual level. We have already seen that Marcion denied that Jesus was true man and only appeared to be human. He also considered the God of Israel to be a fraud. That God was not the one God but rather a demi-urge who mistakenly brought the universe into being. This is totally opposed to the Judeo-Christian notion that the material universe including humankind was good. Gnostics are almost always dualists seeing good and evil as equal but opposite forces. The Essenes showed a hint of Gnosticism in their beliefs.

The aforementioned Gnostic Christian books, found in the Egyptian are discussed in depth by Elaine Pagels. Pagels has written the best-known book on the subject called *The Gnostic Gospels*. These gospels were written about one hundred to one hundred fifty years after the Christian gospels. Several years ago, the find of a Gospel of Judas was announced to the world. This is the same book that Irenaeus of Lyon wrote against in the second century. One of the oldest books in the Gnostic Gospels is the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas. Below is a sample of verse 114 of that Gospel;

Simon Peter said to them: “Let Mary go away from us, for women are not worthy of life.” Jesus said: “Look, I will draw her in so as to make her male, so that she too may become a living male spirit, similar to you.” (But I say to you): “Every woman who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Thomas:114)

This passage is just one example of why these “gospels” were never considered serious by early Catholic Christians. Christians knew who and what Jesus was because they were taught either by men who knew Christ directly or were themselves taught by those who had first-hand knowledge of Christ.

An Example of Roman Persecution

Judaism was an ancient religion respected by the Romans. They classified it as a *religio licita*. When Rome recognized Christianity as separate from Judaism, it classified Christianity as a *superstitio*. This classification allowed Christians to be punished simply for being Christian. Here is a communication between a Roman Official (Pliny the Younger) and the Roman Emperor (Trajan) written around 112 CE.

PLINY: 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 have observed the following procedure: 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. There were others possessed of the same folly; but because they were Roman citizens, I signed an order for them to be transferred to Rome.

When they (i.e. those accused of being Christians) invoked the gods in words dictated by me, offered prayer with incense and wine to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for this purpose together with statues of the gods, and moreover cursed Christ--none of which of those who are really Christians, it is said, can be forced to do--these I thought should be discharged. ... Because the contagion of this superstition has spread not only to the cities but also to the villages and farms.

TRAJAN: You observed proper procedure, my dear Pliny, in sifting the cases of those who had been denounced to you as Christians. 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 worshipping our gods--even though he was under suspicion in the past, shall obtain pardon through repentance.

Commentary on the Early Christian Communities

Aristides of Athens, like the Roman Christian Justin, was a Christian philosopher, who presented a defense of Christianity (an *apologia*) to the Roman Emperor Hadrian during his visit to Athens in 125 CE. Among other things, he wrote this about the Christians of his time

They honor father and mother, and show kindness to those near to them; and whenever they are judges, they judge uprightly ... Falsehood is not found among them; ...and whatsoever they would not that others should do unto them, they do not to others;... from widows they do not turn away their esteem; ...They go their way in all modesty and cheerfulness. and they love one another,

Tertullian, a Christian of the West who was the first person in the early Church to write mainly in Latin instead of Greek, was also a man who sadly abandoned his Catholic Christian faith and joined the followers of Montanus. While he was a Christian, however, he wrote about something he heard one pagan friend say to another on the subject of Christians.

Look at these Christians, how they love one another!

Christians did go into the world to preach and to baptize. And, like Jesus, they lived what they preached. Francis of Assisi is often cited as the source of the phrase that best describes Christians of the first three centuries, “Preach the Gospel always and, when necessary, use words!”. People noticed that the faith that the Christians preached and practiced seem to make a difference in their lives. In face of a government that could force them to choose between apostasy or execution at any time, they seemed happy and content. They even prayed for the government. All of that made a deep impression on those people that encountered Christian communities.

Did Christians Persecute Heretics In The First Three Centuries?

From time to time, I read how there were many forms of Christianity in the first centuries of Christianity. Charges are often made that Christians persecuted these heretics and destroyed their writings. While it is absolutely true that Christians persecuted heretics in later centuries when the Christian faith was united with the local political power (more on that later), it is laughable to accuse Christians of such things in the early centuries of the faith

There was no Christian army, no Christian legal power, no jails or prisons for Christian heretics. As we have seen, denying Christianity was a virtuous thing for a Roman citizen to do. Admitting to being a Christian often meant execution for those who did not recant their faith in Christ.

