Haberdashers' School

Occasional Papers Series in the Humanities

Occasional Paper Number Seventy-Seven

The Seeds of the Roman Empire of the East: Constantinople in the Making from Constantine I to the Death of Theodosius I (AD 324-395)

Christopher Joyce

Department of Classics

cjoyce@habselstree.org.uk

January 2025

Haberdashers' School Occasional Paper Number Seventy-Seven

January 2025

The Seeds of the Roman Empire of the East: Constantinople in the Making from Constantine I to the Death of Theodosius I (AD 324-395)

Dr Christopher Joyce

Abstract

This paper examines the period of the fourth century AD (CE) during which the capital of the Roman world was shifted to Constantinople in the East, and when Christianity became established as the state religion of the Roman Empire. It examines five features of the period: 1) The Tetrarchy (293-305); 2) the Christianisation of the Empire after 312; 3) the first Christian emperors until Theodosius I (d. 395); 4) the reversion to Paganism under Emperor Julian (r. 361-363); and 5) the re-Christianisation of the Empire after 363, and the establishment of Trinitarianism as the Catholic-Orthodox creed of the Church. It also surveys sectarian movements within the fourth-century Christian community, including Arianism, Sabellianism, Homoiousianism, Eunomianism, and Homoism. It looks at the two generations after the Nicene Council of 325 during which the creedal formulations at Nicaea were disputed by leading figures within the Church, and at the end of which, in 381, the dogmas of the Nicene Creed were re-imposed as Catholic-Orthodoxy at the Second Ecumenical Council, held at Constantinople.

On 11 May 330, the ancient city of Byzantium was re-dedicated as Constantinople – literally, the City of Constantine – to honour the man who, after a civil war that had lasted nearly twenty years, had emerged as the sole ruler over a newly re-united Roman Empire.[1] Originally a colony situated on the carotid choke point of the Black

[1] The foundation legends of ancient Byzantium are most completely preserved in the sixth century (AD) treatise by Hesychius of Miletus titled *Patria of Constantinople*. For further reading, see T. Russell, *Byzantium and the Bosporus: A Historical Study from the Seventh Century BC until the Foundation of Constantinople* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 43-44. All dates given are AD (CE) unless otherwise specified.

(Euxine) Sea and the Marmara (Propontis) Sea, Byzantium had been founded by Athens' western neighbour, Megara, in the seventh century BC. For about a millennium, Byzantium, as it had been known until then, had been a thriving port city on the bridge between Europe and Asia, holding a key trade link between East and West. The city that Constantine re-founded on a grander scale and dedicated in his own honour was intended to serve as the new capital of a restored empire to replace Rome, the traditional focal point of a growing civilisation which, at its height, spanned from northern Britain to the outer fringes of the Sahara Desert in northern Africa, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Euphrates River in Mesopotamia. Constantinople – new Rome – was built on a scale never seen. Protected and walled on three sides by important strategic navigable water channels – the Marmara Sea to the south, the Bosporus Sea to the east, and the Golden Horn to the north – its land boundary to the west was fortified by the Walls of Constantine, to which was added an extra defensive system further to the west a century later under Emperor Theodosius II (r. 408-450).[1]

Until 1453, the year of its final sack under the Ottoman Turks, Constantinople was proverbially impregnable. Besieged many times by Goths, Huns, Persians, Arabs, Bulgars, and Russians over the centuries of its existence, the only successful attempt to take Constantinople before its final capitulation to the Sultanate in 1453 was in 1204, under Venetian armies during the Fourth Crusade (1202-1204). For 1123 years, from its foundation under Constantine I (the Great) to its fall under Constantine (XI) Palaeologus at the close of the Middle Ages, it stood as the richest and most powerful city in Europe and, until the start of its eclipse in the thirteenth century, as the capital of a Greek-speaking empire which, after 395 – the death of Theodosius I, the last reigning emperor over a united Roman Empire, and the final partition of the Roman Empire between East and West – survived as the eastern vestige of Roman civilisation after the western half crumbled into chaos in the fifth century in the wake of Germanic invasions from across the Rhine and Danube rivers. After the deposition of the last Roman emperor in the West – Romulus Augustulus – in 476, the emperors of Constantinople were the sole legitimate heirs to the Caesars until the year 800, which marked the coronation of Charlemagne in Rome and the creation of the Holy Roman Empire under Frankish hegemony, whose capital stood at Aachen in the Rhineland, and which postured as the revived western counterweight to Byzantine power. As far as the rulers of Constantinople were concerned, Charlemagne and his successors were mere upstarts and imposters: to Constantinople belonged the legitimate succession to Roman imperial rule, and until the Arab invasions of the seventh century which lost to Constantinople forever suzerainty over the provinces of Syria-Palestine, Egypt, Cyrenaica, and southern Spain, Byzantine hegemony covered those regions which had originally formed the eastern half of the Roman Empire defined by Emperor Diocletian (r. 284-305) when the Empire was for the first time partitioned into two self-governing halves under the new system of the Tetrarchy.

What were the purposes for which Constantinople was established as the new capital of a re-united empire in 330, and what were the historical processes that led to

[1] For the topography of ancient Constantinople, see C. Hennessy, 'Topography of Constantinople' in E. Jefferies, J. Haldon and R. Cormack (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 202-216 (https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199252466.013.0022).

its ascendency as the capital of the Eastern (Byzantine) Empire from 395?[1] This paper treats the period from its foundation under Constantine I to the end of Theodosius I's reign at the end of the century. The period is complex, and to give it tractable shape, I divide it into five discrete components: (I) the Tetrarchy and its legacy; (II) the Christianisation of the Empire; (III) the first Christian Roman emperors (324-361); (IV) Julian the Apostate (361-363); (V) the gradual separation between East and West (363-395). Because of its considerable length, some readers may wish to select free-standing sections as focal points and ignore others; though the argument follows a broad general thread, I have given each sub-section a self-contained focus so that those interested in (*e.g.*) the economy of the Late Empire need not be distracted by other distantly related issues (*e.g.*) the growth and establishment of Christian doctrine.[2] Constantinople was anything but the decaying rump of Roman power, and it was only because of it that the flame of civilisation in Europe was kept alive in a world otherwise disintegrating into chaos.

I: The Tetrarchy and its legacy

In the southwest corner of St Mark's Basilica in Venice stands a famous porphyry statue portrait of the four emperors who symbolised the division of power in the Roman Empire from 293. Looted from Constantinople after the Venetian sack of 1204, it displays the Tetrarchs – literally, the four co-emperors or co-rulers – who under a new system devised under Emperor Diocletian ruled the Empire conjointly, two in the East, two in the West. Diocletian had risen to power in 284 after a tumultuous period in the third century, at a time when Rome was rent by political and economic turmoil, hyperinflation, renewed threat to the east from militarised Sassanid Persia, and recurrent incursions by Germanic tribes from across the Rhine and Danube, the two most important geographical boundaries that marked the Roman Empire off from what lay beyond to the north. Diocletian stabilised the crisis by introducing fiscal discipline, ending the debased coinage, rebuffing Persian advance from Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), and abolishing the traditional administrative control of the Roman Senate over the Empire which, by this stage, had become too large and unwieldy to govern from a single administrative centre. In place of Rome as the historic capital of the whole Empire, Diocletian created four capitals from which each of the Tetrarchs governed – Nicomedia in Asia Minor (modern Turkey), Mediolanum (modern Milan) in northern

[1] The term 'Byzantine' to describe the Empire of Constantinople is no older than the nineteenth century and was never used by Constantinople itself. In origin, the term was pejoratively used by Western powers to suggest that Constantinople was not Rome's true successor, and that legitimate succession belonged to the Latin-speaking West, not the Greek-speaking East, on which, see further A. Kaldellis. *The New Roman Empire*: *A History of Byzantium* (Oxford, 2024, pp. 2-5).

[2] The distinction *sensu stricto* between what we today term as Eastern Orthodoxy and Western Catholicism did not become complete or final until the Great Schism of 1052, since which time the patriarchal sees of Rome and Constantinople have been out of communion with each other, though doctrinal divisions over the formulation of the Creed had been evident from the ninth century onward. By Catholic-Orthodox, I refer to the official doctrinal position of the Church defined by the first four Ecumenical Councils, at Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431), and Chalcedon (451). Though followed by many later councils which Martin Luther repudiated at the time of the sixteenth-century Reformation, these first four constitute the basis of the Trinitarian faith and are accepted alike by Catholic, Orthodox, and most mainstream Protestant Churches.

Italy, Sirmium in Pannonia (modern Sremska Metovica, in Serbia), and Trevorum (modern Trier) on the river Mosel in what is now western Germany. This newly established Tetrarchy marked the end of Rome's historic position as the imperial capital of the civilisation it had engineered and created. Rome, and its Senate, did not end, but the bitter pill they had to swallow was to recognise that they could no longer function as the honoured ruler of the Empire.

A 'Roman' Empire without Rome as the imperial capital requires explanation. Much earlier in the third century, in 212, a seismic change had occurred in the conception of Roman citizenship.[1] Whereas, historically, there had always existed a distinction between citizen and non-citizen – those with rights and those without rights – in the imperial civilisation which had emanated from Rome in central Italy to incorporate a vast swathe of subject territory, and within that polarity there were innumerable sub-gradations of status rights, from 212 onward every free person within the Empire became a fully-fledged citizen. The act which brought this change about was the famous *Constitutio Antoniniana* – otherwise known as the Edict of Caracalla – which brought an end to the old distinction between citizen and non-citizen within the bounds of the Empire.[2] The causes of this legal change are debatable, but the late Roman historian Dio Cassius (writing in Greek) put it down to the need to increase the imperial tax base.[3] Legally and politically, this meant that the distinction between Roman and non-Roman was no longer an internal one; that is, between those with and those without rights within the Empire. To be a Roman from the third century onward meant simply that one was a member of the fortress civilisation that covered the whole Mediterranean basin, Gaul, Britain, Lower Germany, Dacia (Romania), the Balkans, Asia Minor, Egypt, North Africa, and the ancient Near East. The older justification for a capital in central Italy was no longer apparent: the capital of the Empire was wherever the reigning emperor happened to be stationed at any given time. Now that the threat to the Empire lay to the east, it made sense for the reigning emperor to establish his headquarters closer to the main epicentre of military crisis. Likewise, it made sense for the reigning emperor to delegate power and authority in the West to co-rulers who were tasked with stabilising the repeated barbarian incursions across the two boundary rivers and restoring order in a region where, for over fifty years, local governors had been posturing as *de facto* emperors.

