

**CHURCH HISTORY:
CONSTANTINE & THE NICAEA CREED**

DIOCLETIAN-303

- One of the most capable and efficient emperors of the later Roman Empire
- Highly dedicated to unifying the empire, tragically he hoped that the elimination of Christianity would reduce disruption from religious conflict.
- Also divided the Roman Empire into 4 Administrative districts. Over the Westernmost district he appointed Constantius Chlorus
- Notable Martyrs of that period:
 - Timolaus and Companions
 - Aphian

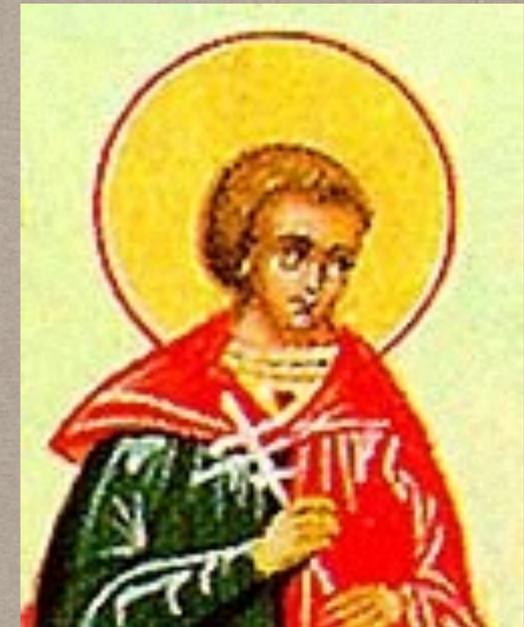
TIMOLAUS AND COMPANIONS

- Young men who heard that the Roman authorities had condemned a number of Christians to die by being thrown to wild beasts in the public arena,
- Willingly came before the governor with their hands tied behind their backs and demanded to join their fellow Christians in that martyrdom.
- They were not however thrown to wild beasts but decapitated along with two other men who were already in prison.



APHIAN

- From a wealthy and distinguished family in Lycia
- Became a Christian while away at school and then attempted to convert his parents. They resisted and he moved to Caesarea Maritima
- At 18 he entered a temple, rebuked the Roman prefect and magistrate for idolatry
- He was then tortured and flung into a dungeon
- Eventually was thrown into the sea with stones tied to his feet. Eusebius (eyewitness & famous Church Historian) claims an earthquake occurred immediately and the sea flung up his corpse onto the shore.



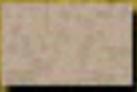
CONSTANTINE



- Constantine's father passed and he assumed his father's role.
- Infighting began between the districts
- At the battle of Milvian Bridge, north of Rome, he defeated Maxentius
- Prior to the battle Constantine had the: "In this sign conquer" vision.

EMERGING CHRISTIAN EMPIRE

- Constantine was every bit as concerned as Diocletian had been about the stability of the empire and about the difficulties created by religious strife. To Constantine, however, the best course was not to suppress Christianity but to exploit its potential for unity.
- Together with Licinius (East) in February 313 they issued the Edict of Milan
 - proclamation that permanently established religious toleration for Christianity within the Roman Empire.



Boundary of the Roman Empire



Regions Known to Contain Christians by 325 A.D.

LESS FIGHTING OUTSIDE... MORE INSIDE

- By 324 the internal strife within the church was preventing Christianity from being the "glue" for the Roman Empire that Constantine hoped.
- The debates centred on the teaching of Arius
- Two Reasons for Constantine calling Nicaea:
 - "My design then was, first, to bring the diverse judgments found by all nations respecting the Deity to a condition, as it were, of settled uniformity [that is, to clarify doctrine for the sake of the church];
 - and, second, to restore a healthy tone to the system of the world, then suffering under the power of grievous disease [that is, to end religious strife for the sake of the empire]."

THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA: THE GUEST LIST

- Bishops mostly from the East
- A young assistant to Bishop Alexander of Alexandria by the name of Athanasius, who would devote his life to defending the teaching hammered out at Nicaea.
- Two presbyters dispatched from Sylvester, bishop of Rome, as well as the bishop of Carthage, a bishop from Gaul
- And, (as a reminder of Christianity's beginnings) four bishops with Jewish names from Persia.
- Traditionally it is also held that the personage eventually known as Santa Claus, St. Nicholas of Myra in Lycia, modern southwestern Turkey, was also present.

NICAEA AND DOCTRINE

- While presenting his case at the Council of Nicaea to Emperor Constantine, Arius burst into song:

"The uncreated God has made the Son
A beginning of things created,
And by adoption has God made the Son
Into an advancement of himself.

Yet the Son's substance is
Removed from the substance of the Father:
The Son is not equal to the Father,
Nor does he share the same substance.
God is the all-wise Father,
And the Son is the teacher of his mysteries.
The members of the Holy Trinity
Share unequal glories."

SCRIPTURES DEBATED

- Proverbs 8:22
- John 14:28
- Luke 2:52
- John 4:6-7
- John 19:28
- Romans 8:29
- Col 1:15
- Matthew 24:36
- Proverbs 8:30
- John 1:1
- Phil 2:6
- Hebrews 1:3
- 1 Corinthians 2:8
- Hebrews 13:8

ATHANASIUS OF ALEXANDRIA



- Attended the Council of Nicea
- May 9, 328, he succeeded Alexander as bishop of Alexandria.
- Exiled 5 times for his defence of Jesus' divinity.
- CS Lewis wrote concerning him:
 - "He stood for the Trinitarian doctrine, 'whole and undefiled,' when it looked as if all the civilised world was slipping back from Christianity into the religion of Arius—into one of those 'sensible' synthetic religions...which, then as now, included among their devotees many highly cultivated clergyman."
- Some contend that he was the first person to identify the same 27 books of the New Testament that are in use today. Up until then, various similar lists of works to be read in churches were in use.

ATHANASIUS (CA. 296-373)

- Treatise De Incarnatione (Of the Incarnation) was written early in the dispute with Arius
- Summary: if Christ were not truly God, then he could not bestow life upon the repentant and free them from sin and death.
- He saw this work of salvation to be at the heart of the biblical picture of Christ, and an anchor for the church's life since the beginning

1ST COUNCIL OF NICAEA: 325 AD NICENE CREED

- I believe in one GOD THE FATHER Almighty
- Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible:
- And in one LORD JESUS CHRIST,
- the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds;
- God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God;
- begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father,
- by Whom all things were made:
- Who for us men and for our salvation came down from Heaven,
- and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the virgin Mary, and was made man:
- And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried:
- And the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures:
- And ascended into Heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father:
- And he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead:
- Whose kingdom will have no end:
- And I believe in the Holy Ghost the Lord, and Giver of Life,
- Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son
- Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified,
- Who spake by the Prophets.
- And I believe in One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church,
- I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins.
- And I look for the Resurrection of the Dead:
- And the life of the world to come. Amen.

TWO RESPONSES TO THE NEW CHRISTIAN-EMPIRE

- Some fled...
 - Paul & Anthony
 - Jerome
 - Basil The Great
- Some fought...
 - Donatists