So how did Christians of the first few centuries maintain unity? They followed Paul's advice. They knew and trusted the apostles and their successors who taught them about Christ. They would have nothing to do with anyone who spoke to them about a Christ other than the one preached to them by their trusted leaders. This could be seen as a type of shunning. Their reaction to those who preached another Christ was more like "I am ready to die for what I believe. I am not ready or willing to risk my life for what you are preaching." than anything else. No violence. No execution of heretics.

The Christian faith was spread by word of mouth locally but also remotely by the written word. Paul was very effective at the use of letters in maintaining unity. I have already mentioned the *Cursus Publicus*, the Roman mail system. It was a reliable and effective system of communication. We have already discussed letters written by early Christians such as Clement of Rome and Ignatius of Antioch. There were many others.

Christianity Spreads Despite Persecution

- **Nero and Domitian were great persecutors of Christians in the First Century CE**
- **Persecutions of Christians waxed and waned in the Second Century CE and were more regional**
- **It was in the third century that the persecution of Christians really became intense.**
- **The Emperor Decius (249-251) was suspicious of Christians who relied more on each other rather than on the state. He was quoted as saying “I would far rather receive news of a rival to the throne than of another bishop of Rome”.**
- **The Emperor Valerian (253-260) blamed Christians for the troubles he faced from the Germanic tribes in the North and the Persians in the East.**
- **It was the Emperor Diocletian (284-305) who organized the most efficient and thorough persecution of Christians. His stated goal was the total extinction of Christianity. All Christian worship was to cease. Christian places of worship were to be destroyed. Christian leaders would be required to offer sacrifice to Roman gods. **It should be noted that his wife, Prisca, was a Christian.****

An Example of Later Roman Persecution of Christians

We have already seen an example of the persecution of Christians by the Roman in the Second Century in the last section in the exchange between Pliny the Younger and the Emperor Trajan. By the latter part of the Third Century CE, that had changed. Christians were actively being persecuted in both halves of the Empire. Consider these words from the trial of Bishop Cyprian of Carthage which took place in 257 during the persecution of Valerian. The Roman proconsul, Galerius Maximus was the prosecutor.

Galerius Maximus: Are you Thascius Cyprianus?

Cyprian: I am.

Galerius: The most sacred Emperors have commanded you to conform to the Roman rites.

Cyprian: I refuse.

Galerius: Take heed for yourself.

Cyprian: Do as you are bid; in so clear a case I may not take heed

Galerius: After briefly conferring with my judicial council, with much reluctance I pronounce the following sentence: you shall be made an example to those whom you have wickedly associated with you; the authority of law shall be ratified in your blood.

Galerius then read the sentence of the court from a written tablet:

Galerius: It is the sentence of this court that Thascius Cyprianus be executed with the sword.

Cyprian: Thanks be to God.

The Empire Under Diocletian

- In 293 Diocletian decided to reorganize the Empire. He divided the Empire into Eastern and Western Regions. Each region would be governed overall by an Augustus. Each region would then be sub-divided and ruled by a Caesar. When an Augustus died, the Caesar would become the new Augustus. The new Augustus would name someone to replace him as Caesar



Eastern Augustus - Diocletian

Eastern Caesar - Galerius

Western Augustus - Maximian

Western Caesar - Constantius

The Best Laid Plans....

In 305 CE Diocletian wanted to test his system. Both he and his fellow Augustus, Maximian resigned. Diocletian wanted to test the system he had created. It seemed to work. Constantius became the Augustus in the West replacing Maximian. He appointed Flavius Severus as his Caesar. Galerius replaced Diocletian as Augustus in the East and he named Maximinus as his Caesar.

Everything seemed to be going well until, in 306, Constantius suddenly died. Then it all went bad.

Before:

AW: Maximian
CW: Constantius

AE: Diocletian
CE: Galerius



After:

AW: Constantius
CW: Flavius Severus

AE: Galerius
CE: Maximinus

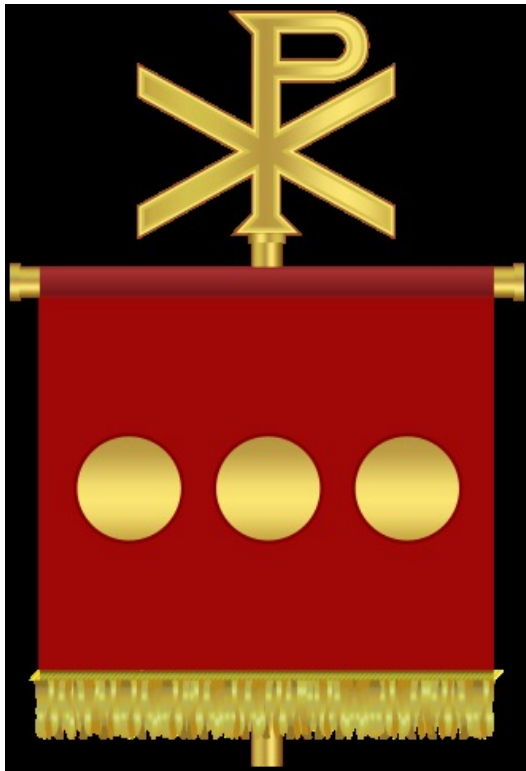
Here We Go Again.

- **Flavius Severus prepared to take his rightful place as the new Augustus in the West, but the troops commanded by Constantius had other ideas. They wanted a different Augustus in the West. They wanted Constantinus (Constantine), the son of Constantius. The whole system unraveled.**
- **When the smoke cleared, Constantine ruled over the Western Region.**
- **By the end of 313, two men remained standing, Constantine was the Augustus in the West and Licinius the Augustus in the East. Each managed to play nice with each other until 324. Constantine accused Licinius of renewing a persecution of Christians in the East (reason or excuse?). He defeated Licinius in battle in 324 and became the sole Emperor of the Roman Empire**

Edictum Mediolanense

In 313 when Constantine had solidified his situation as Augustus in the West and Licinius did the same as the Augustus in the East, they jointly issued the *Edictum Mediolanense* better known as the Edict of Milan.

This edict called for the freedom of everyone to practice whatever faith or tradition they desired. It specifically assured Christians the right to freely worship in public and to organize churches. It also returned to them property that had been taken under the earlier persecutions.



Constantine's mother, Helena, was herself a Christian so Constantine favored Christianity for that reason. The incident at the Milvian Bridge and his subsequent defeat of Maxentius sealed his faith in the Risen Christ. Constantine was said to have had a vision in which he saw a chi-rho cross symbol with the words ἐν τούτῳ νικά (en touto nika = in this, conquer) written in Greek. The Latin translation of this is better known, *in hoc signo, vinces*. (in this sign you will conquer). He had his soldiers shield decorated with the symbol and made the symbol part of his military standard.

Constantine Favors Christianity

- **Constantine's mother was a Christian. Constantine may or may not have considered himself a Christian, but he was not baptized until shortly before his death.**
- **Shortly after the Edict was proclaimed, Constantine called on Miltiades Africanus, Bishop of Rome. Miltiades was a reluctant visitor since Bishops were not particularly popular in Rome**
- **Constantine informed Miltiades that he would no longer have to reside in his Church that was little more than a chapel. He gifted to him what would become the Lateran Palace. Constantine further promised to build magnificent Churches to honor the two Apostles martyred in Rome, St. Peter and St. Paul.**
- **It is not clear that Miltiades was ever comfortable with these gifts but his Archpriest, Sylvester, was quite comfortable. Sylvester became Sylvester I, Bishop of Rome. Sylvester saw this as an opportunity to join Church and State to bring the Kingdom of God to the Earth. Rome would be the New Jerusalem.**