In the second half of the third century, the Empire underwent a series of crises with interlocking causes and effects. Because of the increased demands on legionary manpower, the treasury was saddled with the burden of raising funds to meet military costs. From the 260s onward, this led to a problem of hyperinflation. The inflationary crisis of the later third century was driven by the debasement of silver coinage, mainly to meet the need to pay for increased legionary personnel. The crisis of coinage was unleashed when Emperor Aurelian (r. 270-275) issued a gold standard and a new exchange rate.[4] When Diocletian ascended the imperial throne in 284, the Roman economy was in shambles. Diocletian stabilised the inflationary problem by means of a census on all taxable assets calculated in units of *iuga* for cultivated lands and *capita*

[1] For a general overview, see my earlier paper in this series 'Why did Rome end?', *OP* 2018, in which I discuss the evidence for this change and the processes by which it took place.
[2] Ulpian *Digest* 1.5.17. For a more detailed discussion, see R. Lim, 'Late antiquity', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Ancient Greece and Rome* (Edinburgh, 2010), p. 114.
[3] Dio Cassius *Rom. Hist*. 78.9.
[4] See D. Potter, *The Roman Empire at Bay, AD 180 to 195*, 2nd ed, (New York, 2014), pp. 279-280.

for the agricultural workforce.[1] This led to a new calculation of wealth based not on liquidity but on movables and immovables which, in turn, meant that the Empire could be more directly taxed. The personnel charged with the census were the praetorian prefects who, in turn, delegated to junior officials and civilian governors who reported to the prefects.[2] This led to an increased fiscal bureaucracy that answered directly to officials appointed by the emperor, not, as in previous centuries, to hereditary aristocracies who had governed semi-independently and who taxed with backing of the authority of the Roman Senate. There is no doubt that the numbers of imperial administrative personnel became vastly expanded; on some estimates, from around 1000 to over 35,000 throughout the entire Empire.[3] If we go by a modern estimate of 22 million civilians Empire-wide, that still makes for a low ratio by any modern standard of comparison, but which by any ancient standard constituted a complex bureaucratic machinery on a scale never previously witnessed. However, the new fiscal system, though bureaucratic, carried with it two stunning advantages over what had preceded it. The first was to wrest control of the tax system from an outdated and over-centralised Senatorial government in Italy that could no longer govern or raise taxes effectively because it relied on local jurisdictions that were often corrupt or unreliable.[4] The second, and perhaps more important, was to transfer the burden of tax away from the poor towards those of wealth and means, calculated not in nominal (liquid) but in real terms (that is, agricultural property and land). This, in turn, resulted in the emergence of a new imperial elite that was salaried in coin and owed its allegiance not to the Roman Senate but directly to the Tetrarch in whichever quarter of the Empire he operated.

Over the centuries, the emperors became vast landowners. The land which they directly controlled was known as *res privata* ('private land') which, in turn, was administered by personnel known as *comites* (literally, 'companions', from which we derived our English word 'count'). This crown land was leased to raise revenue for the imperial treasury. Under the Tetrarchy, the use of this land to raise public funds through rental was a key ingredient to the stabilisation of the financial crisis. In the fifth century, in Syria, the city of Cyrrus was assessed at 50,000 *iugera* of private land and 10,000 of imperial.[5] The taxes raised were diverted to pay for the armies in the East, which until that point had been maintained on the back of debased coinage. Because the legions could now be fed, maintained, and paid reliably, the military crisis in the East was gradually brought under control. In 298, one of Diocletian's generals, Galerius, won a crushing victory at Satala in Armenia, reversing decades of Persian encroachment on Rome's eastern frontier.[6] The older view was that the burden of tax under the Tetrarchy landed upon the peasant classes, but more recent archaeological discoveries have led to the suggestion that the peasantry in the late third, fourth, and into the fifth centuries economically flourished.[7] To secure a predictable tax yield, laws were issued to bind tenants to the fields. The term for these land-bound tenants was

[1] Lactantius, *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* 23.2.
[2] See D. Slootjes, *The Governor and his Subjects in the Later Roman Empire* (Leiden, 2006).
[3] A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (Baltimore, 1964), pp. 1411-1412, with n. 44.
[4] Basil of Caesaria *Epistle* 299.
[5] Theodoretus *Epistle* 42.
[6] Eutropius 9.25.
[7] See L. Dossey, *Peasant and Empire in Christian North Africa* (Berkeley, 2010), p. 9; A. Izdebski, *A Rural Economy in Transition: Asia Minor from Late Antiquity into the Early Middle Ages* (Warsaw, 2013), pp. 13-21, 100-101.

coloni (from which we derive our word 'clown'), and they were the seeds of a new feudalist system that was to develop throughout the Middle Ages.[1] Contemporary evidence indicates that the exploitation of these quasi-serfs was heavy-handed.[2]

Monetarily, Diocletian's most important innovation was the development of the new gold coin (*solidus*), struck at sixty and seventy to the Roman pound respectively, to replace the older silver coin (*denarius*) which over three decades had become debased and inflated; the production of the solidi was increased later by Constantine at the value of seventy-two to the pound.[3] To obtain the bullion, he forced his subjects to trade in golden objects in exchange for baser coinage, but it is also clear that much of the gold infused into the economy of the Late Empire came from requisitioned funds from Pagan temples.[4] By the 340s, the whole of the Roman economy was flooded with solidi to the point that the old denarius had become almost obsolete, used chiefly among the military.[5] This preference for the solidus, over time, had an undesirable effect. Whereas the gold standard was fixed and therefore resistant to inflationary pressures, the bronze coins (*nummi*) used by the poorer strata of society had a floating value and thus fuelled inflation as more were injected into the money circulation.[6] Though taxation and payment in kind (*e.g.* in the form of produce and foodstuffs) did not vanish at this time, and may even have formed the basis of much of the economic transaction under the Tetrarchy, modern historians have estimated that by the later fifth century, much if not most of the economy was monetarised.[7] This led to a concentration of wealth in the hands of the imperial elite, starting with the high-ranking magistrates in the cities and provinces, and filtering down through the Tetrarchy's bureaucratic personnel.[8]

Ancient writers referred in disparaging terms to a system run by greedy exploiters.[9] As the reins of power were later transferred to Constantinople, there was a growing acquisitiveness for gold all over the Empire. This led to moralising sermons among some of the early Christian writers, who decried the avarice of their age.[10] It is important not to read too much into the works of these moralists, but what their writings reflect is a great hunger for gold. By the time of Constantine, much gold was flowing out of the countryside into the cities, and to remedy this the emperor imposed an unpopular coinage tax called the *collatio lustralis* on those in the big metropolises who profited mainly from service industries, especially sex workers.[11] The taxes raised for the imperial treasury were used to foot the increased expense of the legions, who received pay in a quinquennial (five-year) donative.[12] In addition to payment in coin, the massive military personnel required payment in rations (*annona*, or grain),

---

[1] See J.-M. Carrié, 'Colonato de Basso Imperio' in E. Lo Cascio (ed.), *Terre, proprietari e contadini dell' imperio romano* (Rome, 1997), pp. 75-150.
[2] John Chrysostom *Homily on Matthew* 61.3.
[3] Kaldellis, *NRE,* p. 43.
[4] Zosomenos 2.5.1-3.
[5] See J. Banaji, *Agrarian Change in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 60-65, 76-77, 87, 123, 158-159, 218-220, 265.
[6] See K. Harl, *Coinage in the Roman Economy* (Baltimore, 1996), pp. 158-175.
[7] See Banaji, *AC*, pp. 70-75.
[8] *Theodosian Code* 6.4; 13.2.1; *Code of Justinian* 12.3.2; 12.3.3.
[9] Libanius *Epistles* 252, 731, 952, 1277; Zosimus 2.38.3-4
[10] See Basil of Cesarea, *Homily 4 on Avarice (on Luke 12.18)* 4; Asterios of Amaseia, *Homily* 3.7.
[11] Libanius *Oration* 46.22-23; Zosimos 2.38.2; Evagrius 3.39-41.
[12] Pseudo-Zacharias *Chronicle* 7.8f; Procopius *Secret History* 24.27-29.

equipment, and horse. Historians reckon that the total annual cost of maintaining the army in the eastern half of the Empire was between 1.25 million and 1.9 million solidi (17,000- 26,500 lbs gold) for an army totalling a quarter of a million men in the East. If the gross tax revenue of the Eastern Empire was between 4 and 6 million solidi, this would have meant that at the most conservative estimate, just under a fifth of the wealth in taxes of the Eastern Empire was spent on maintaining the military; a less conservative estimate would raise this to almost a half of the total income revenue to the treasury.[1]

The result was the rise of an imperial elite class that was salaried by the state in gold. Initially, this salaried class was known as the 'Valerians', after the gentlician name of Diocletian (which was Valerius), but once Constantine established his power in Constantinople, they bore the gentilician name of the emperor, Flavius. The 'Flavians', as they came to be known, were demarcated off from the generality of the population, otherwise known as 'Aurelii' (after the gentilician name of Caracalla who, at the other end of the third century, had made all free persons within the Empire citizens).[2] The historical irony here was that what had begun as an egalitarian measure in 212 to erode the old legal distinction between citizen and non-citizen – between the putative exploiters and exploited or, at least, between those with legal rights and those without or with restricted rights – by the end of the third century and into the fourth evolved into a new system of social division, whereby those who drew an income directly from the Roman (and, later, Constantinopolitan) state became a newly constituted elite, and those who made a living off the land or in the cities became the non-elite. Whereas under the old (pre-Tetrarchic) system, the social distinctions had been felt between the traditional aristocracies and peasantries throughout the provinces, now the sense of where one was in the social pyramid was much more defined by one's relationship to the bureaucratic governmental hierarchy established by Diocletian and taken over by Constantine. Historians have conventionally spoken of this new chapter in late Roman history as 'the Dominate' (from the Latin *dominus* meaning 'lord' or 'master', the new way in which the emperor was addressed from the Tetrarchy onward). According to ancient writers, Diocletian was the first to adorn his robes with gems, a move taken one step further by Constantine, who began to wear a gold and jewelled diadem.[3] Here, perhaps, we begin to see the origins of the medieval system of monarchy, though the title of 'king' (in Greek, *basileus*) was not adopted in the East until the reign of Heraclius (r. 610-641), and the habit of anointing monarchs as God's ordained was not developed in the West until the ninth century, with Charlemagne.[4]

One of the most important political changes which the Tetrarchy and its legacy brought about was the role of the reigning emperor in the governance of the Empire. Several centuries earlier, in the age of Augustus, Rome did not face the same external pressures on her frontiers that she began to face from the third century onward, and for that reason it made sense for the emperor to reside at Rome, where the main challenge he faced was the management of a potentially hostile Senate. Once the

[1] See M. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 171; J. Haldon, *The Empire That Would Not Die: The Paradox of Eastern Roman Survival, 640-740*, pp. 27-29; W. Treadgold, 'Paying the army in the Theodosian period' in I. Jacobs (*ed.*), *Production and Prosperity in the Theodosian Period* (Leuven, 2014), pp. 303-318.
[2] A. Cameron, 'Flavius: A nicety of protocol', *Latomus* 47 (1988), pp. 26-33.
[3] Aurelius Victor *De Caesaribus* 39; Eutropius *Breviarium* 9.26.
[4] See my earlier paper in this series 'Before England was England', *OP* 2023.

military pressures increased after 193, the emperor's main challenge was not with the governing elite in Rome, which was rapidly becoming powerless and obsolete, but with the army and generals on the frontiers.[1] This meant that over time, the emperor became the increased focal point of all political transactions. A famous panegyric to Emperor Maximian (r. 286-305), one of Diocletian's colleagues in the Tetrarchy, praised the Emperor for shouldering the entire burden of the world, which of course referred to that zone of the newly divided empire over which he presided.[2] As A. Kaldellis aptly writes:

> Emperors could now order up a universal sacrifice to the gods, produce a census of all lands to be taxed, attempt to cap prices throughout the empire, and demand that all adhere to their preferred theological doctrine. Even in smaller decrees, posted and read out locally, emperors stressed that 'our untiring attention and solicitude encompass everything that benefits human society'. This trait could be taken to extremes, as when Justinian justified his unceasing interventions in every aspect of life, including the price of vegetables, by invoking the same principles of universal benevolence.[3]

In historical terms, what this prefaced was the evolution of a new cult of personality whereby the reigning emperor legislated in all human affairs – military, economic, social, legal, and of course religious.

