

## Pliny to the Emperor Trajan

"It is my practice, my lord, to refer to you all matters concerning which I am in doubt. For who can better give guidance to my hesitation or inform my ignorance? I have never before participated in trials of Christians, so I do not know what offenses are to be punished or investigated, or to what extent. And I have been not a little hesitant as to whether there should be any distinction on account of age, or no difference recognized between the very young and the more mature. Is pardon to be granted for repentance, or if a man has once been a Christian is it irrelevant whether he has ceased to be one? Is the name itself to be punished, even without offenses, or only the offenses perpetrated in connection with the name?"

Meanwhile, in the case of those who were denounced to me as Christians, I have followed the following procedure: I interrogated them as to whether they were Christians; those who confessed I interrogated a second and a third time, threatening them with punishment; those who persisted I ordered executed. For I had no doubt that, whatever the nature of their creed, stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy surely deserve to be punished. There were others possessed of the same folly; but because they were Roman citizens, I signed an order for them to be transferred to Rome."



**Pliny The Younger (61 - 112 AD)**  
**Roman Governor of Bithynia and Augur**



## Trajan to Pliny

"You observed proper procedure, my dear Pliny, in sifting the cases of those who had been denounced to you as Christians. For it is not possible to lay down any general rule to serve as a kind of fixed standard. They are not to be sought out; if they are denounced and proved guilty, they are to be punished, with this reservation, that whoever denies that he is a Christian and really proves it – that is, by worshiping our gods – even though he was under suspicion in the past, shall obtain pardon through repentance. But anonymously posted accusations ought to have no place in any prosecution. For this is both a dangerous kind of precedent and out of keeping with the spirit of our age."



**Trajan: Roman Emperor 98-117 AD**  
**“Virtuous Pagan”**



## St. Augustine on the City of God and the City of Man:

“For of that city also, as one of their poets has mentioned, "the first walls were stained with a brother's blood,"(2) or, as Roman history records, Remus was slain by his brother Romulus. And thus there is no difference between the foundation of this city and of the earthly city, unless it be that Romulus and Remus were both citizens of the earthly city. **Both desired to have the glory of founding the Roman republic**, but both could not have as much glory as if one only claimed it; for he who wished to have the glory of ruling would certainly rule less if his power were shared by a living consort. In order, therefore, that the whole glory might be enjoyed by one, his consort was removed; and by this crime the empire was made larger indeed but inferior, while otherwise it would have been less, but better.

Now these brothers, Cain and Abel, were *not* both animated by the same earthly desires, nor did the murderer envy the other because he feared that, by both ruling, his own dominion would be curtailed,--for **Abel was not solicitous to rule in that city which his brother built**,--he was **moved by that diabolical, envious hatred with which the evil regard the good**, for no other reason than because they are good while themselves are evil. **For the possession of goodness is by no means diminished by being shared with a partner** either permanent or temporarily assumed; **on the contrary, the possession of goodness is increased in proportion to the concord and charity of each of those who share it**. In short, he who is unwilling to share this possession cannot have it; and he who is most willing to admit others to a share of it will have the greatest abundance to himself. **The quarrel, then, between Romulus and Remus shows how the earthly city is divided against itself; that which fell out between Cain and Abel illustrated the hatred that subsists between the two cities, that of God and that of men.**”



Manly valor of Christians appealed to Stoics and soldiers who admired virtue and who were disgusted with what they saw: bad men putting good ones to death. The City of God being persecuted by the City of Man

Many soldiers like Christian athletes, among last seedbeds of normalcy and courageous to uphold it - football prayers end of game and bless self)

One of them became Emperor: **CONSTANTINE** = “By this sign you shall conquer”

Battle of Milvian Bridge: October 28, 312 AD between Emperors Constantine and Maxentius for sole rule of the City of Rome and the Western Empire.





## The Edict of Milan 313

Issued by Emperor Constantine, who ruled the West and Licinius, who ruled the East. The two met in Milan to celebrate Licinius' marriage to Constantine's sister, Constantia.

"When I, Constantine Augustus, as well as I, Licinius Augustus, fortunately met near Mediolanurn (Milan), and were considering everything that pertained to the public welfare and security, we thought, among other things which we saw would be for the good of many, those regulations pertaining to the reverence of the Divinity ought certainly to be made first, so that we might grant to the Christians and others full authority to observe that religion which each preferred; whence any Divinity whatsoever in the seat of the heavens may be propitious and kindly disposed to us and all who are placed under our rule. And thus by this wholesome counsel and most upright provision we thought to arrange that no one whatsoever should be denied the opportunity to give his heart to the observance of the Christian religion, of that religion which he should think best for himself, so that the Supreme Deity, to whose worship we freely yield our hearts) may show in all things His usual favor and benevolence.

