

**CHURCH HISTORY: FROM PENTECOST TO THE GREAT SCHISM**  
**CONSTANTINE, THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CREED**  
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**Life as a Christian – AD 300**

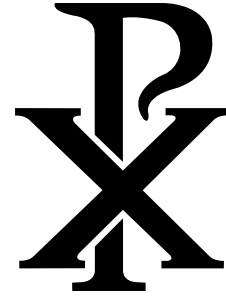
The Great Persecution – 303-313

Scripture: authority and canon

Doctrine: the nature of the Trinity and the nature of Christ

Morality: reconciliation of lapsed Christians

Unity: role of the Bishop of Rome and the Rule of Faith



**Constantine – 275-337**

Personal Background – father: Flavius Constantius (Roman officer who became governor of Dalmatia and Caesar of Western Empire); mother: St. Helena (peasant Christian; later made pilgrimage to Holy Land and discovered Holy sites, including Calvary and the true cross); declared Caesar by the army after his father's death, eventually becoming Augustus in the West, but without control of Rome (which was held by Maxentius)

Battle of Milvian Bridge – October 28, 312– Constantine attacked Maxentius at Rome; Constantine had a dream in which he saw a cross in the sky and heard a voice saying, “*In hoc signo vinces,*” Constantine had the Chi-Rho put on the shields of his army before the battle; rather than staying within the Roman walls, Maxentius sent his army outside the walls to the other side of the Tiber at the Milvian Bridge, where they were easily defeated by Constantine; Constantine becomes the undisputed Augustus of the West

Edict of Milan – AD 313 – Constantine (Western Augustus) and Licinius (Eastern Augustus) meet in Milan and declare religious freedom, allowing free Christian worship for the first time in the Roman Empire

Influence on Christianity and establishing a Christian Society

Legalization of Christianity and personal favor of the religion

Imperial attention on matters of church doctrine, morality, and unity

Gave the Lateran Palace to the pope as a residence (used as such until 1308)

Church Building in Rome and elsewhere: St. Peter, St. John Lateran, St. Paul

Sunday declared as an official day of rest and worship in the Empire

Ordered Christian property that had been confiscated under persecutions to be returned

Declared clergy exempt from military service and forced labor

Christian influence on laws, e.g., forbade branding criminals on the face

Recognized as a Saint in the East

Saw Christianity as a means to achieving unity and peace in the Empire

## The Greatest of All Heresies

Arius the Presbyter of Alexandria (256-336): born in Lybia, priest in Alexandria

Arianism – Jesus is not divine – controversy begins c. 318 – God is a unity and cannot be shared or divided in any way, otherwise God would be changeable; Jesus is therefore the first creature, perfect and beyond all other creatures, born outside of time but with a beginning; Jesus might be called God but only by grace, not truly God but in name only

Arius drew many followers throughout the Church, including Eusebius of Nicomedia – the division among bishops over Arianism threatened to divide the Church

## The First Ecumenical Council: The Council of Nicaea – AD 325

Location: Nicaea in northwest Asia Minor (originally called for Ancyra)

Origin: Called by Emperor Constantine – called and convened the Council, but did not vote

Attendance: 318 Bishops (mostly Eastern) and two priests representing the Pope

West: Carthage, Pannonia (Austria), Gaul, Calabria, Cordoba (Spain)

Beyond the Empire: Persia, Scythia

Nicholas of Myra

Purpose: Address the divisions caused by Arianism

## The Creed of the Council of Nicaea

The Apostles' Creed – baptismal creed first found in Hippolytus' *Apostolic Tradition* c. 215

Prior to Nicaea, creeds were local and baptismal – used for questioning catechumens

The Creed of Nicaea was written to be universal and was the first to use philosophical, non-Scriptural language

*Homoousios* (Latin equivalent: *consubstantia*) – one in essence, one in substance – philosophical term – non-Scriptural – championed by Athanasius, deacon and scribe to the bishop of Alexandria

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God, Begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things were made.

Who for us men and for our salvation came down and became incarnate, and was made man, suffered and rose on the third day, and ascended into heaven, and is coming with glory to judge living and dead, and in the Holy Spirit.

But those who say, There was when the Son of God was not, and before he was begotten he was not, and that he came into being from things that are not, or that he is of a different hypostasis or substance, or that he is mutable or alterable – the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes.

The Creed of Nicaea did not end the Arian disputes; St. Athanasius (297-373) led the theological argument against the Arians; much depended on the theological state of the Emperor: Constantius II (337-361) and Valens (364-378) were Arian; Julian (361-363) tried to revive paganism; Arianism was only outlawed more or less definitively under Theodosius (see below)

### The Canons of the Council of Nicaea

Bishops must be ordained by at least three bishops, preferably all bishops of a province, bishops have jurisdiction only over their own diocese

Clergy – eunuchs barred from the clergy; clergy could not have women living in the same house except a mother, sister, or aunt; waiting period after baptism before ordination

Reconciliation of apostates, heretics, and schismatics

Date of Easter set following the Roman practice

### Baptism and Death of Constantine

Constantine was baptized on his deathbed in 337 by Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia, an Arian

## **The Second Ecumenical Council: The Council of Constantinople – AD 381**

Location: Constantinople (Eastern Capital of the Empire)

Origin: Called by Emperor Theodosius

Attendance: 150 Bishops (all Eastern)

Purpose: Address the identity and role of the Holy Spirit

### The Creed of the Council of Constantinople

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things were made. Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and became incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and was made man, And was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, And rose the third day according to the Scriptures, And ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of the Father, And is coming again with glory to judge both living and

dead, Whose kingdom shall have no end; And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son is jointly worshipped and jointly glorified, Who spoke through the prophets; In one holy catholic and apostolic Church; We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins, We look for the resurrection of the dead, And the life of the world to come, Amen.

589 – Council of Toledo added *filioque*: the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son*