If we take a broader perspective, we might see from this how when the Empire became Christian from the fourth century onward, the imperial capital of Constantinople *ipso facto* became the theological epicentre of the Church. We need however to be careful before drawing hasty historical parallels with other periods of history. In post-Reformation England, the religious doctrines of the established state church followed the religious preferences of the reigning monarch; if the king or queen was Catholic, Protestant, or something in-between, so was the Church over which he or she was the head. After Constantine, though the religion of the emperor was important, and though the emperor had the authority to legislate in religious affairs (as, for example, did Theodosius I in 380, with the Edict of Thessalonike, which declared that all confessing Christians in the Empire should observe the Nicene version of the Creed), it would be mistaken to claim that the Emperors shaped the evolving doctrines of the Christian Church in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries. As we will see, though the foundations of Christian doctrine were shaped under the aegis of Constantinople, the emperor was never the head of the Church in the way that Protestant monarchs were in post-Reformation Europe; he (or she) did not have authority above the bishops to pronounce on theological doctrine, even though he (or she) might take a side in a debate. Thus, though one of Constantine's sons, Constantius, showed a predilection for Arianism in 355 in the western provinces, the Arian branch of Christianity never became established as Christian Orthodoxy.

Perhaps the most important legacy of the Tetrarchy was the stabilisation of relations between the emperor and the army. Constantine famously declared that it

---

[1] See S. James, 'The "Romanness" of the soldiers: Barbarised periphery or imperial core', in L. Brody and G. Hoffman (eds.), *Roman in the Provinces: Art on Periphery of the Empire* (Chicago, 2014), pp. 91-107.
[2] *Panegyrici Latini* 10.3.3-4.
[3] Kaldellis, *NRE*, pp. 52-53.

was his duty ever to increase the happiness of his fellow-veterans.[1] Theodosius I was elected emperor in 382 by the vote of the soldiers.[2] St Jerome famously contrasted worldly with ecclesiastical affairs by pointing out that whereas the presbyters of the Church appointed their own bishops, the army chose the emperor.[3] The importance of the army in elevating the emperors to power became ever more apparent from the crisis of the third century (c. 224-284), during which period usurpers were stationed as 'emperors' on the fringes of the Empire where real political power was concentrated. In stabilising this problem, Diocletian did not divest the army of its power as the *de facto* kingmaker of the Empire, but rather solved the crisis of political turmoil by dividing the Empire into smaller administrative units, thereby eliminating local contenders. By the Late Empire, a distinction was felt between the mobile field armies – named *comitatus* because they were regularly accompanied by the emperor – and the frontier-defence armies – the *limitanei* or *ripenses*, so called because they were stationed along the banks of the two great dividing rivers, the Rhine and Danube. Under the Tetrarchy and afterwards, the emperors were military champions who derived their authority not from the traditional centre of power, Rome, but from the margins, out on the frontiers. Perhaps for this reason chiefly, the need to think of Rome as the capital of the fortress civilisation which historically it had created ceased to exist. The empowered – and empowering – force within the Empire was no longer the Senate and People of Rome, which even in Augustus's time was becoming something of an anachronism, but the army itself. The genius of Diocletian was to devise a system where the locus of political power and authority was on the fringes, not at the centre. The great innovation of Constantine, a generation later, was to transfer the capital to the east where the ruler of a newly re-united empire could administer affairs closest to the main pressure point, the frontier with Persia.

II: The Christianisation of the Empire

According to his great fourth-century biographer Eusebius of Caesarea, Constantine saw in the sky at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, on 28 October 312, a cross-shaped trophy marked with the words Ἐν Τούτῳ Νίκα ('In This Sign, Conquer').[4] This marked the point of the Emperor's conversion to Christianity. Lactantius records that on that same night, Constantine received a vision instructing the soldiers to mark their shields with a sign in the shape of a cross to signify that a new Christian ruler was entering Rome.[5] The conversion of a Roman emperor to a religion which, since the reign of Valerian (r. 253-260), had been declared illegal throughout the Empire and, under Diocletian, had undergone its most aggressive wave of persecution must have shocked the world. We do not know for certain why Constantine did convert, and it was not until a year later, in 313, with the Edict of Milan, which declared Christianity legal again, that he officially announced his conversion.[6] Many have speculated that Constantine, who by this stage was in his forties, converted as a political gambit to win

[1] *Theodosian Code* 7.20.2.1.
[2] *Panegyrici Latini* 2.31.2.
[3] Jerome *Epistle* 146.1.
[4] Eusebius *Life of Constantine* 1.28.2.
[5] Lactantius *Of the Deaths of the Persecutors* 44.5-6.
[6] See P. Brown, *The Rise of Christendom* (Oxford, 2003), p. 61.

the support of the army. The story of the vision is almost certainly apocryphal, and what is equally interesting is the body of legend which suggests that Constantine, before his conversion, had received visions from the god Apollo granting him three wreathes, each representing a decade in power.[1] We need not place credence in any of these traditions, but what we can be sure of is that Constantine's conversion heralded in a religious and cultural transformation for the Empire.

Constantine rose to prominence in the years following the demise of the Tetrarchy. On 1 May 305, Diocletian and Maximian resigned as senior emperors (Augusti) of the East and West respectively. Their junior colleagues (Caesares), Galerius and Constantius Chlorus (father of future Emperor Constantine), were elevated to the position of Augusti. Constantius died in July 306, and the army proclaimed his son Constantine as both Caesar and Augustus in the West. Maximian's son, Maxentius, wrested from Valerius the title of Caesar in the West and was recognised, alongside Constantine, as Augustus in the West in 307. This led to a five-year civil war, which resulted in the triumph of Constantine over his rival in the West, Maxentius, in 312 and his triumphant entry into Rome as the head of a Christian army. Religion and politics had become aligned. Constantine became sole emperor in the West. His co-ruler in the East, Licinius, was still a Pagan, and though he and Constantine came to a formal political concordat in 313 with the famous Edict of Milan, which guaranteed toleration for Christians throughout the Empire, it appears that this agreement was soon violated in the East, and Constantine used this as a pretext to declare war afresh on his eastern colleague. By 324, Licinius was beaten, and the Empire was once again united under a single ruler, but for the first time a Christian one. In 324, the year of his victory over his eastern rival, Constantine marked out the limits of his new capital in the East, which six years later was dedicated as Constantinople.[2]

It would be mistaken to call the Empire 'officially Christian' from this point. The Edict of Milan was a turning point when Christianity became legal, not compulsory. Even the Edict of Thessalonike some sixty-seven years later, in 380, under Theodosius I, which declared that if one was Christian, one had to follow the Nicene (Trinitarian) conception of Christianity against its heretical alternatives, especially Arianism, did not succeed in blotting out Paganism. Though the Empire became progressively Christian, Christianity was not forced upon its subjects, at least not directly, at first. As the Christian writer Sozomenos in the fifth century pointed out, the reason people started to convert to Christianity after Constantine was not so much through profundity of religious conviction as simply through the realisation that the honoured status that their traditional Pagan religions had enjoyed until that point had evaporated, and that it would be a good opportunity to adopt the same religion as the ruler.[3] We do not know for certain what the percentage of Christians in the Empire would have been on the eve of Constantine's conversion. Modern estimates suggest that in the East, about 2 million people were Christians by the year 300, most concentrated in Egypt and Syria-Palestine, a few in Asia Minor and Greece, and predominantly in the large metropolises.[4] This would make up about 10% of the total population of the East at

[1] J. Bardill, *Constantine. Divine Emperor of the Christian Golden Age* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 159-170.
[2] N. Lenski, 'Constantine and the Tyche of Constantinople', in J. Wienand (ed.), *Contested Monarchy: Integrating the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 330-352.
[3] Sozomenos 2.5.
[4] See Kaldellis, *NRE*, p. 62.

this time, estimated around 22 million. Once Christianity had been adopted by the emperors, it was no longer a counterculture in a world that was politically, socially, or legally resistant to it. As the Bishop of Caesarea, Eusebius, who wrote *inter alia* an account of the history of the Church from its origins in the first century to his own day, and who witnessed the last Great Persecution of Christianity under Diocletian, put it, to be a Christian was not merely to have a system of moral precepts that were different from those of everyone else, but to be a citizen of a new heavenly city that functioned within the world.[1] The Christianisation of the emperors, and the foundation of a new (Christian) imperial capital at Constantinople, meant that the vision of a Christian polity on this earth, which combined the worldly and heavenly realms, could become a political reality. The creation of Constantinople as the 'new Rome', at least in part, met this requirement.

The notion that religion and ethnicity were closely interlinked was an ancient one. Centuries before, the Roman orator and political thinker Cicero had noted that every city had its own system of religious beliefs, just as it had its own laws and political customs.[2] To belong to the political community, since time immemorial, had meant belonging to the religious and cultic framework that made up its internal fabric. Early Christians shared the idea that religion was an essential component of what it meant to be a citizen, but what was different about the Christian conception was the idea that the polity to which one belonged was not of this world.[3] When Constantine converted in 312, Eusebius was not prepared for a system in which the precepts of this world were to be modelled on those of the next. Eusebius was strongly opposed to warfare in the physical sense and proclaimed a 'war of the spirit' against the worldly rulers for whom a dutiful Christian was to have little or no concern.[4] Yet, by the end of his life, it seems that Eusebius was more warmly disposed to the idea of a Christianised Empire.[5] What changed in the fourth century, therefore, was not just the religious orientation of the emperors, but the attitude of Christian leaders to worldly authorities. It was not just the Empire that evolved to accept and adjust to Christianity as the favoured religion, but Christianity that had to adjust to the idea that the present world order was not one it needed to resist or oppose, but one with which it should align and which it should strive to uphold. On both sides – worldly and religious – there was from the time of Constantine's conversion a paradigm shift. Though the authorities of the Church were independent of those which ran the Empire, the two were nevertheless closely intertwined, and it is not accidental therefore that the First Ecumenical Council of the Church was convened at Nicaea (in Asia Minor) in 325 at Constantine's behest.