Therefore, your Worship should know that it has pleased us to remove all conditions whatsoever, which were in the rescripts formerly given to you officially, concerning the Christians and now any one of these who wishes to observe Christian religion may do so freely and openly, without molestation. We thought it fit to commend these things most fully to your care that you may know that we have given to those Christians free and unrestricted opportunity of religious worship. When you see that this has been granted to them by us, your Worship will know that we have also conceded to other religions the right of open and free observance of their worship for the sake of the peace of our times, that each one may have the free opportunity to worship as he pleases; this regulation is made we that we may not seem to detract from any dignity or any religion."



## **Edict of Milan Continued:**

“Moreover, in the case of the Christians especially we esteemed it best to order that if it happens anyone heretofore has bought from our treasury from anyone whatsoever, those places where they were previously accustomed to assemble, concerning which a certain decree had been made and a letter sent to you officially, the same shall be restored to the Christians without payment or any claim of recompense and without any kind of fraud or deception, Those, moreover, who have obtained the same by gift, are likewise to return them at once to the Christians. Besides, both those who have purchased and those who have secured them by gift, are to appeal to the vicar if they seek any recompense from our bounty, that they may be cared for through our clemency.

All this property ought to be delivered at once to the community of the Christians through your intercession, and without delay. And since these Christians are known to have possessed not only those places in which they were accustomed to assemble, but also other property, namely the churches, belonging to them as a corporation and not as individuals, all these things which we have included under the above law, you will order to be restored, without any hesitation or controversy at all, to these Christians, that is to say to the corporations and their conventicles: providing, of course, that the above arrangements be followed so that those who return the same without payment, as we have said, may hope for an indemnity from our bounty.

In all these circumstances you ought to tender your most efficacious intervention to the community of the Christians, that our command may be carried into effect as quickly as possible, whereby, moreover, through our clemency, public order may be secured. Let this be done so that, as we have said above, Divine favor towards us, which, under the most important circumstances we have already experienced, may, for all time, preserve and prosper our successes together with the good of the state. Moreover, in order that the statement of this decree of our good will may come to the notice of all, this rescript, published by your decree, shall be announced everywhere and brought to the knowledge of all, so that the decree of this, our benevolence, cannot be concealed.”



The faith tolerated – is this a political move or is Constantine a pagan seeing Jesus as another great god for pantheon?

What would have been result if Constantine made Catholic religion official and punished all others? Does this need time?

Constantine persuaded the bishops to convene the **Council of Nicea (325)** which affirmed that Jesus, the Son, was equal to and of the same substance (*homoousios*) as the Father. The council condemned the teachings of Arius that the Son was a created being and inferior to God the Father, and that the Father and Son were of a *similar* substance (*homoiousios*) but not *identical*

In 320, Licinius broke his Pledge given in the Edict of Milan and began to oppress Christians by confiscation of property and removal of Christians from public office. This led to civil war with Constantine.

Outnumbered, Constantine emerged victorious in the Battle of Adrianople. Licinius fled but eventually surrendered and Constantine spared his life. However, in 325 Licinius was accused of plotting against Constantine and was hung. In this way, Constantine became the sole emperor of the Roman Empire.

By this time Rome already in state of decline. Seeing writing on wall = Relocate to Constantinople = "New" or "Second Rome" It will stand for 1,000 more years. While west will fall and in process a political vacuum without a leader.

Constantine built the new Church of the Holy Apostles on the site of a temple to Aphrodite.



With Constantine's move to Constantinople = left way open for Church to exercise temporal and spiritual power in west whereas in east move is toward and will remain Caesaropapism or absolute rule in State rather than state being part of Church or God's kingdom.

Constantine did not get baptized until death – cleanse all sin or political again so over life move toward Catholicism and make it last act toward conversion?



**Baptism of Constantine by Raphael**

**Theodosius the Great**, was Roman Emperor 379 to 395. He was the last emperor to rule both the East and West. Like Constantine, he is recognized by Orthodox as a Saint.

**Theodosius** also fought against Arianism and promoted the Nicene Creed and the Catholic idea of the Trinity. In 380, he declared the Catholic Church to be the only legitimate religion of the empire; thus, ending state support for paganism. **Council of Constantinople 381**



**Proclamation of Theodosius the Great:** *“It is our desire that all the various nation which are subject to our clemency and moderation, should continue to the profession of that religion which was delivered to the Romans by the divine Apostle Peter, as it has been preserved by faithful tradition and which is now professed by the Pontiff Damasus and by Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic holiness. According to the apostolic teaching and the doctrine of the Gospel, let us believe in the one diety of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in equal majesty and in a holy Trinity.*

*We authorize the followers of this law to assume the title Catholic Christians; but as for the others, since in our judgment they are foolish madmen, we decree that they shall be branded with the ignominious name of heretics, and shall not presume to give their conventicles the name of churches. They will suffer in the first place the chastisement of divine condemnation and the second the punishment of our authority, in accordance with the will of heaven shall decide to inflict.”*