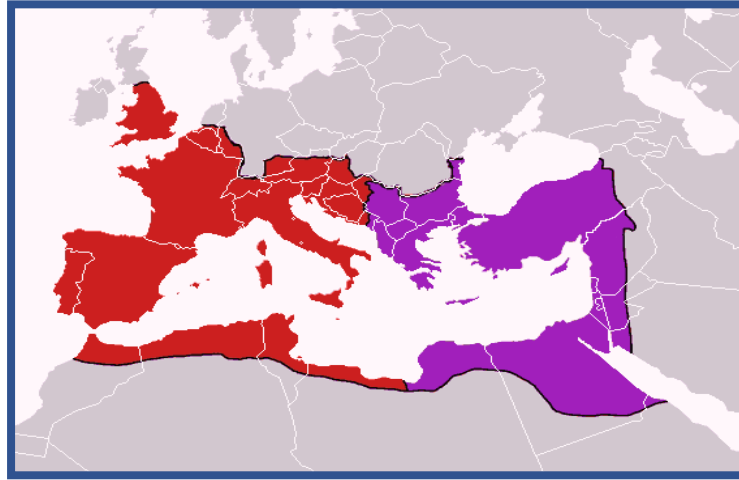
What Constantine Did / Did Not Do

- Constantine had become sole Emperor in 324. Immediately made plans to move the capital of the Empire eastward from Rome to a small town called Byzantium. He renamed that town after himself, Constantinople.
- At about that same time, a conflict in the Catholic Church arose out of Egypt regarding the question of Jesus' divinity. A priest named Arius, was teaching that Jesus was not God in the same way that the Father was God. As the Father was the begetter and Jesus was the begotten, so there must have been a time when Jesus did not exist. Arius concluded that Jesus could not be God in the same way that the Father was God. Arius quoted from Scripture (Psalm 2:7-9, John 14:28 and Mark 13:32) to make his case.
- Arius was condemned for violating one of the important tenets of Christianity: Jesus was fully human, and Jesus was fully divine. Catholic teaching proclaimed that Jesus was *homo-ousios* (of the same substance) as the Father. Arius claimed that Jesus was *homoi-ousios* (of a substance like but not the same as the Father). There was one iota of a difference. Constantine ordered his Bishops to meet in Council at Nicaea to settle the issue.
- Constantine called for the Council. The fact that he set its agenda shows some level of involvement. Yet most historians agree that he left the daily proceedings of the Council to the Bishops. The Nicene Creed resulted which declared that Jesus was homo-ousios to the Father. The faith, which was first called Catholic by Ignatius of Antioch in 107 was called Catholic to contrast it to the beliefs of Arius. Constantine did not declare this Catholic faith to be the official faith of the Roman Empire.

Emperor Theodosius I

- As always seemed to be the case, the heirs of Constantine vied with each other for power. One heir was a full-blown Arian, another leaned toward Arianism and the final member of Clan Constantine to rule was a full-fledged Pagan who tried to restore the Roman Gods
- In Theodosius, unlike so many of his predecessors, was a committed Catholic Christian Emperor. In 380 CE, he, along with Gratian, then Augustus in the West, issued the Edict of Thessalonica making Catholic Christianity the public religion of the Empire. Rome was not the first country to make such a declaration.
- By 395 AD, Pagan temples and shrines lost all public monies. Arian Christian Bishops were replaced with Catholic Bishops. The Olympic Games ended. They didn't resume until the 1800s
- Theodosius pacified the border between the Empire and the Gothic tribes to the East
- Theodosius called a second council of Bishops which convened in Constantinople in 381. This Council settled the status of the Holy Spirit. It also stated that Constantinople would be a fifth patriarchate (along with Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria and Rome) and would be considered second in importance only to Rome. Constantinople began to be called by a new name. Nova Roma

The Western Empire After Theodosius



- The Eastern (Byzantine) portion of the Roman Empire lasted, in some form or another, until the fifteenth century. After the rise of Islam, it would lose much of the territory that you see on the 4th century CE map shown here. The Western portion of the Empire did not fare so well.
- Rome ceased to be the political center of the Empire soon after Constantine moved East. The Imperial Court in the West moved to Mediolanum (Milan) and, from there, to Ravenna. While Constantinople grew as a religious and political center, Rome began a long decline in political importance and splendor at the same time.
- In the fifth century, the Huns from Asia appeared. By 452, Rome, which had already been sacked by the Visigoths in 410, was facing an attack by the Huns. The Bishop of Rome, Leo I, was the most important leader left in the city. He met the leader of the Huns, Attila, and somehow managed to dissuade him from attacking the city. While the Huns passed on sacking Rome, three years later, an attack by the Vandals showed no such restraint.