The immediate consequence of the Edict of Milan was that all imperial subjects could follow whichever religion they wished.[6] But when Constantine defeated Licinius in 324, imperial subjects were actively encouraged to become Christians.[7] Thus, for a decade after Constantine's conversion, there was a state of equality between Christians and non-Christians in the Empire, but once Constantine had beaten his last

[1] Eusebius *On the Psalms* 50.21; 64.2-3; 86.2-3
[2] Cicero *Pro Flacco* 69.
[3] St Paul *Philippians* 3.20.
[4] Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 5, pref. Augustus 4.26; *Evangelical Demonstration* 3.7.30-35.
[5] Eusebius *Life of Constantine* 1.8.
[6] Lactantius *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* 48.2.
[7] Eusebius *Life of Constantine* 2.48-60.

political rival, Christianity acquired a favoured position.[1] This meant that new fiscal laws were placed on traditional Pagan cults, which acquired the nickname *superstitio* (whence comes our word 'superstition'), just as Christianity had been branded with the same pejorative name by Pagan rulers in the previous generations when Christianity was still illegal.[2] There followed active efforts by the authorities to abolish traditional Pagan rituals, often on grounds that they fostered immoral or licentious activities, such as the worship of the goddess Aphrodite in Phoenicia (modern Lebanon).[3] By 380, the year of the Edict of Thessalonike, a desire expressed by Emperor Theodosius I was for all subjects to 'profess that religion delivered to the Romans by the Apostle Peter'.[4] Yet the true purpose of the Edict was not to annihilate Paganism but, more importantly, to enforce complete adherence within the Christian community to the Catholic formulation of the faith as set out at Nicaea in 325. Our modern habit of speaking of the 'triumph' of Christianity in the fourth century is belied by the deep doctrinal controversies and divisions with which the Church in the fourth and fifth centuries was riven, to which the Edict of Thessalonike chiefly responded. By the end of the fourth century, the main threat which Catholic Christianity encountered was not from Paganism but from other strands of Christianity that did not accept or acknowledge the Trinitarian faith, as defined at Nicaea. It is perhaps in the specific context of sectarian rifts within the Church, rather than of a faceoff between Christianity and Paganism, that we should best seek to understand the historical forces that drove the Edict of Thessalonike.

The Edicts of Milan and Thessalonike, at each end of the fourth century, represent the two historical demarcations between which Christianity was made at first legal, then obligatory. But not all Christian thinkers believed that their religion should be imposed by force. A shining example of religious tolerance in the fourth century was the Constantinopolitan senator and spin doctor, Themistius, himself a Pagan, who advised Jovian (r. 363-364), the emperor to ascend the imperial throne on the demise of the last Pagan emperor, Julian, in 363, to apply tolerance throughout his jurisdiction on the premise that God 'delights in diversity'.[5] But men like Themistius may well have been the exception that defined the contrary rule. From the time of Theodosius I, active efforts were made to convert non-Christians so that they could enjoy the full rights of Roman citizens.[6] Religious dissenters were deemed 'beyond the Roman law'.[7] It was not uncommon, though by no means universal, that provincial governors demanded that their subjects, including sometimes even Jews, convert to the religion of the emperors.[8] By the time of Justinian I in the sixth century, Christianity had become identified as 'the religion of the Romans'.[9] The ancient Pagan practice of praying for the health of the reigning emperor was taken over by the Christian emperors of Constantinople.[10] Whereas the Christian writer Tertullian in the previous century had

[1] See Kaldellis*, NRE* p. 67.
[2] *Code of Theodosius* 16.10.2; 16.10.12; 16.5.63.
[3] Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 3.55.
[4] *Code of Theodosius* 16.1.2.
[5] Themistius *Oration* 5.70a.
[6] Justin II *Novel* 144.2.
[7] *Code Of Theodosius* 16.5.7.
[8] *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati* 1.2.
[9] Justinian *Novel* 18, pref.
[10] *Code of Theodosius* 16.2.16; Justinian *Deo Auctore* pref. (Digest).

stated that a faithful Christian could not serve two masters, Caesar and God,[1] by the fourth century it was not uncommon for Christian blessings to be heaped down upon armies before battle.[2] By the end of his reign, Eusebius, who had initially decried the idea that Christians should align with worldly powers, was calling for triennial prayers for Emperor Constantine.[3] Bishops often prayed for the Church and for the Empire of the Romans.[4] The eastern Liturgy of St Basil contains prayers for the welfare of the army and the rulers.[5] In various ways, none of this was incompatible with the Pauline teaching (*Romans* 13.1) which stated that all authority comes from God, and that the right thing for any Christian subject to do was to submit to worldly authority. But, from the perspective of historical evolution, what is noteworthy about this development is that the old Pagan habit of bolstering worldly power with religious precepts was inherited and taken over by the new Christian rulers of a newly Christianised Empire. In an important sense, very little had changed except, of course, the religious orientation of those for whom prayers were uttered.

As stated already, Christianity was not without its internal divisions, and the role of the Ecumenical Councils was to eliminate and eradicate division. Here it is worth recognising that a world in which political and earthly authority was held together by religious doctrine was not a new phenomenon of the fourth century. The crucial development was less in the worldly than in the Christian realm itself. Rather than viewing earthly rulers as enemies, the leaders of the Church started to align with those rulers, even though ecclesiastical and worldly authority still constituted two separate spheres, the one held together by the Apostolic succession, the other by the army. Christianity became a 'state religion' insofar as the state sanctioned and eventually imposed it upon its subjects, but the emperor was never the head of the Church. Here is a crucial difference between fourth-century Christianity and what developed in Protestant Europe over a thousand years later, when earthly princes and kings became heads of the churches, as well as of the states, over which they governed. In this sense, it would be mistaken to describe the world of Constantinople as a 'theocracy' *sensu stricto*. To be sure, Christian religion was enforced and imposed from above, and after Theodosius, those who dissented were seen as second-class citizens, but the authorities who ruled at Constantinople in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries were not religious in origin. The Church, though now aligned with the earthly power, did not derive its authority from the earthly power. Church and State were still separate jurisdictions, though the one could easily call in the other to prop up its authority. Unlike the successors of Charlemagne in the ninth century and beyond who drew their legitimacy as rulers from the Pope, the early emperors of Constantinople drew their legitimacy not from the Church but from the army. Their intervention in Church affairs was an element of *Realpolitik*, but a belief in the distinction between the worldly and sacred realms nevertheless persisted.

III: The First Christian Roman Emperors (324-361)

[1] Tertullian *On Idolatory* 19.2.
[2] P. Photiadis, 'A Semi-Greek, semi-Coptic parchment', *Klio* 41 (1963), pp. 234-235.
[3] Eusebius *Triennial Oration in Praise of Constantine* 9.8.
[4] Cyril of Jerusalem *Epistle to Constantius II* 8.
[5] See F. Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western* (Oxford, 1896), pp. 407-408.

The first Christian emperor, Constantine I, remains an enigma. Ancient sources depict him as riding into Constantinople as nude Apollo with his son, Crispus, as the god Dionysus.[1] The foundation of Constantinople on 8 November 324 was accompanied by the proclamation of Constantine as the Augustus of the whole Empire and his son, Constantius, as Caesar.[2] How much of Constantine's conversion to Christianity was through true conviction and how much a political calculation remains uncertain. Without doubt, he legislated in favour of the return of Christian property confiscated during the Great Persecution.[3] Christians benefited enormously from the accession of a self-proclaimed Christian to the imperial throne, but what Constantine expressly avoided was to pronounce on matters of ecclesiastical doctrine. Anyone who was a Christian could be compensated if property had been requisitioned in earlier time; the sources do not specify which, if any, Christian branch stood to profit from this compensatory measure. Though he hosted the Council of Nicaea in 325 in which the foundations of the Catholic-Orthodox faith were laid down, the Emperor did not forge doctrine in his own capacity. As far as we can tell, the Edict of Milan relinquished all Christians – Catholic-Orthodox or otherwise – from the persecutions that had gone before. The Edict of Thessalonike sixty-seven years later specified that all Christians had to follow the Nicene formulation, but it was for the bishops of the Church in worldwide congregation, not for the emperor, to declare true doctrine.

In the first three centuries of its existence, before the first attempt to draw up the chief articles of its creed in 325, the Church had been riven with faction and heresy. The Gnostics in the second century were a syncretic sect that combined elements of Jewish and Christian belief and held to the view that there were two gods, a God of the material universe (Yahweh) as revealed in the Old Testament, and a God of the spiritual universe, revealed in the personhood of Jesus whose mission was to lead humanity back to its divine nature. Gnosticism spread to Persia and as far afield as China in the form of Manichaeism, a dualistic religion that spoke of a God of Light and a God of Darkness. Until the discovery at Nag Hammadi in Lower Egypt in 1947 of a stunning collection of Gnostic texts on papyrus, most of our knowledge of the Gnostic heresy came down through the writings of Irenaeus of Lyons and Hippolytus of Rome. A related movement in the early centuries was Marcionism, another type of dualistic belief system originating with Marcion of Sinope in around 144, who taught that the God of the New Testament was a benevolent force, whereas the God of the Old Testament was evil. Marcion rejected the whole of the Old Testament and included in his version of the canon only ten books of the New Testament, a shortened version of St Luke's gospel and ten letters of St Paul. Montanism, which began in the late second century, was a charismatic sect which relied on instantaneous inspirations of the Holy Spirit and accepted new prophesies. By the time of Nicaea (325), the Church had rejected all these movements as heretical. The claim that the God of the Old Testament was different from that of the New was condemned as a heresy, as well as the claim that there were two Gods. Catholic-Orthodox Christianity was never averse to the notion of new prophesies, but no prophet in either Judaism or Christianity could ever be greater than the Messiah, whom the Christians identified as Jesus, and for whom the Jews are still waiting. The later Islamic belief, which developed in the seventh

[1] See E. Fowden, 'Constantine and the peoples of the eastern frontier', in N. Lenski (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 377-398.
[2] Themistius *Oration* 4.58b.
[3] Eusebius *Life of Constantine* 2.24-42, 48-60.

century and beyond, in a prophet in the person of Mohammed greater than the Messiah himself, whom Muslims accept as Jesus, is reconcilable with neither the Jewish nor the Christian conceptions of Messiahship.

