

Colt Emswiler

5-3-1 The Christian Empire - Gonzalez

QUESTIONS

1. What was the result of Constantine's conversion to Christianity?
2. How did monks lifestyle change over time?
3. What was the theological reason for the schism?
4. What were the different responses within the church when Christianity became mainstream after the conversion of Constantine?
5. What led to the end of the Roman Empire?

ANSWERS

1. Christians who were once persecuted were now accepted in Roman society after Constantine and this would pave the way for Christianity to become the official religion of the Empire. Many in the Roman Empire began turning to Christianity including those in the aristocracy.
2. Initially many monks lived alone in their devotion to contemplation and a solitary lifestyle. However, they eventually began to form communities and shared resources and teachings while living a community lifestyle.
3. There was a debate over the authority of the ministers who had renounced the faith under persecution. People were divided over whether the baptisms which had taken place by certain ministries were legitimate given their leadership had proved to be inadequate.
4. Some were grateful but therefore did not take a hard stance against the government. Other Christians turned to the monastic lifestyle. Still other Christians broke away from the mainstream church. The most outstanding leaders stayed in the cities and remained involved in the culture but kept a critical stance.
5. The invasion of the barbarians in 410 C.E. led to the fall of Rome and the end of the Western Roman Empire. The Eastern section of the empire would remain for another 1,000 years.

TERMS

Donatism – The group which led the schism in the church. They believed that the ministers of the church must be faultless for their prayers and functions to be valid.

Council of Nicea – The church council convened by Constantine in 325 C.E. to address the heresy which Arius had spread which claimed that Christ was not divine but was a created being.

Pelagianism – The belief that original sin does not taint human nature. This ideology stresses human initiative in the role of salvation. Augustine formulated a doctrine of grace and predestination to combat these ideas.

SUMMARY

In the chapter titled "The Christian Empire," Gonzalez outlines the colossal changes which took place in the church following Constantine's rise to power over the Roman Empire. Constantine's sympathies towards the Christians had positive and negative consequences as persecution against the church lifted, but the adoption of Christianity threatened the integrity of the church. Various heresies arose during this time and conflict sprang up between the Eastern and Western parts of the Empire. Through the change and transition, the church endured by God's grace, and doctrine was established to steady the church.