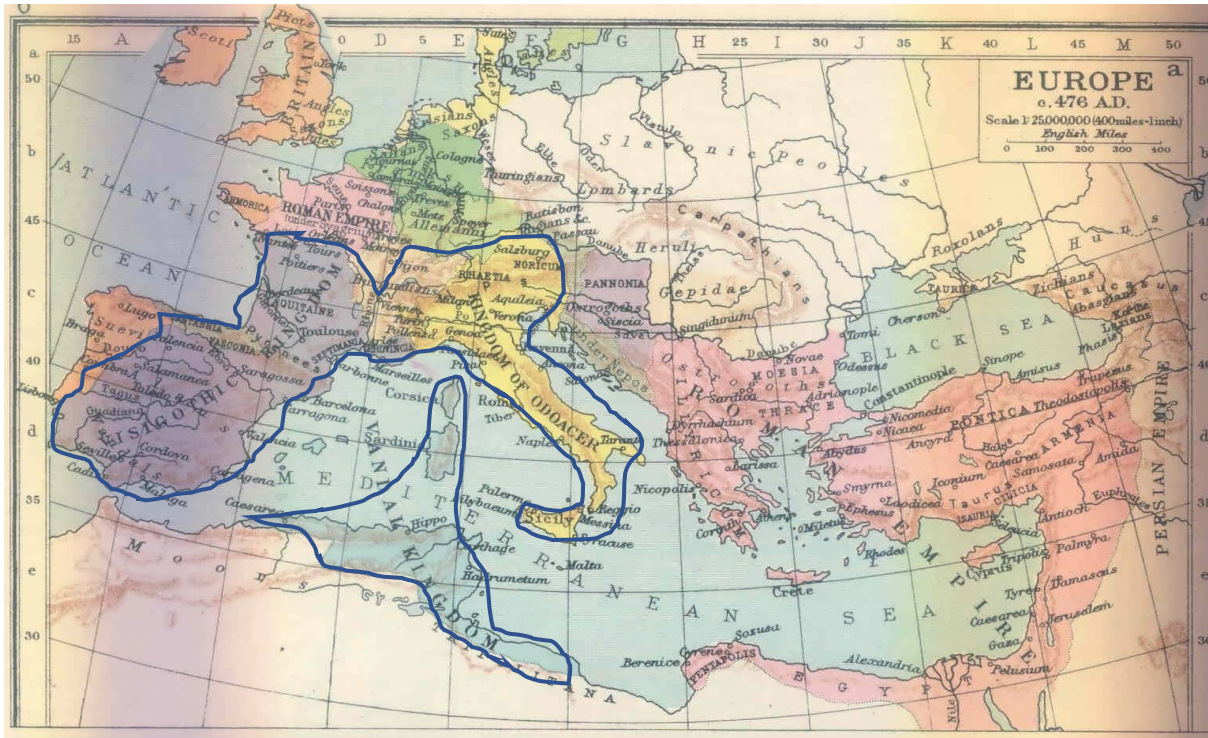
Decline and Fall

- During much of the fifth century the Western portion of the Roman Empire lost control of much of its territory as many Gothic (Germanic) tribes moved West. Angles and Saxons were in England. Franks were in Gaul. Vandals had swept across Spain but didn't remain there. They settled in North Africa. The Visigoths swept into Spain and remained there.
- But the Western Empire wasn't dead yet. In 457, a military General named Majorian deposed the reigning Emperor in the West, Avitius, and began a three-year campaign to retake lands lost to the Gothic invaders. He enjoyed an amazing run of success.
- In the end, the fallen human nature showed itself yet again. When Majorian had finished his fighting, he returned to Rome to establish reforms that would allow the Empire in the West to maintain his gains. This ran against the desires of the elites in power. They captured and killed Majorian in 460 and the last chance for the Western Empire died with him. In the fifteen years after Majorian, The West had six Emperors. In 476, Romulus Augustulus abdicated in favor of Odoacer, a German. Odoacer received the approval of the Eastern Emperor, Zeno, as Augustulus' legal replacement. It was a mere formality. Odoacer was the King of Italy from 476-493 when Theoderic, an Ostrogoth, defeated him.

Things You May Not Have Known About the Western Empire

- The Western Empire officially fell in 476 CE when Odoacer replaced Augustulus but, the Germanic tribes tried to run the regions they controlled as if they were still part of the Empire. The East played along for awhile because they had more important issues to deal with from the Persians.
- With Romans no longer in control of the West, the only thing Roman that remained was the Catholic Church. Catholic Bishops had always provided some level of administrative services since Constantine. In fact, the word diocese comes from a Greek word *diokesis* meaning administration.
- Many of the invading Gothic tribes had become Christians but they were not Catholic Christians. The Goths in Italy, Spain and Gaul along with the Vandals in North Africa were Arian Christians who had earlier been converted by the Arian Bishop Ulfilas. As a result, the Bishop of Rome was tolerated in Italy because he was the Patriarch of the Western Empire and held the place of honor among the five Patriarchates. But most of the former Western Empire was no longer of the Catholic Christian faith.
- The Franks were late to convert to Christianity. As a result, and due to their admiration for things Roman, they converted to Catholic Christianity. The Lombards also were Catholic Christians. They conquered the Italian peninsula which was again Catholic.
- Other Germanic tribes like the Angles, Saxons and Danes remained Pagan. So, as the fifth century turned into the sixth. Most of the Western half of the Empire was no longer of the faith of Nicaea (Catholic Christianity). The East remained within that faith.