By the fourth century, those earlier heresies had largely vanished. Most confessing Christians by this stage acknowledged the existence of one God, the creator of the heavens and the earth, who sent his son Jesus to redeem sinful humanity. But the relationship between God the Father and Jesus the son was a matter on which Christians could not agree. By the start of the fourth century, a new movement had sprung up known as Arianism, after its founder Arius from Cyrenaica in north Africa (c. 250-336), who argued that Jesus was not co-eternal with the Father and gave rise to a heretical doctrine known as Subordinationism, which saw the second person of the Trinity, Jesus the Son, as less than the first person, God the Father. A debate arose between Arius and his co-religionists, later led by Athanasius of Alexandria in the generation after Arius' death, as to whether the relationship between the first and second persons of the Trinity that of like substance (*homoiousia*) or that of identical substance (*homoousia*). Homoiousianism became identified with Arius and his followers, whereas the Homoousian formulation of the faith, which with Nicaea (325) became the Catholic-Orthodox formulation, found a champion in Athanasius. The basis of Arius' teaching was Jesus's statement (John 14:24) that the Father was greater than the Son. The opposing view in Arius' day was led by Alexandros bishop of Alexandria, who pointed to other verses in the Johannine Gospel where Jesus states that He and the Father are one (John 10: 30), and who argued that it was analytically redundant to speak of God the Father as existing separately from God the Son.[1] Eusebius, the biographer of Constantine, initially weighed in favour of the Arian movement, though later appears to have spun his earlier theology once Arianism was ruled out by the Council of Nicaea as a heresy. Within the Arian and Nicene movements there were extremes of opinion: on the one side, that the three 'persons' of God were just three aspects and not distinct persons or identities – a belief known as Sabellianism – and on the other side, a belief known as Adoptionism which held that God the Father adopted Jesus into the Godhead at the time of his baptism, a man in origin human and without divine nature.

Constantine's purpose in convening the Council of Nicaea (325) was to end a debate which he regarded as arcane and of little value, mainly in the hope of fostering greater Christian unity. According to Eusebius, the eagerness of the 270 bishops who attended from all over the Empire – though most came from the East – to convene at Nicaea on Constantine's invitation was prompted, at least in part, by their collective wish to see a Christian emperor.[2] Though Constantine convened the First Ecumenical Council of the Church, a habit that would repeat itself in subsequent Church Councils convened on the bidding of the emperor, the Emperor nevertheless did not foreordain the decision of the Nicaea Council.[3] Constantine's purpose was not to pronounce in his own capacity on matters of theological doctrine, an authority which, as a lay person and worldly ruler, he did not possess, but to resolve a theological dispute through the mediation of the ordained bishops. It would be mistaken therefore to claim that the

[1] Athanasius *On the Synods of Ariminum-Seleukeia* 15; Alexandros *Epistle to Alexandros of Byzantium* 26, 47; Eusebius *Evangelical Preparation* 7.12-13.
[2] Eusebius *Life of Constantine* 3.6.2.
[3] Kaldellis, *NRE* p. 84 holds that the decisions of Nicaea were predetermined by the decision of the reigning emperor but does not point to evidence to back this claim.

outcome of Nicaea was a 'politically created' doctrine, as centuries of critics have decried. The Catholic-Orthodox Doctrine of the Trinity which resulted was the product not of political authorities but of the Church, and only of the Church. The role of the Emperor was to bankroll the meeting and to orchestrate thereby unity within a Christian community which had grown ever more divided and split over remote doctrinal matters. According to Eusebius, Constantine entered the meeting of the Nicaea Council in full imperial attire bidding the bishops to resolve their disagreements peacefully.[1] The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (see Appendix) declared the Son to be of same substance (*homoousios*) with the Father and explicitly rejected Arianism. Arius and those who refused to sign the Nicene doctrine were exiled. Eusebius of Nicomedia (not to be confused with Eusebius of Caesarea, Constantine's biographer) was also exiled, along with Theognis, Bishop of Nicaea, even though they ratified the Nicene Creed, because of their long-standing links to the Arian movement.[2] According to the other Eusebius, Eusebius of Nicomedia had denied that Jesus was of the same substance as God the Father.[3]

Constantine thus legislated in favour of the Homoousian interpretation which, at Nicaea, was pronounced as orthodox, and any Arian critique of it as heretical. Yet it remains unclear that Nicene Christianity was the 'creation' of Constantine. The Nicene formulation of the Trinity, which declared that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit were consubstantial, co-eternal, ever Three and ever One, is theologically a far harder and more abstract doctrine to grasp or comprehend that its lower Christological alternatives, which went for simpler and more tractable theologies. It seems unlikely that Constantine, the consummate pragmatist and politician, would have invented *ex nihilo* a creedal formulation of intractable proportions and imposed it on a resistant assembly of bishops if the doctrine were not at some deeper level rooted in the theological convictions of the Church.[4] If the Council of Nicaea was predetermined, it was only because the Church had already decided that Arianism was a heresy and incompatible with a true Orthodox understanding of the faith. Of course, Arianism remained for most of the fourth century and later became identified with the belief systems of the barbarian kingdoms of the West, whose rulers adopted a lower Christological understanding of the faith and remained at variance with the Orthodox-Catholic creeds formulated at Constantinople and Nicaea. Yet Constantine was interested less in stamping out the heresies as managing them in such a way that they did not cause disruption to the peace. In 327, Arius wrote to Constantine begging for his verdict of exile to be repealed on condition that he did not resurrect controversy, a request which Constantine granted a year later.[5] Eusebius of Nicomedia was re-instated as bishop in 328 on condition that he abide by the verdict of Nicaea.[6] By the time of Constantine's death in 337, the Arians had all but been re-instated to their former positions in the Church, and Eusebius of Nicomedia, who denied the

[1] Eusebius *Life of Constantine* 3.10-13.
[2] Athanasius *Defence of the Nicaean Creed* 41.9-11; Sozomenos 1.21.3-4.
[3] Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 1.6.
[4] High Christology is implied in *1 Corinthians* 8.5-6, which states: 'For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.'
[5] Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 3.15.
[6] Socrates Scholasticus 1.14; Athanasius *Apology* 59.

Homoousia, became the Emperor's closest adviser.[1] If the Homoousian movement was the creation of the Emperor at Nicaea, we need some explanation for why Constantine remained hesitant and swung more in favour of the Homoiousians towards the end of his life. Constantine seems to have been a bargain-driver, interested primarily in restoring peace and harmony in the Empire and in stabilising the sectarian crisis that might have toppled the emerging Christian religion.

It was not just with factions within the Church that Constantine bargained. He is also known to have parleyed with the Shah of Persia, the long-lived Shapur II (309-379), for the protection of Christians in a neighbouring empire whose prime religion was Zoroastrianism.[2] Constantine's death-bed baptism on 22 May 337 in Nicomedia was *en route* to Armenia in a renewed conflict with Sassanid Persia, declared just two years earlier in 335. Constantine died shortly thereafter, and his body was conveyed to Constantinople where a mausoleum was constructed to the dead ruler.[3] According to tradition, Constantine was presented as the equal of the Apostles, and there is evidence that the imperial subjects, in the tradition of the Pagans, may have regarded him as deified through the customary process of *consecratio*, where the soul of the dead ruler was believed to ascend to heaven.[4] It must be remembered that for the early portion of his life, the Emperor had been Pagan, and perhaps in death both traditional and innovative traditions were honoured. The three surviving sons of Constantine, Constantius II, Constans, and Constantine II met at Sirmium to negotiate the division of the Empire. It was decided that Constantine II should receive the western third (Spain, Gaul, Britain), Constans the middle third (Italy, North Africa, parts of the Balkans), and Constantius II the eastern third (Thrace, Greece, and the East). Having re-united the Empire, Constantine I did not live to see the Empire re-divided again. In 340, Constantine II fell out with Constans and died invading Italy. This gave Constans control of two-thirds of the Empire and set him against his brother, Constantius, who ruled the East from Constantinople.[5] Once more, the Empire was divided.

The years 337 to 350 marked thirteen years of uneventful war between Shapur II and Constantius II. In 350, Shapur was called away to the eastern frontier of his empire and patched up relations with Constantinople. The same year marked the death of Constans in the West. Constantius, the sole reigning Augustus, appointed his cousin Gallus Caesar as Caesar in Sirmium in March 351, who married the sister of Constantius, Constantina. The other Caesar was Magnentius, with whom Constantius went to war for two years in what might go down as one of the most extravagantly wasteful and costly civil wars on record, costing the Empire vast reserves of manpower. In 353, Magnentius was defeated in Pannonia after a brutal civil war in the West which cost the Empire huge numbers of legionary forces.[6] According to the twelfth-century Byzantine historian Zonaras, the numbers of dead reached 30,000 for Constantius and 24,000 for Magnentius.[7] The military capacity with which

[1] Athanasius *Epistle to Serapio on the Death of Arius*; Socrates Scholasticus 1.38.
[2] Eusebius *Life of Constantine* 4.9-13.
[3] Eusebius *Life of Constantine* 4.66-71; Bardill *Constantine* pp. 183-194.
[4] See R. Van Dam, *The Roman Revolution of Constantine* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 11.
[5] Libanius *Oration* 59.
[6] Ammianus Marcellinus 14.10.16; 14.11.8; 21.16.15; Eutropius *Breviarum* 10.15.2; *Epitome De Caesaribus* 42.18; 2.43.6.
[7] Zonaras *Chronicle* 13.8.17.

Constantinople might have waged a successful campaign against Persia and refortified the Rhine and Danube frontiers was wastefully squandered in a senseless civil war which left the Empire weakened and exhausted. Magnentius was declared a tyrant and usurper. Gallus was later suppressed in the East and executed in Istria after evidence emerged that he had been conspiring against the generals of Constantius. In November 355, the general Julian (later, surnamed the Apostate, following his renunciation of Christianity) was promoted to the rank of Caesar under Constantius, the sole reigning Augustus from Constantinople, and married to Helena, the sister of Constantius. Julian as junior co-ruler in the West had a meteoric early career rebuffing invaders from across the Rhine and restored order in Roman Gaul in 357 at the Battle of Strasbourg.[1] Constantius found himself once again at war with Shapur, who in 359 captured Amida and in 360, Singara and Bezabde. By August 360, Julian had been proclaimed Augustus by the army. On 3 November 361, Constantius died of natural causes in Cilicia in Asia Minor. Julian was the sole emperor.

