

Lessons

- Introduction and Overview

- Spread of Christianity



- Church and State – Persecution and Adoption

- Doctrine – Orthodoxy vs. Heresy Part I

- Doctrine – Orthodoxy vs. Heresy Part II

Church & State – Persecution and Adoption

Persecution – Why?

- Christians don't worship the Emperor (bad for loyalty and unity)
- Christians are Atheists – worship invisible God not “the gods” (1 Thessalonians 1:9)
- Christians are unpatriotic – don't participate in civic events
- Christians disrupt [idol selling?] business
- Christianity is responsible for economic decline, plagues, invasions, etc.
- Christians are Cannibals – Rumors spread from Communion
- Christians practice Incest – Rumors from references to brother / sister and greetings with holy kiss
- Christians are anti-family (willing to leave relatives for their cause)
- Christianity is one of those new-fangled eastern mystical religions
- Christians are odd and secretive

1 Thessalonians 1:9 - “For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God”

Church & State – Persecution and Adoption

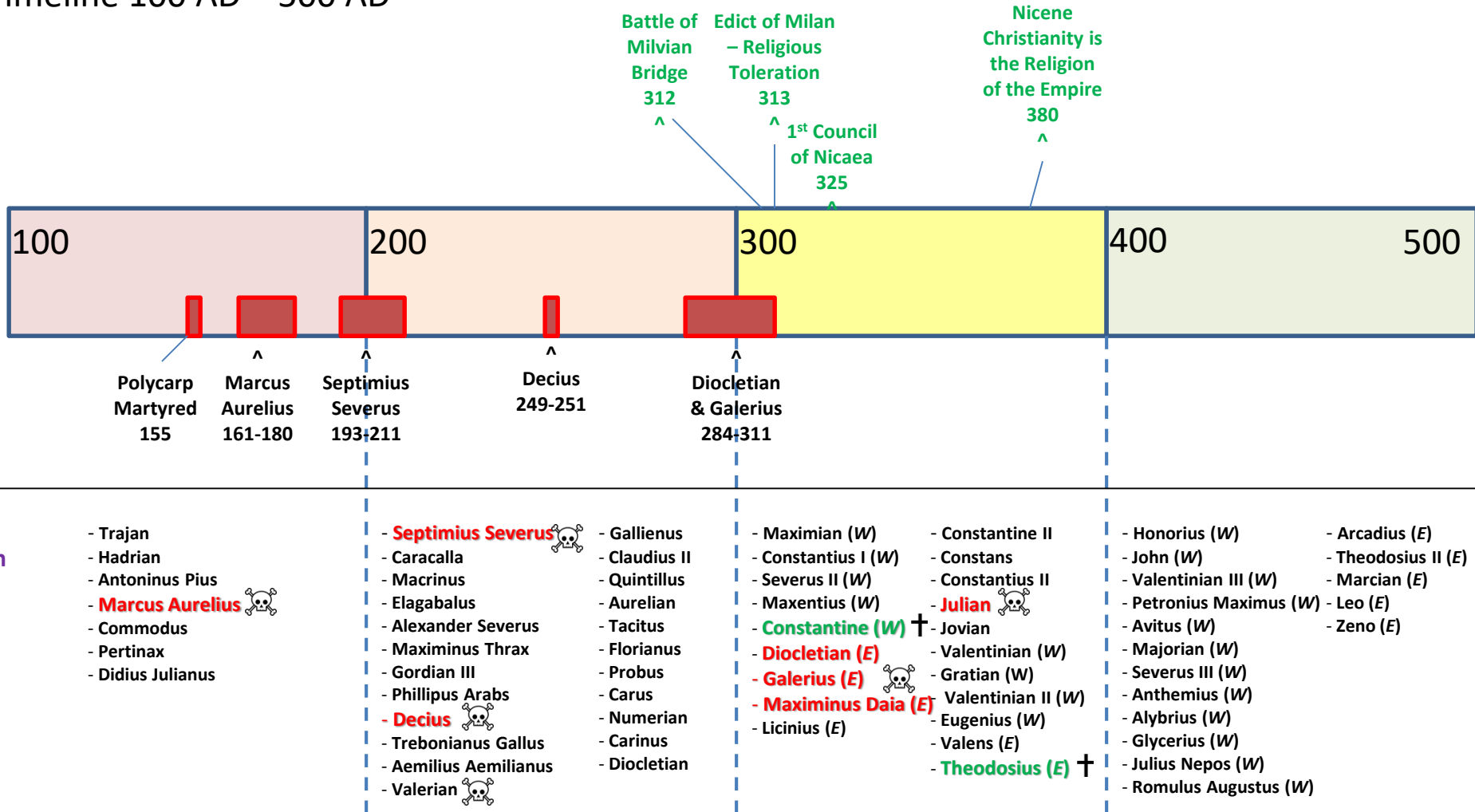
Persecution – How Much?