The Roman Empire After the Gothic Invasions



In less than 100 years, Catholic Christianity (following the Creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople declaring that Father, Son and Spirit were all persons in a single godhead and that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine) no longer dominated in the Western Empire. Germanic tribes that were either pagan or were Arian Christians (Jesus was not fully divine) took over much of the Western Empire. Catholic Christianity in Rome was allowed some degree of freedom, but the Vandals and the Visigoths in Spain and North Africa were less accommodating. The Eastern Empire remained Catholic. Antioch in Syria and Alexandria in Egypt became great centers of Christian learning and remained so until the Rise of Islam

The Roman Empire of Justinian



In the year 521, Emperor Justin named his nephew, Justinian as Co-Emperor of the Eastern (Byzantine) Roman Empire. When Justin died in 527, Justinian became the sole Emperor. Justinian was an active and energetic Emperor. He surrounded himself with good men. This included two remarkable generals, Belisarius and Narses. He married a much younger woman, his mistress Theodora, who turned out to be an important asset to him as Emperor. During his reign, he re-established Imperial rule in the portions of North Africa dominated by the Vandals. In the Italian peninsula, Belisarius defeated the Goths and brought much of that region under Roman control. Narses managed to take a portion of Hispania from the Visigoths. There was a price to be paid for these gains. Taxes were increased and the people became resentful. There was a major incident, the Nika riot, which Justinian, aided by Theodora, managed to quell.

Justinian and Christianity

Justinian was probably the last Roman Emperor to speak Latin. He was a firm Nicaean Catholic Christian and supported that understanding of the Catholic faith through yet another heresy.

There was a branch of Christianity that claimed that Jesus Christ had a single nature. Some believed that single nature was completely divine while others believed it to be a mix of divine and human. The Council of Chalcedon declared that such an understanding would have made Jesus Christ other than fully human. The Council declared this understanding, which was called Monophysitism, to be heretical. The Council declared Jesus to have a fully human nature and a fully divine nature perfectly united in the one person Jesus Christ. This argument may seem silly in our time, but the Church would not waver from its understanding that Jesus was fully human and fully divine.

The Council of Chalcedon (451) seemed to have settled the matter, but later questions arose, so Justinian hoped to settle the matter and reunite those eastern Churches (e.g. the Armenian Church) that refused to accept Chalcedon. The Second Council of Constantinople confirmed the Council of Chalcedon but failed to bring the Eastern Monophysite Churches back in union with Catholic Christianity

Justinian also produced the *corpus juris civilis*, a statement of Roman law which continues to form the basis of current canon law in both Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. Justinian also rebuilt the Hagia Sophia into the building that exists today.

Justinian's reign was marred by plague and by earthquake. None of its political gains lasted but it remains the one last shining moment of the Roman Empire before the next event which would change the Mediterranean basin and the world up to our current time.

Christianity After The Union of Church and State

The combination of the Christian faith with the Roman state was not the first such union. Armenia had declared itself a Christian nation at the turn of the fourth century, around 303 CE. The impact of the Roman union affected far more people.

Positive Impacts:

- 1) Christianity grew in numbers far more quickly than it ever had.**
- 2) Christian worship could now take place in public.**
- 3) Christian concerns for the well-being of one's neighbor could now be shared by the structure of Government**

Negative Impacts:

- 1) Christianity grew in numbers far more quickly than it ever had. Simple logistics had long since forced Bishops to share with their priests (the English word priest derives from the Greek word Presbyteros) the task of presiding over Sunday worship. Catechizing all the new converts overwhelmed the resources at hand. There were more Christians, yes, but the new converts knew less about their faith.**
- 2) Christian worship could now take place in public. That was great but Christian Churches before the union were relatively small. More and larger church buildings (domos kyriakos) were needed for the expanding church membership (ekklesia).**
- 3) Christian concerns for the well-being of neighbors. Loving and caring for one's neighbor was a key aspect of early Christianity. Handing that task off to government depersonalized this key moral value lessening the beneficial nature of such selflessness on both the giver and the receiver.**

Conclusion

The Eastern Roman Empire under Justinian I, AD 527–565

