

STUDY PAK 8

THE CONSTANTINIAN STATE CHURCH

“The Edict of Milan proved to have a very definite disadvantage. It was now no longer a shame but an honor to be a Christian. The Christian name now secured many and great material advantages. The Christian name had become a passport to political, military, and social promotion. As a result, thousands upon thousands of heathen joined the church.”

~~B. K. Kuiper, *The Church in History*, p 27~~

I. THE CONSTANTINIAN COMPROMISE

Shortly before the end of his life, Galerius ordered the end of the persecution of Christians, and he was succeeded by Constantine who carried out his desires. Constantine officially _____ as the _____. (the Edict of Milan); however, there is no evidence that he was _____. He began to _____ of Christianity with the religious ideas of several other religions that had a significant number of followers. Constantine was the _____, offering _____.

Christians were now faced with a new set of decisions to make. There seemed to be freedom from persecution, unlimited opportunity to preach, a great opportunity to influence society with Christian values, and the _____ they had to surrender right away were _____ and the concept of the _____. Right away, two approaches to Christianity developed: those that accepted the concept of a governmentally established Christian church and those who stood for _____ of the New Testament church.

II. THE EDICT OF MILAN – 312 A.D.

- A. This made Christianity the only legal religion.
- B. Clergy privileges

1. clergy exempted from taxation
 2. monies made available to churches from the state
 3. church buildings were built by the empire
- C. Persecution of Paganism
1. pagan temples confiscated
 2. forbid pagan sacrifices
 3. forbid work on Sunday
- D. Constantine maintained the title Pontifus Maximus but it was now applied to Christianity.

III. THE ARIAN CONTROVERSAARY

A prominent teacher named Arius began to teach that Christ was the _____ but that he was not fully God. He developed a significant group of followers.

Constantine did not want his new church state divided over an important doctrine. He called for a representative Church Council to settle the debate. The Council of Nicea met in 325 A.D. Most of the participants had suffered physical persecution during the Heroic Age. A thirty-year-old deacon named Athanasius became the primary spokesman for the doctrine of the Deity of Christ. The Nicene Creed firmly stated belief in the Deity of Christ, who has the _____.

IV. CHURCH DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENT

Many church councils were held to settle doctrinal debates.

- A. The First Council of Constantinople – 381 A.D.
- This council affirmed the Nicene Creed and declared _____. Three theologians, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa were prominent during this council. They are remembered as the Three Great Cappadocians.

- B The Council of Ephesus – 437 A.D.
This council declared Mary to be the Mother of God, deposed Nestorius, the bishop of Constantinople, condemned Pelagius (who questioned man’s sin nature) and affirmed previous statements about the Deity of Christ.
- C. The Council of Chalcedon – 451 A.D.
This is the first council led by someone claiming to be the Pope. This council affirmed the two natures of Christ. The council also declared that freedom did not come from the state but from God.
- D. Later councils condemned various heretics and upheld the authority of the state church.

V. THREE PROMINENT LEADERS

- A. Ambrose (340-397 A.D.) of Germany, defended orthodoxy and resisted the control of the emperor.
- B. Jerome (340-420 A.D.) translated the Old Testament from Hebrew to Latin and the New Testament from Greek to Latin. This Vulgate translation became the official translation of the state church.
- C. Augustine (354 A.D.) developed the philosophy of _____ and also the idea of state persecution.

VI. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHURCH STATE

Organization between local churches began before the union of church and state under Constantine. The concept of a bishop (senior pastor) was soon corrupted into the concept of _____. This approach was gradually turned into a form for uniting all churches (involved in the church-state system) into one organized church.

When Constantine gave the influence of the Roman Empire to this system, it quickly became dominant, and the organizational structure of the church system quickly included all regions within the Roman Empire. The Emperor became the head of the church system, and, since he was already head of a pagan religion, these two roles quickly

became confused. Because of his relationship with the Roman Emperor, the bishop at Rome soon became the most important preacher in the empire.

Roman Emperors soon began to use the title, *Pontifex Maximus*, as the head of the established Christian church, the same that they had used as the leader of a pagan religion. This was shortened to Pontiff or Pope (meaning “Holy Father”). When the Roman Empire crumbled and there was no Emperor in the west, the bishops of Rome gradually assumed the powers and role of the Pontiff. This development created the modern Roman Catholic religious system and denomination.

VII. MONASTICISM

Monasteries became an important part of the established church. Preachers (now becoming known as priests) began to organize in formal communities and withdrew from the day-to-day life of society. Sometimes these groups devoted themselves to social work, sometimes to study. The monasteries did a great deal to foster the idea of unmarried preachers (priests). The very best and the very worst of the established church system can be found in the study of the monasteries. Independents rejected the monastery movement because they correctly feared that this would lead to a separate category of religious leaders recognized as priests. This denied the priesthood of all believers. Under this system, men began more and more to look to other men _____
_____. Under this approach, the very important doctrine of personal salvation faded and was replaced by a teaching of _____
_____.

VIII. JULIAN THE APOSTATE

In 361 A.D. the Emperor Julian reverted to paganism and outlawed Christianity. He fought against Christianity with both persecution and intellectual arguments. In 363 A.D. he died in battle. His last words were, “So Thou Hast Conquered All, Galilean.”