The generation after the death of Constantine I was marred by political division and internal disintegration within the Empire. But what is more interesting still is the reopening of religious divisions which Nicaea (325) had sought to resolve. Arianism, though declared heresy in 325, was still a lively movement within the fourth-century Christian community, a problem made worse by Constantine's late courting of Arian sympathisers, most memorable among whom was Eusebius of Nicomedia. Constantius II, Constantine's successor as Augustus in Constantinople, had more overt Arian leanings. In the East, Subordinationist (Arian) theology became more prevalent in the three decades after Nicaea, and a new loose consensus emerged among some of the eastern bishops to avoid any reference to the Homoousia/Homoiousia debate, on the principle that none of it could find any justification in Scripture. In 351, at Sirmium, after defeating his junior colleague turned usurper, Magnentius, Constantius called the western bishops to a council to reconcile the disputants. The Creed of Sirmium (351), which Constantius forced Ossius of Cordoba and Liberius of Rome to sign, was seen by Nicene adherents as a direct slap in the face to Orthodoxy and invited the sternest rebuke.[2] Athanasius was exiled to Egypt, where Constantius brought the Creed (later known as the 'Blasphemy') of Sirmium, which contained most essentials of the Nicene Creed (see below, Appendix), but which left out all references to the Son and Father being of identical or similar substance.[3]

The wording of the Council of Sirmium (351) under Constantius is preserved by the Nicene apologist Athanasius, who saw the meeting as an endorsement of heresy:

> It is held for certain that there is one God, the Father Almighty, as also is preached in all the world. And His one only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, generated from Him before the ages; and that we may not speak of two Gods, since the Lord Himself has said, 'I go to my Father and your Father, and my God and your God' (John 20:17). On this account He is God of all, as also the Apostle taught: 'Is He God of the Jews only, is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also; since there is one God who shall justify the circumcision from faith, and the

[1] Gregory of Nazianzus *Oration* 4.75; Ambrose of Milan, *Consolation for the Death of Valentinian II* 21; Prudentius *Apotheosis* 449ff.
[2] Athanasius *Apology* 30; Socrates Scholasticus *Ecclesiastical History* 2.37.
[3] Athanasius *History of the Arians* 31.

> uncircumcision through faith' (Romans 3:29, 30). And everything else agrees and has no ambiguity. But since many persons are disturbed by questions concerning what is called in Latin *substantia,* but in Greek *ousia* (or, to put in more clearly, '*co-essential'*, or '*of the same essence'*, these terms should not be used at all, nor should they be expounded on in the Church. And here are the reasons: nothing is written about them in Holy Scripture; they are beyond mankind's knowledge and understanding; and no one can declare the Son's generation, as it is written, 'Who shall declare His generation?' (Isaiah 53:8) For clearly only the Father knows how He generated the Son, and again the Son how He has been generated by the Father. No one can question that the Father is greater, for no one can doubt that the Father is greater in honour and dignity and Godhead, and in the very name of Father. The Son Himself testifies, 'The Father that sent me is greater than I' (John 10:29, 14:28) And no one is ignorant that it is catholic doctrine that there are two persons–Father and Son; that the Father is greater, and the Son is subordinated to the Father together with all things which the Father has subordinated to Him; that the Father has no beginning, is invisible, and immortal, and impassible. But the Son has been generated from the Father, God from God, light from light, and His origin (as stated previously), no one knows except the Father. And that the Son Himself and our Lord and God, took flesh (that is, a body, that is, man) from the Virgin Mary, as the Angel announced beforehand; and as all the Scriptures teach, and especially the apostle himself, the doctor of the Gentiles, Christ took on manhood of the Virgin Mary, through which he has suffered. And the whole faith is summed up, and secured in this, that a Trinity should ever be preserved, as we read in the Gospel, 'Go and baptize all the nations in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost' (Matthew 28:19). And entire and perfect is the number of the Trinity; but the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, sent forth through the Son, came according to the promise, that He might teach and sanctify the Apostles and all believers. (Preserved in Athanasius *De Synodis* 28).

The most important effect of Sirmium (351) was to eliminate any references to the issue of whether Jesus the Son was of identical (*homoousios*) or like (*homoiousios*) substance (or being) with the Father. It was not anti-Trinitarian in principle, but it circumvented by passing over in silence any of the arcane theological controversies that had divided the Nicenes and the Arians. The compromise was short-lived. Soon, the eastern consensus fractured, and Subordinationism gave way to an even stauncher interpretation, championed by two anti-Nicene thinkers, Aetius and Eunomius, who argued that Jesus and the Father were of different substances altogether.[1] This new movement, alternatively known as Heterousianism or Eunomianism, taught an even lower Christology than its Subordinationist cousin, Homoiousianism, and regarded Christ in the same category as a higher angel but not to be identified in any way with God. One of the consequences of Eunomianism was the complete rejection of the Nicene doctrine that Christ was to be worshipped and glorified together with the Father.[2] This was quickly condemned as heresy, and Basileios of Ankyra prevailed upon Constantius to invoke a compromise position. Tow councils were summoned at Ariminum (modern Rimini) and Seleucia in 359 and 360. Further cracks appeared in the Subordinationist position, when a group of Arians who called themselves Homoians (as distinct from Homoiousians) declared that Jesus was 'like' the Father but refused to commit themselves to any understanding that he was

[1] Gregory of Nyssa *Against Eunomius* 3.9.27; 3.9.32.
[2] Epiphanius *Panarion* 73.4.3; 73.9.6.

of like ‘being’. The new version of the Creed which surfaced from these councils declared that Jesus was ‘similar to’ the Father but not ‘of similar substance (or being)’. This marked a victory for Arianism.[1]

The move to a lower Christology under Constantius (r. 337-360) has signalled to some historians that the emperor became the *de facto* head of the Church in the generation after Constantine.[2] To be certain, the theological preferences of Constantius influenced the direction of Christian theology, and no doubt the Emperor pressured the bishops at Sirmium, Ariminum and Seleucia to conform to a compromise doctrine and teaching that was to his liking. But it is equally important to recognise that though the emperor could be influential, the controversies over which he presided did not originate in the imperial court. Like his father Constantine I, Constantius was interested in formulating compromise and holding the fractious Christian community together. In no official capacity was Constantius ‘Supreme Governor of the Church’, a title conferred on the Protestant kings and queens of England over a millennium later. The earthly ruler’s intervention in Church affairs was indeed regarded by many bishops, including Ossius who ratified the Creed of Sirmium under duress, as an affront to the injunction outlined at Matt. 22:21 to ‘render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s, unto God that which is God’s’, and to the premise stated at Acts 5:29 ‘to obey God and not Man’.[3] In Constantine’s and Constantius’ cases, the influence of the earthly power is undeniable, but in both cases, the controversies over which they presided and which they sought to resolve were not of their own making. The lower Christological formulations that issued from Constantius’ reign emerged not from the imperial court but from congresses of eastern bishops in the aftermath of Nicaea (325) who were not prepared to accept or recognise the Nicene definition and formulation of the Trinity. Indeed, it was the ascendency of Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia at Constantinople towards the end of Constantine’s reign that brought about the Council of Antioch (341), at which it was declared that the Son was the ‘image’ of the Father but not of one being or substance with the Father. The Dedication Creed which issued from the meeting became the reference point for the Homoiousians who spoke at Sirmium (359) and Seleucia (360).[4]

What is perhaps most notable about Constantius’s intervention in ecclesiastical affairs was the way in which he ducked commitment to any one of the controversial theological positions on the table. As events would show, the Subordinationist position was riddled with incompatible variants, and the creedal formulations of the intervening councils were doomed to failure. In the generation that followed, Homoousianism would be re-established.

IV: Julian the Apostate (r. 361-363)

The conservative – some would say, reactionary – Julian became Augustus over the whole of a re-united Empire in 361. When he ascended the imperial throne, Paganism (meaning the belief in a plurality of gods, not the one God worshipped by Christians and Jews) was not yet formally abolished, but restrictive measures had been taken to

[1] Jerome *Against the Luciferians* 19.
[2] See, for example, Kaldellis *NRE* pp. 104-105.
[3] Athanasius *History of the Arians* 44, 52; 33.7; 34.1.
[4] Atthanasius *On the Creed of the Council of Nicaea* 20.5.

limit the freedom with which traditional religious cults could practice. Most important among these was an Empire-wide ban on animal sacrifice.[1] This did not mean that animal sacrifice did not still take place, as it still did in very Pagan cities such as Athens, Rome, and Alexandria.[2] But despite the death penalty which it carried, diehard Pagans continued to practice their sacrificial rites, sometimes openly.[3] As stated earlier, the funding of the gold economy of Constantinople meant that much ancient temple property was requisitioned and confiscated to be melted down as bullion for the new solidus currency.[4] We know also of efforts by Christians to demolish Pagan temples and smash their idols during the reign of Constantius.[5] Sometimes bishops who were insecure of their convictions and of the loyalties of their congregations would turn against Pagans as a means to unite a dissident flock, as did the anti-Athanasian bishop of Alexandria, Georgios.[6]

Julian, nephew of the late Constantine I, turned all of this on its head. After a period of 'cultural revolution' during which the ancient Pagan traditions had been completely subverted by Christian emperors, for the first time in over four decades Constantinople had a Pagan emperor once more. Julian had been raised in a Christian household in Cappadocia but, at some point in his life, rejected the religion with which he had been brought up and reverted to the Pagan religion of his Roman ancestors. There were other political and social customs introduced since the Tetrarchy which he earnestly sought to undo. Most important among them was the way the emperor was greeted. Julian restored the practice of friends and associates kissing the hand of the emperor in place of the newfangled habit of total prostration introduced by Diocletian.[7] Contemporary depictions of the Emperor on coin types from the early 360s illustrate the return to the old habit, introduced two centuries earlier under Hadrian, of wearing a beard in the tradition of a philosopher-king.[8] Julian regarded traditional Greco-Roman civilisation as the model of civic virtue, over and against the turbulent times which the Christianised Empire of the fourth century had witnessed, and one of his first acts was to restore Pagan temples and their apparatus throughout the Empire.[9]

Christian bishops who, under Constantine and Constantius, had been granted tax relief on their incomes now had their tax immunities revoked, and temples were funded on the back of the revenues raised from their taxable incomes.[10] Though the sources clarify that Christians continued to serve in the imperial elite under Julian without difficulty or resistance,[11] it is also clear that many among the legionaries

---

[1] *Code of Theodosius* 16.10.2; 16.10.4; 16.10.6.
[2] Eunapius *Lives of the Philosophers* 491; Sozomenos 4.30; Ammianus Marcellinus 19.10.4; 26.1.5; Ambrose of Milan *Epistle* 18.31; Libanius *Oration* 30.34-35.
[3] Libanius *Oration* 1.27; Julian *Epistle* 36.
[4] Eunapius *Lives of the Philoosophers* 503; Sozomenos 5.3; 5.5; Libanius *Epistles* 91; 92.3-4; *Orations* 13.13; 14.63; 15.53; 17.7; 18.23; 24.36; Ammianus Marcellinus 15.8.22; John Chrysostom *Discourse on Blessed Babylas* 74.
[5] Gregory of Nazianzus *Oration* 4.88; Sozomenos 5.10; Libanius *Epistles* 103.7; 105.7.
[6] Sozomenos 4.30; 5.7; Socrates Scholasticus 3.2; Amianus Marcellinus 22.11.4-8; Julian *Epistle* 21.
[7] *Panegyrici Latini* 3.28.4; 3.29.4-30.3; Ammianus Marcellinus 22.7.1; 22.7.3; 22.9.13; Libanius *Oration* 18.155-156; *Code of Theodosius* 9.2.1.
[8] For a broader discussion of Julian's imperial methods, see J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London, 1989), pp. 235-237.
[9] *Code of Theodosius* 5.13.3; 10.1.8; 10.3.1; Libanius *Oration* 13.45; Ammianus Marcellinus 25.4.15.
[10] Julian *Epistle* 39; Julian *Epistle* 39; Libanius *Oration* 18.148'; Ammianus Marcellinus 25.4.21.
[11] Gregory of Nazianzus *Oration* 7.11-13.

