

Church History

Empires and Councils (4th Century)

Timeline

- AD 301
 - Armenia first nation to adopt Christianity as its official religion
- AD 302-312
 - Emperor Diocletian persecutes Christians
- AD 312
 - Emperor Constantine converted, ends persecution (Edict of Milan)
- AD 325
 - Council of Nicaea, called by Emperor Constantine
 - Attempt to reunify the Church
 - Arian Controversy (Jesus was fully God)
 - Establishment of official date of Easter
 - Nicene Creed
- AD 328-373
 - Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria
 - Known for being first to list the current NT canon
 - Strongly opposed Arianism
- AD 330
 - Constantine inaugurated as emperor of all the Roman Empire, moves capital to Byzantium
- AD 360
 - Julian the Apostate, last non-Christian emperor of Rome
- AD 381
 - First Council of Constantinople
 - Jesus was fully human
 - Excluded Western Church (Rome)
- AD 385
 - Heretic Priscillian executed, possibly first execution performed by the Church

Important figures:

Emperor Constantine. First Christian Emperor of Rome. Moved the capital of the Empire from Rome to Byzantium (and renamed it Constantinople). Summoned the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea.

Ambrose. Bishop of Milan. His intelligent and intellectual preaching helped to draw Augustine to Christianity. Disciples young Augustine.

Alexander. Bishop of Alexandria who opposed Arius' teachings. Excommunicated Arius after the decision of the Council of Nicaea.

Athanasius. Bishop of Alexandria after Alexander. Strongly opposed Arianism. Exiled for his opposition. First known list of the current 27 New Testament books.

Arian. Heretic by decree of the Council of Nicaea. Taught the Jesus was not eternal but was created by God the Father.

Major issues:

Arianism. Belief that Jesus was created by God the Father and has not existed for all eternity. Jesus is lesser than God the Father.

Church Unity. The church had split into factions largely because of the persecution of the 3rd century, especially between West (Rome) and East (Alexandria, Antioch, Byzantium, Jerusalem). Efforts were made to reunify the churches, such as the Nicene Creed.

Definitions:

Orthodox: conforming to approved doctrine, beliefs, or ideas

Ecumenical: universal, pertaining to the whole civilized world

Homoousia: God the Father and Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit are of the same substance

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Heteroousia: God the Father and Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit have different natures