- Persecutions Were Generally Sporadic and Geographically Isolated
 - Persecutions were most often localized
 - Substantial intervals of relative peace are experienced
 - For most of the 2nd and 3rd Century “Trajan’s Advice” to Pliny applied
 - ❖ Do not expend effort seeking out Christians (it’s not worth the effort and cost)
 - ❖ If someone is accused, give them opportunity to recant
 - If they recant pardon them
 - If they do not recant they must be punished
 - ❖ Don’t trust anonymous accusations (bad legal precedent “unworthy of the age”)
- There are Conspicuous Exceptions

Tacitus, Roman Senator & Historian (died 117 AD) - “Great empires are not maintained by timidity”

Church & State – Persecution and Adoption

Timeline 100 AD – 500 AD

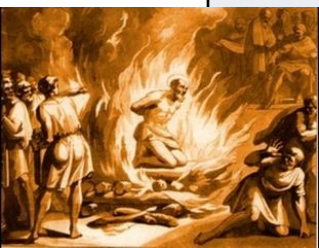


Aleksandr Men, Eastern Orthodox Preacher (1935-1990) – “No living creature, except for a man, is able to take a risk, and even the risk of death, for the sake of truth. Thousands of martyrs who have lived are a unique phenomenon in the history of our solar system.”

Church & State – Persecution and Adoption

Persecution – Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, martyred in 155


Event	Response
Group of accused Christians is captured and brought before authorities where they refuse to bow to Roman gods.	
One elderly Christian, Germanicus, ignores offer to bow to gods and calls on beasts to come and kill him.	Mob of accusers is incensed and calls out “Death to the atheists [Christians]” and “Bring Polycarp”
Polycarp, on advice of his flock, hides but subsequently decides his arrest is the will of God and gives himself up	Taken to prison and trial
Proconsul urges Polycarp to worship the emperor especially considering Polycarp’s advanced age	Polycarp refuses
Proconsul orders Polycarp to shout, “Out with the atheists [Christians]”	Polycarp points to his accusers and shouts, “Yes, out with the atheists”
Proconsul: If you swear by the emperor and curse Christ you can go free	Polycarp: “For 86 years I have served him and he has done me no evil. How could I curse my King who saved me?”
Proconsul: We’ll burn you alive!	Polycarp: The fire the proconsul can light will last but a moment but the eternal fire will never go out.
Polycarp is tied to a post and burned	Polycarp: “Lord Sovereign God I thank you that you have deemed me worthy of this moment, so that, jointly with your martyrs, I may have a share in the cup of Christ. For this I bless and glorify you. Amen”



Polycarp(69 - 155 AD) - “Lord Sovereign God I thank you that you have deemed me worthy of this moment, so that, jointly with your martyrs, I may have a share in the cup of Christ. For this I bless and glorify you. Amen”

Church & State – Persecution and Adoption

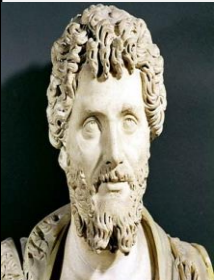
Persecution – Marcus Aurelius, ruled 161-180

Who	Why	What	Unique
<p>Marcus Aurelius - Relatively enlightened and refined. His <u>Meditations</u> recognized as a literary masterpiece of the times</p> <p>- Praised those ready to leave their body [die] when the time comes when this is done out of reason, but not obstinacy [like Christians]</p> <p>- Superstitious – consults seers & signs, into sacrifices</p> 	<p>Early in his reign the empire experiences invasions, floods, famine, and disasters.</p> <p>Are these Christians bringing disfavor from the gods?</p>	<p>One example – A consecrated widow (one given to the care of the church) and 8 sons are accused of practicing Christianity.</p> <p>Led by the widow they refuse to worship the gods and emperor.</p> <p>The case is escalated from local official to Marcus Aurelius who orders them all killed then buried in eight different parts of the city. (Likely this was done to appease 8 gods)</p>	<p>Contrast between reputation as enlightened and refined leader and cruel actions against Christians.</p>