decided to convert to the religion of the Emperor.[1] The fourth-century Christian writer Gregory of Nazianzus clarifies that Julian did not launch a revanchist persecution against Christians under his reign and even complained that Christians did not enjoy the opportunity to display martyrdom.[2] A tactic which Julian did deploy, however, was to recall Christians whom Constantius had exiled as heretics.[3] This was understood by some Christian apologists as a measure to sew further division in the Church, but from the Trinitarian perspective, it was a beneficial and welcome measure in that it resulted in the restoration of Athanasius, the great defender of the Nicene Council. Athanasius soon fell out with the Emperor, who had him exiled a second time from Alexandria as a religious stirrer and troublemaker.[4] Julian imagined a cultural divide between what he termed 'Hellenism' – the Greco-Roman Classical culture which was Pagan, and which rejected any notion of divine revelation through the Jewish prophetic tradition, an idea which the Christian culture had adopted – and Christianity. In consequence, he prohibited Christians from holding lecturing posts where the Classics were taught and reserved those for Pagans only, on the premise that the purity of the ancient civilisation would not be polluted by the upstart cult which his uncle, Constantine, had accepted and incorporated within the Empire. Christians were referred to disparagingly as 'Nazarenes' and decried as being anti-Hellenes. Though there had been efforts by some Christian bishops in the generation before to destroy older Pagan statues and temples, it would be mistaken to imagine that all Christians held a view of the traditional Pagan culture that was irreconcilably opposed to it. Many indeed saw their literature and architecture as art, nothing more, and were not averse to preserving it as an important cultural legacy.[5]

On the eastern frontier, Julian continued the war with Shapur II of Sassanid Persia started by his cousin, the late Constantius. In the winter of 362-363, he gathered an army of 65,000 men to advance to the Persian capital, Ctesiphon, in Mesopotamia. Initially, the Persian campaign went well for Julian, and in due course he penetrated the Sassanid heartland.[6] Tradition has it that he died on the banks of the Tigris river having been killed by the lance of an Arab Christian and, in his dying breath, whispered 'Thou hast conquered, Galilean' – meaning that he had a 'deathbed conversion' to Christianity. Whether the story is true or not, the death of Julian marks the last Pagan emperor the Roman Empire knew. From the time of Julian onward, the emperors of East and West were Christian. A thirty-year truce was concluded with Shapur, to the advantage of Persia, and much of the territory gained over half a century earlier to Rome under Diocletian was conceded. From Constantinople's point of view, the eastern campaign of Julian had been a disaster, and many writers lamented the sight of Persian banners draped over captured cities which they believed were rightfully Roman.[7] Others saw it as a sign from God that Paganism was cursed, and the failure of the Persian campaign can be understood historically as a major turning point when any attempt to revert to the ancient Pagan religion of Rome was doomed.[8] Though

[1] John Chrysostom *Discourse on Blessed Babylas* 121.
[2] Gregory of Nazianzus *Oration* 4.27, 61, 68, 84, 94.
[3] Ammianus Marcellinus 22.5.3-4; Sozomenos 5.5.7; Philostorgius 7.4; *Pachal Chronicle* s.a. 362.
[4] Julian *Epistles* 24, 46, 47.
[5] For further discussion, see Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 158-164.
[6] Eunapius *History* fr. 27.3-4; Libanius *Oration* 1.133.
[7] Ammianus Marcellinus 25.9.3; 25.7.13; Eutropius *Breviarum* 10.17; Zosimus 3.31.1-2.
[8] Ephrem *Hymns Against Julian* 3.3-4

later writers in the fifth century bewailed the disasters which befell the West as a punishment from the gods who had been neglected since the advent of Christianity, there was no serious effort thereafter among the emperors of Constantinople to return to traditional Paganism.[1] As a political force, Paganism was spent.

Julian was succeeded in 363 by an Illyrian general named Jovian (r. 363-364), a Christian whose first act as Augustus was to restore the religion of Constantine to the Empire. Under Jovian's short-lived and ill-fated reign, the persecution of Paganism under the late Constantius was renewed, temples were closed, and lands confiscated. It fell to Jovian to patch up relations with Persia and return to preside over a weakened and humiliated Empire. The imperial army was now substantially weakened, and within two decades the Roman army would experience its worst defeat in history at the hands of the Goths, a military disaster which would lead to the total collapse of the West. As the final section shows, the years that followed the death of Julian marked a period in which East and West became finally separate. Though an effort was made under Theodosius I, the last emperor to reign over a united Empire, to cement the two halves together, the years from 363 to 395 mark a turning point when the 'Roman' Empire ceased, and a new 'Byzantine' Empire was hatched.

V: The Gradual Separation between East and West (363-395)

Following the untimely death of Jovian in February 364, Valentinian was proclaimed Augustus by the army at Nicaea in Asia Minor.[2] Under pressure, Valentinian chose his brother, Valens, to be co-ruler, and in March of the same year Valens was proclaimed Augustus in Constantinople.[3] The two brothers divided the Empire between themselves, Valentinian deciding to rule in the West and Valens in the East.[4] Having been re-united under Julian, the two halves the Empire became partitioned once again. Because of the exorbitant costs of Julian's Persian war, Valens faced the unenviable task of increasing taxes on his imperial subjects to fund the Constantinopolitan treasury.[5] This understandably had damaging results for his popularity, and one of the chief battles Valens had to face was resentment among the people over who he governed. In late 365, Valens faced a revolt in the East under the pretender Procopius, who was eventually put down.[6] Though the revolt of Procopius was ultimately unsuccessful, it revealed fatal weaknesses in the regime of Valens.[7]

The reign of Valens in the East (364-378) has invited mixed judgment among modern historians. In a comprehensive account of his imperial rule, N.E. Lenski took a deprecatory view of the leadership of Valens, casting it as a period of failure and breakdown. Lenski listed the various crises Valens faced as Augustus: a new ideology of rulership, usurpation, renewed aggression from the northern and eastern frontiers of the Empire, limited resources, and the settlement of Goths within the boundaries of

[1] See my earlier paper in this series*, Why did Rome End*? (*OP* 2018).
[2] Eunapius *History* fr. 1.
[3] Ammianus Marcellinus 31.14.5; Zosimus 4.4.1.
[4] Zosimus 4.3.1.
[5] *Code of Theodosius* 11.1.13; n12.6.10 = *Code of Justinian* 10.72.3; Basil of Caesarea *Epistle* 21.
[6] Ammianus Marcellinus 26.6-9; Zosimus 4.5-8; Themistius *Oration* 7
[7] Thus, Kaldellis, *NRE*, pp. 115-115.

the Empire, which led to the ultimately disastrous standoff at Adrianople (378) at which Valens himself was killed, and which resulted in the destruction of two-thirds of his legionary capacity.[1] Others have taken a more flattering view of Valens, pointing to the deftness with which he managed the unforeseen crises with which he was beset through no fault of his own.[2] It was under Valens that the Empire began to face the rising menace of the Goths from across the Danube river. In the 360s and into the early 370s, Valens campaigned in Gothic territory to bring this troublesome people under control and, in 370, ratified a treaty with their chieftain which bought Constantinople temporary reprieve.[3] In the early 370s, a civil war broke out between two rival leaders among the Gothic tribes – Frtigern and Athanaric – the former of whom called on Valens to back him in exchange for adopting Christianity.[4] What seemed like a victory for Valens in Gothia allowed him to turn his attention eastward. In 371, he reclaimed Armenia from Persian control.[5] The next eight years of his reign, until he was called to Adrianople in 378, was spent in Antioch.

The rule of Valens in the East was marked by a period of religious tolerance. Though confessionally a Christian, Valens was fully aware of the problems which the persecution of Paganism under Constantius and Jovian had brought about, together with the revanchist acts of Julian when Paganism once again was on the ascendant. Therefore, he and his brother Valentinian were careful not to ban Paganism, though this invited criticism from contemporary Christian polemicists.[6] What also shines out in both of their reigns is the hands-off approach taken by both to sectarian debates within the Church. As Augustus in the West, Valentinian found himself on the side of Nicene sympathisers who represented the majority among the western bishops.[7] As Augustus in the East, Valens, though nominally a Nicene, encountered eastern bishops who rejected Nicaea and supported a Subordinationist theology. One of Valens' early religious policies was to reverse the amnesty decree of Julian which had recalled bishops banned in 360 under Constantius.[8] Because this was not adhered to in earnest, some historians have doubted the decree's historicity.[9] Yet what is more interesting in the East at this time is the shifting patterns of sectarian alliance among the supporters and opponents of Nicaea. Since Homoians had gained the ascendant under Constantius, Homoiousians and Homoousians began to forge an alliance against them and against the Heterousians, with whom they both lumped the Homoians as Arians.[10] In the 370s, the Nicenes in the East formed an aligned school under the leadership of Basil of Caesarea (370-379), originally a Homoiousian, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzos. These three charismatic bishops came

[1] See N.E. Lenski, *Failure of Empire: Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century A.D.* (Berkeley, 2002).
[2] See R. Van Dam 'Review of Lenski', *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2003: Failure of Empire: Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century A.D – Bryn Mawr Classical Review
[3] Themistius *Oration* 10.
[4] Socrates Scholasticus 4.33.1-4. For the chronology, see N.E. Lenski, 'The Gothic War and the date of the Gothic conversion', *GRBS* 36 (1995), pp. 51-87.
[5] *Epic Histories* 5.33.
[6] Libanius *Oration* 30.7; *Epistle* 1147.
[7] Sozomenos 6.7.2; Theodoretus *Ecclesiastical History* 4.6.6-7.
[8] [Athanasius] *Historia acephala* 5.1-7 (Martin); Socrates Scholasticus 4.12-13; Sozomenos 6.10.
[9] See, for example, R. Errington, *Roman Imperial Policy from Julian to Theodosius I* (Chapel Hill, 2006), pp. 180-185
[10] Hilarius *Against Constantius* 12; Athanasius *On the Synods of Ariminum-Seleucia* 12, 41.

to be known as the Cappadocian Fathers and were instrumental in subsequent decade in the reinstatement of Catholic-Orthodox theology at the Second Ecumenical Council held at Constantinople (381).