Anthony



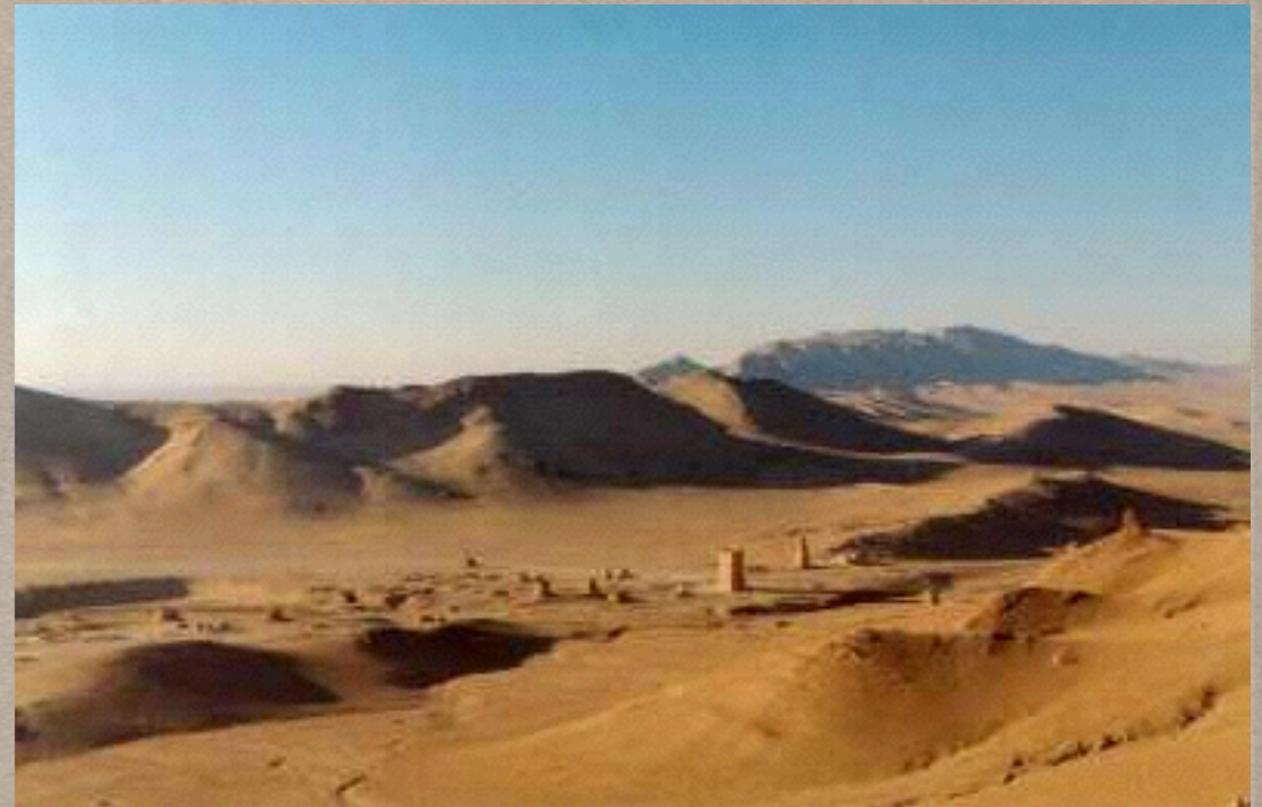
Jerome



Basil

WHY FLEE TO THE DESERT?

- Now that the heroic expression of the faith of the martyrs was no longer possible, many took up the alternative heroic expression of asceticism...
- The early monks are difficult to define because of the various extremes, but generally they were all known as men and women of prayer.



THE DONATIST SCHISM 312 AD.

- Schism involved the treatment of apostates from the Great Persecution (Diocletian 303).
- Donatists refused to accept the sacraments and spiritual authority of the priests and bishops who had fallen away from the faith during the persecution.

AUGUSTINE'S INFLUENCE



- 386AD -
- The most influential Christian of all time
- The father of Western Theology
- Formally a teacher of persuasive argumentation and writing
- Never could master Greek

BRILLIANT, BUT MISGUIDED



"As he [Augustine] saw the Donatist resistance to the government's mounting pressure, he came to accept the use of force in a religious issue. What looks like harsh action, he said, may bring the offender to recognise justice. Had not the Lord himself in the parable said, 'Compel people to come in' (Luke 14:23)?..."

SOME OF WHAT HE TAUGHT

- That Mary was born and lived her entire life without actual sin;
- That unbaptized infants are eternally damned;
- That sex within marriage is an inherently debased act;
- That war can be holy;
- That there is no forgiveness of sins outside the Catholic church;
- That some of the practices and teachings of the apostles no longer apply;
- That there is a purgatorial fire;
- That the dead can benefit from the sacrifice of the Eucharist.