Hebrews 13:5-6 – “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

Church & State – Persecution and Adoption


Persecution – Septimius Severus, ruled 193-211

Who	Why	What	Unique
<p>Septimius Severus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some success ending civil wars that had plagued the empire - Still faced threats from Barbarians and internal factions 	<p>Sets out to instill unity throughout the empire by bringing all subjects together worshiping Sol invictus (the unconquered sun)</p> <p>All gods are acceptable as long as everyone acknowledges the “sun that reigns above all”</p>	<p>All conversions to Christianity (and Judaism) are prohibited under penalty of death</p> <p>Example – The martyrdom of Perpetua, 2 slaves, and 2 others arrested as they were about to receive baptism.</p> <p>Perpetua’s father encourages her to recant but she replies Christianity is as inseparable from her as her name is.</p> <p>Felicitas (female slave) fears her martyrdom will be postponed due to pregnancy, prays and child is delivered and given in care to females of the congregation.</p> <p>3 males killed by beasts in arena (the last only after prophesying he will be killed by a leopard).</p> <p>Perpetua and Felicitas knocked down by wild beasts, re-tie hair, give kiss of peace, and are killed by sword.</p>	<p>Total forbidding of conversions to Christianity as opposed to more passive approach of penalizing only when someone is accused of being a Christian and fails to recant in court</p>

Felicitas (~200 AD) - “There will be another who will live in me and will suffer for me since I shall be suffering for him.”

Church & State – Persecution and Adoption

Persecution – Decius, ruled 249-251

Who	Why	What	Unique
<p>Decius - Wants to restore the glory of the Roman Empire in midst of Barbarian incursions, economic crisis, and abandonment of the ancient, classical traditions</p> 	<p>Believed the people had abandoned the gods. If everyone turned back to the gods perhaps the gods would favor the empire again.</p>	<p>It was mandatory for everyone to worship the Roman gods and burn incense before a statue of the emperor. If you did you got a certificate so indicating, if not you were considered an outlaw.</p> <p>Current generation of Christians who had been relatively persecution free for ~40 years were not prepared for this</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some obeyed the command (apostates) - Some bought false certificates - Some resisted for awhile but gave in - Some stood fast <p>Lots of torture, few actual martyrs. This was widespread across the empire but fortunately lasted for a relatively short time.</p>	<p>Decius' goal to a greater degree than others was to create apostates (i.e., force Christians to worship the Roman gods) not martyrs.</p> <p>First empire-wide systematic persecution of Christians.</p> <p>His successor Valerian continued Decius' policy but to a much lesser extent.</p>

Revelation 2:10 – “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

Church & State – Persecution and Adoption

Persecution – Diocletian, ruled 284-305; Galerius, ruled 305-311

Who	Why	What	Unique
<p>Diocletian</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New era of prosperity and peace - Reorganized empire with 4 emperors recognized (2 East, 2 West) - His wife and daughters were Christians <p>Galerius</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Was Diocletian's subordinate emperor in the East - Ill will toward Christians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Original issue – Military Service - Galerius convinces Diocletian to expel Christians from army. - Officers, fearing thinning of ranks, attempt to force Christians to deny faith. - Galerius convinces Diocletian to ban Christians from all positions of responsibility in the empire - Fire at royal court, Galerius blames Christians 	<p>~295 – Many Christians are condemned to death for refusing service or desertion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Christians banned from government positions and Christian buildings and books are to be destroyed. Any who refuse to turn over writings are tortured and killed. - Diocletian orders all Christians at court to sacrifice to gods (his wife & daughter do) and all who refuse are martyred. - Overzealous leaders throughout empire follow this example - Results in torture / slaughter, apostasy, and some Christians fleeing to Persia 	<p>Cruellest of all the Roman persecutions</p>



Revelation 17:5-6 – “And upon her forehead was a name written, **Mystery, Babylon The Great, The Mother Of Harlots And Abominations Of The Earth**. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration [amazement].”

Church & State – Persecution and Adoption

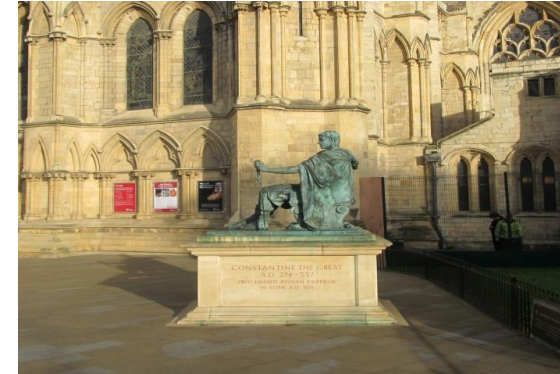
Persecution – Results

- Purified the Church
 - If you weren't serious you probably didn't stick around
- Extended the Church
 - Estimate ~10% of empire's population Christian by early 4th Century

Church & State – Persecution and Adoption

Adoption – Historical Background

- Power players at Galerius' death
 - Constantine (declared Emperor in Eboracum [York]) - West
 - Maxentius (seen by others as usurper, occupies Rome) – West
 - Licinius - East
 - Maximinus Daia (Christian persecutor) - East
- Constantine's Military Campaign
 - Crosses Alps from Gaul (France) into Italy
 - Maxentius (trusting augury) leaves fortified Rome to engage Constantine in the field
 - Constantine's vision (or dream)
 - Constantine victorious at Milvian Bridge (Maxentius killed)
- Constantine (W) and Licinius (E) Agree to Edict of Milan in 313
 - Christians (and others) free to practice religion
 - Property taken in persecutions returned to Christians