In 376, Valens engaged once again with the Goths on the northern (Danube) frontier. Valentinian, his co-reigning Augustus in the West, died in 375 and was replaced by his son Gratian. In all sorts of ways, Valens until this point had been a highly successful emperor. He had stabilised the crisis in the East by repelling Persian arms from Armenia and had concluded a peace with the Goths which appeared to be lasting. What arrests historians' attention in this year is the *volte-face* policy which Valens took to the peoples living across the Danube. Large numbers of Goths – some estimates to the tune of 200,000 – were ferried across the Danube into Roman Thrace to provide defences for the Empire. There was nothing original about the reception of barbarians (non-Romans) within imperial boundaries, a habit known as *receptio* which had been happening progressively since the first century BC. But what was so different about this act was the sheer scale in terms of human numbers at which it happened in 376, to say nothing of the potential with which it all might turn sour, with catastrophic consequences.[1] Valens' justification for this mass importation of Gothic forces was the right rein on the state finances which his predecessors Constantius and Julian had brought about from their ultimately fruitless campaigns against internal and external foes. By delegating the defence of the northern frontier to low-paid mercenaries, Valens thought he had discovered the magic bullet by which he could deliver the Empire from external menaces further to the north. Nothing could have been further from the truth. As events turned out, the relationship with the Gothic immigrants soon turned nasty, and on 9 August 378, a mighty Gothic force under Fritigern convened at Adrianople in Thrace (modern Bulgaria) to defeat the Roman legions. It is estimated that about two-thirds of the mighty force of 30,000 troops led by Valens died in the battle, together with Valens himself.[2] This meant that the whole Balkan peninsula was exposed to Gothic raids.

The disaster at Adrianople presaged a new type of imperial policy in the East. Whereas before, Constantinople saw itself as the capital of the whole of a united empire, now, with fierce Gothic marauders on its tale, the imperial capital in the East seemed imminently vulnerable. The first and most important policy in the immediate term was for Constantinople to protect itself and its more vulnerable eastern provinces against Gothic depredations. This meant, in turn, that the concern of the East was now with its own survival, less with the survival of the entire Empire. In the years that followed (378-382), the Gothic forces overran Greece and the Balkans.[3] The suffering that followed in the besieged cities of the peninsula must have been indescribable.[4] The young Gratian remained the sole reigning Augustus, and in January 379 appointed Theodosius I as Augustus in the East.[5] Theodosius' chief contribution to governance of the Eastern Empire was to stabilise the Gothic crisis in the Balkans. Sadly, we know relatively little about the progress of this war, except that Theodosius reached a truce with the Goths in October 382. Unfortunately, we know precious little

[1] Ammianus Marcellinus 31.4.9-11; 31.5.1; Eunapius *History* fr. 42; Jerome *Chronicle* s.a. 377.
[2] Ammianus Marcellinus 31.13.18.
[3] John Chrysostom, *To a Young Widow*, 5; Ammianus Marcellinus 31.16.7.
[4] Libanius *Oration* 24.15-16.
[5] *Panegyrici Latini* 2.12.1; Themistius *Oration* 14.182b. See R. Errington, 'The accession of Theodosius I' *Klio* 78 (1996) pp. 438-453.

of the terms of the truce, even though it was spun as a Roman victory. What we do know is that the Goths were granted territories within the Empire, though we are not told where those territories were, and were permitted to conduct themselves within the bounds of the Empire as an independently self-governing nation.[1] This had momentous consequences for the Empire's future. For the first time in Roman history, a sizable body of people, identified by a tribal loyalty, and not directly subject to the emperor, was permitted to exist within the boundaries of the Empire itself. The glib Constantinopolitan orator Themistius described this as a victory for the Empire and as 'forgiveness' for the Goths, even though in reality it was a concessionary measure which opened for the Empire a new problem to deal with over the next half century – large groups of people within its own boundaries who owed no loyalty of allegiance to the imperial authorities.[2] Historians rightly see this as a turning point in the history of Rome, and the final nail in the coffin of the Empire's collapse. The unique advantage the East had over the West was that Constantinople itself was impregnable and its eastern provinces unreachable, whereas the West was fully exposed to land invasions which, over the next century, led to the complete annihilation of the western Empire. Constantinople did little to prevent this disaster unfolding.

In 383, Gratian was murdered by the rebellious Spaniard Maximus and replaced with Valentinian II in Mediolanum (Milan). Some four years later, in 387, Maximus invaded Italy, and Valentinian II fled to Thessalonike.[3] With a troupe of Gothic mercenaries behind him, Theodosius confronted Maximus and killed him in Pannonia.[4] The laws of Maximus were thereby rescinded, and in 388, Theodosius became the last emperor to rule a united Empire. Theodosius' reign, which ended with his death in 395, is marked by the aggrandisement of Constantinople as the imperial capital. He is commemorated especially for his legislation over processions, dress code, and celebrations of imperial births and marriages.[5] He is also best known for the lavish expense on re-endowing public buildings and hospitals in the City.[6] In 392, Valentinian II was murdered.[7] This led to a renewed dynastic squabble within the court as to who should succeed as Augustus in the West. Initially, Theodosius plumped for Eugenius, but in early 393 he reversed his decision and decided to appoint his son Honorius as his successor in the western half of the Empire, with Arcadius, his other son, to succeed him in the East. This resulted in the second of two colossal dynastic wars in Theodosius' reign, resulting in the recruitment of Alaric the Goth, as well as a motley contingent of Huns, Armenians, and Georgians, to confront Eugenius and his barbarian ally, Arbogast, in the West. The two armies clashed on 5-6 September 394 at the Battle of the Frigidus River, somewhere in the Alps, which resulted in the victory of Theodosius over his western rivals.[8] Some of the accounts suggest that Theodosius took over 20,000 Goths in his army against the West. This act prefaced the mass migration of Gothic mercenaries into the western half of the Empire, an unmanageable

[1] For a discussion of the evidence, see P. Heather *Goths and Romans*, *332-489* (Oxford 1991), pp. 157-181.
[2] Themistius *Oration* 16.
[3] Zosimus 4.43.2-3.
[4] Zosimus 4.45.3; Eunapius *History* fr. 55; *Code of Theodosius* 15.14.6-8.
[5] See B. Croke, 'Re-inventing Constantinople: Theodosius I's imprint on the imperial city', in S. McGill (ed.), *From the Tetrarchs to the Theodosians* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 241-264.
[6] Theodoretus *Ecclesiastical History* 5.19.2-3.
[7] Eunapius *History* fr. 57; Zosimus 4.52.
[8] Zosimus 4.58.2; Orosius *History against the Pagans* 7.35.19; Jordanes *Getica* 28.145.

feature on the political landscape that would dominate the West until its collapse in 476. On 17 January 395, Theodosius died at Mediolanum (Milan). His son Honorius became the Augustus in the West and transferred his capital to Ravenna, which would remain the capital of Italy down into the early Middle Ages. The division between East and West was complete and final.

Religiously, Theodosius I is best remembered for having presided over the Second Ecumenical Council of the Church (Constantinople 381) which re-affirmed, with a few slight modifications, the Creed of Nicaea (325). The Council of Constantinople marked the triumph of Nicene Christianity over its Subordinationist rival sects, which from that point onward in Christian history were demarcated as heresies. Arianism continued as the religious confession of the barbarian successor kingdoms in the West throughout the fifth, sixth, and early seventh centuries. Constantinople from that point onward preserved the Nicene understanding of the faith, which came to be identified with Christian Orthodoxy. The insurmountable pressures of migrating peoples in the West eventually brought down imperial authority, but in the East, Constantinople retained its authority as the ruling city and, over the next century, consolidated its control over the eastern hub of an empire whose western provinces would gradually decay into barbarism. It was not until Justinian in the sixth century that any renewed effort was made to reinstate the Roman Empire as it had been. After the death of Theodosius I in 395, the fate of the West was sealed. The success of Constantinople was to forge a new empire out of the relic of what had been the Eastern Roman Empire, to which we now refer as ‘Byzantine’.

Appendix: The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed

Πιστεύομεν εἰς ἕνα Θεὸν Πατέρα παντοκράτορα ποιητὴν οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς ὁρατῶν τε πάντων καὶ ἀοράτων· καὶ εἰς ἕνα Κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸν Μονογενῆ, τὸν ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς γεννηθέντα πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων, Φῶς ἐκ Φωτός, Θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρί, δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο· τὸν δι' ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ διὰ τὴν	We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, 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 came into existence, Who because of us men	Credimus in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem, factorem coeli et terrae, visibilium omnium et invisibilium, et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum, Filium Dei unicum, de Patre natum ante omnia saecula; Deum verum de Deo vero; natum, non factum; ejusdemque substantiae qua Pater est; per quem omnia facta sunt; qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem descendit, incarnatus est de Spiritu

ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν κατελθόντα ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν, καὶ σαρκωθέντα ἐκ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου καὶ Μαρίας τῆς παρθένου, καὶ ἐνανθρωπήσαντα, σταυρωθέντα τε ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου, καὶ παθόντα, καὶ ταφέντα, καὶ ἀναστάντα τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ κατὰ τὰς γραφὰς, καὶ ἀνελθόντα εἰς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς, καὶ καθεζόμενον ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ Πατρὸς, καὶ πάλιν ἐρχόμενον μετὰ δόξης κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς, οὗ τῆς βασιλείας οὐκ ἔσται τέλος· καὶ εἰς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον, τὸ Κύριον καὶ Ζωοποιόν, τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον, τὸ σὺν Πατρὶ καὶ Υἱῷ συμπροσκυνούμενον καὶ συνδοξαζόμενον, τὸ λαλῆσαν διὰ τῶν προφητῶν· εἰς μίαν ἁγίαν καθολικὴν καὶ ἀποστολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν· ὁμολογοῦμεν ἓν βάπτισμα εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν· προσδοκῶμεν ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν, καὶ ζωὴν τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος. ἀμήν.	and because of our salvation came down from the heavens, and was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried, and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures and ascended to heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father, and will come again with glory to judge living and dead, of Whose kingdom there will be no end; And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life-giver, Who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son is together worshipped and together glorified, Who spoke through the prophets; in one holy Catholic and apostolic Church. We confess one baptism to the remission of sins; we look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen	sancto, in Maria virgine homo factus, crucifixus pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato, sepultus, resurrexit tertia die, ascendit ad coelos, sedet ad dexteram Patris; inde venturus est cum gloria judicare vivos ac mortuos, cujus regni non erit finis. Et in Spiritum sanctum, Dominum ac vivificatorem a Patre procedentem, qui cum Patre et Filio adoratur et glorificatur, qui locutus est per Prophetas; in unam catholicam atque apostolicam Ecclesiam. Confitemur unum baptismum in remissionem peccatorum; speramus resurrectionem mortuorum, vitam futuri saeculi. Amen.