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**Theodosian Code:** A compilation ordered in 429 by **Theodosius II** codifying all the laws of the Roman Empire while under Christian emperors since the year 312. Published in east 438 and in West in 439

*“C. Th. XV.xii. 1: Bloody spectacles are not suitable for civil ease and domestic quiet. Wherefore since we have proscribed gladiators, those who have been accustomed to be sentenced to such work as punishment for their crimes, you should cause them to serve in the mines, so that they may be punished without shedding their blood. **Constantine Augustus.***

*C. Th. XVI.v.1: It is necessary that the privileges which are bestowed for the cultivation of religion should be given only to followers of the Catholic faith. We desire that heretics and schismatics be not only kept from these privileges, but be subjected to various fines.*

**Constantine Augustus.**



C. Th. XVI.x.4: It is decreed that in all places and all cities the temples should be closed at once, and after a general warning, the opportunity of sinning be taken from the wicked. We decree also that we shall cease from making sacrifices. And if anyone has committed such a crime, let him be stricken with the avenging sword. And we decree that the property of the one executed shall be claimed by the city, and that rulers of the provinces be punished in the same way, if they neglect to punish such crimes.

**Constantine and Constans Augusti.**

C. Th. XVI.vii.1: The ability and right of making wills shall be taken from those who turn from Christians to pagans, and the testament of such an one, if he made any, shall be abrogated after his death. **Gratian, Valentinian, and Valens Augusti.**

C.Th. XI.vii.13: Let the course of all law suits and all business cease on Sunday, which our fathers have rightly called the Lord's day, and let no one try to collect either a public or a private debt; and let there be no hearing of disputes by any judges either those required to serve by law or those voluntarily chosen by disputants. And he is to be held not only infamous but sacrilegious who has turned away from the service and observance of holy religion on that day. **Gratian, Valentinian and Theodosius Augusti.**

C.Th. XV.v.1: On the Lord's day, which is the first day of the week, on Christmas, and on the days of Epiphany, Easter, and Pentecost, inasmuch as then the [white] garments [of Christians] symbolizing the light of heavenly cleansing bear witness to the new light of holy baptism, at the time also of the suffering of the apostles, the example for all Christians, the pleasures of the theaters and games are to be kept from the people in all cities, and all the thoughts of Christians and believers are to be occupied with the worship of God. And if any are kept from that worship through the madness of Jewish impiety or the error and insanity of foolish paganism, let them know that there is one time for prayer and another for pleasure. And lest anyone should think he is compelled by the honor due to our person, as if by the greater necessity of his imperial office, or that unless he attempted to hold the games in contempt of the religious prohibition, he might offend our serenity in showing less than the usual devotion toward us; let no one doubt that our clemency is revered in the highest degree by humankind when the worship of the whole world is paid to the might and goodness of God. **Theodosius Augustus and Caesar Valentinian.**

C. Th.XVI.i.2: We desire that all the people under the rule of our clemency should live by that religion which divine Peter the apostle is said to have given to the Romans, and which it is evident that Pope Damasus and Peter, bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic sanctity, followed; that is that we should believe in the one deity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with equal majesty and in the Holy Trinity according to the apostolic teaching and the authority of the gospel. **Gratian, Valentinian and Theodosius Augusti.**

C. Th. XVI.v.iii: Whenever there is found a meeting of a mob of Manichaeans, let the leaders be punished with a heavy fine and let those who attended be known as infamous and dishonored, and be shut out from association with men, and let the house and the dwellings where the profane doctrine was taught be seized by the officers of the city.“ **Valentinian and Valens Augusti**



Constantine and Theodosius helped establish precedent of heavy imperial rule which will be continued by Orthodox who have been more willing to be submissive to state.

In West, the church will relinquish temporal sword, but big debate over it. In East church never holds temporal sword and state will not relinquish it even though it does not belong to state in a Christian empire unless bequeathed by Church. Constantine not a member of Church until death so he held sword by right of nature and thus set a precedent that has been difficult to disentangle.

Saint Ambrose threatened Theodosius with excommunication massacrings 7,000 persons at after the murder of the Roman governor of Thessalonica. Ambrose implored Theodosius to imitate David in penance as he had imitated him in guilt.

After several months of penance the emperor was readmitted to the Eucharist. This action illustrates the strong position of church in the West; whereas a short time later, controversy between Saint John Chrysostom and a much weaker emperor in Constantinople led to the bishop's defeat.

This will lead to a major theological and political debate over temporal and spiritual power which continues to this day on the proper relationship between the two, which will be taken up in Middle Ages next semester.



**Saint Ambrose and  
the Emperor Theodosius**