In Hoc Signo Vinces

Church & State – Persecution and Adoption

Adoption – Constantine the Politician & Military Leader

- Constantine was a shrewd planner
 - Made sure to engage enemies one at a time
 - Prepared for years for campaign against Maxentius
 - Married his sister to Licinius
- Constantine and Licinius both desire the entire empire
 - Assassination attempt on Constantine
 - Constantine takes portion of Licinius' territory
 - Battle at Chrysopolis 324 AD – Constantine wins, Licinius flees
 - Licinius murdered, Constantine emperor of combined empire
- Constantine plans to restore Rome's glory this time as a Christian Empire
 - Driven by friction with the Senate in Rome, and location of greatest external threats, moves capitol of empire to Constantinople, Asia Minor



Constantine

Church & State – Persecution and Adoption

Adoption – Constantine the Christian

The Good	The Questionable
<p>He professed Christ</p> <p>He promoted Christianity in moral laws (e.g., infanticide, crucifixion, gladiators outlawed), art, architecture</p> <p>He brought up his children as Christians</p> <p>He was seen by a very learned contemporary Christian (Eusebius) as the “vice-regent” of God on earth</p> <p>His policies favored Christians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Built churches - Church exempt from taxes - Clergy exempt from military service and other civic responsibilities <p>Claims he was an opportunist using Christianity for his advantage are very weak</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anachronistic - Christians wielded little power and what presence they had was largely in the east 	<p>Only baptized (by Eusebius of Nicomedia) on his death bed</p> <p>Never placed himself under the direction of a church bishop or teacher (unusual at this time for one of Constantine’s prominence)</p> <p>Ruled bishops with an iron hand and intervened in the affairs of the church sometimes using questionable doctrine</p> <p>Continued to exercise pagan duties as required of emperor. Appears to entertain notion that Sol invictus and Christ are compatible. Maintained title Pontifex Maximus (head of the principal college of pagan priests)</p> <p>Constantine, as emperor, is declared a pagan god upon his death</p>

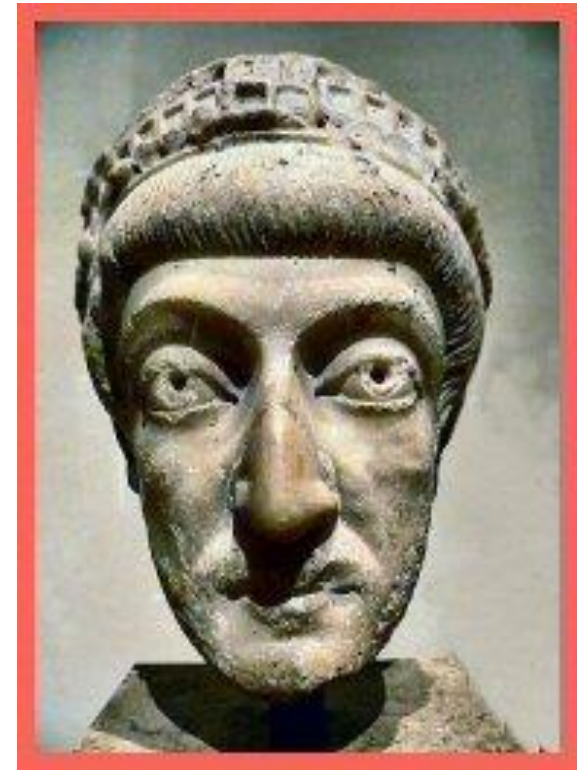
Constantine – “The eternal, holy and unfathomable goodness of God does not allow me to wander in darkness, but shows us the way of salvation”

Eusebius of Caesarea – “Looking westward or eastward, looking over the whole earth, and even looking at heaven, always and everywhere I see blessed Constantine leading the same empire”

Church & State – Persecution and Adoption

Adoption – The Rest of the 4th Century Story

- Constantine succeeded by his Christian son Constantius
- Julian “the Apostate” succeeds Constantius (rules 361-363)
 - Converts from Christianity to Paganism - likely driven by Constantine’s sons killing his relatives who were potential challengers in the line of succession
 - Launched abortive attempt to revert empire to pre-Christian ways
 - Dies in battle with Persia
- Theodosius becomes emperor in 379
 - Christianity established as official religion of the Roman empire in 380
 - Estimate ~50-67% of empire’s population is Christian at the end of the 4th century



Theodosius I

Dr. David Calhoun – “With Theodosius we move into a period that we can call ‘Christendom’, in which state and church are closely aligned, and in which laws will prohibit the practice of other religions or even the practice of heretical Christianity.”

MAP

