

269 Claudius defeats the Goths at Naissus

272 Aurelian defeats Zenobia, the Queen of the Palmyran Empire which at its zenith in 271 was master of the Roman East. She presented herself as the Syrian monarch she was, but also as a Hellenistic queen and a Roman Empress. Her course as a genre of learning and attracted many intellectuals. She based her administration at Antioch.



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The State of the Empire

From 250-270 AD many hardships we suffered from barbarian hordes, pestilences, and many generals were killed in battle.



Diocletian [284-305] The assassinations of Aurelian and Probus showed the the sole rulership of the Empire was dangerous to its stability. Diocletian, over time, divided up the Empire into parts, and raised others to being co-emperors with himself. Constantius controlled Gaul and Britian, Maximum was given Italy, Spain and north-west Africal. Galerius took Dalmatica and the Balkans while Diocletian took the East of the Empire. This tetrarchy [rule of four] meant that each were more or less sovereign in their own lands. They we're linked by marriage, Diocletian and Maximum thought of themselves as brothers. After dealing with the war with Persia [299] Diocletian and Galerius took part in a divination in a n attempt to predict the future. The reading of the entrails of sacrificed

animals came up with the blaming of the Christians being in the imperial household. A great persecution was carried jut in 303-304 with executions, and it lasted until 313 when Galerius rescinded the edict.

All this division of the Empire was later to be reunified under Constantine.

314 Council of Arles, on the Donatists.

db The Donatists were a rigourist group in the African church , refusing in Carthage the consecration of Caecilian Bp of Carthage 311 on the ground that his consecrator was Felix, a traitor. The Group stood for the idea that the church should remain holy and not receive sacraments from traditores [traitors] who had yielded under Diocletian’s persecution. This issue lasted a long time. Even Augustine had much to say about it.

Maxentius [306-312] ruled also sharing the empire with **L.Domitius Alexander [308-309]**.

Licinius 308-324 had shared rulers as well. **Valens in 314** and **Martinianus 324**

For most of his reign he was the colleague and rival of Constantine, with whom he co-authored the Edict of Milan that granted official toleration to Christians in the Roman Empire. He was finally defeated at the Battle of Chrysopolis, and was later executed on the orders of Constantine.

323 Battle of Chrysopolis Constantine defeats the Eastern Emperor Licinius,.

Constantine master of the whole Roman Empire.

Constantine 325-337

Constantine was the son of Flavius Valerius Constantius, a Roman army officer who became deputy emperor on the West in 293 AD. His mother was Helena. The young Constantine was sent east, where he rose through the ranks to become a military tribune under Emperors Diocletian and Galerius. In 305, his father Constantius, raised himself to the rank of *Augustus*, senior western emperor, and Constantine was recalled west to campaign under his father in Britannia (Britain). Constantine was acclaimed as emperor by the army at Eboracum (modern-day York) after his father's death in 306 AD, and he emerged victorious in a series of civil wars against Emperors Maxentius and Licinius to become sole ruler of both west and east by 324 AD.

He re-organised the military into small mobile field units and garrisons of soldiers who could hold back the barbarians. He won battles on the frontiers against the Franks, the Alamanni, the Goths and the Sarmatians.

Constantine

The heathens saw Constantine as the restorer of the empire, and the Christians as a deliverer. Constantine viewed the Arian heresy as important politically. The unity of Christendom was a necessary thing to the Empire.

He sent Hosius of Cordova to Alexandria with a letter for Athanasius to settle a matter he saw as simply of words and terms. He was also aware of other disturbances among the Christians. There were issues of whether those baptised by Novatian and Paul of Samosata were valid baptism. Melitius of Lycopolis was another political matter of unrest; there were also matters of the celebration of Easter that were outstanding.

db **Novatian** was a rigorist Roman presbyter who had deprecated those who had joined those who had flirted with paganism during the Decian persecution of 249-50. Though doctrinally orthodox they were excommunicated for this stance. This rigorist schism resounded throughout the Western Church.

Paul of Samosata was a heretical Bishop of Antioch, originally from Samosata. His teaching that the Person of Christ was condemned at two or three Synods held at Antioch and he was deposed from his see in 268. He held [1] a form of Dynamic Monarchianism - viewing the Trinity as Father, Wisdom and Word, which until creation formed a single hypostasis. [2] In Christology, like Nestorius, he held that the Word from the Incarnation, the World rested on Jesus as one person on another. So he saw Jesus rather like one of the prophets.

The **Melitian Schism**, which had gone on for 20 years, had its origin in those who, under the persecution of Licinius, had denied the faith. These "lapsed" Christians often returned and wanted to be among the Christian church again. Meletius' objected to the terms laid down by Peter of Alexandria *about 'the lapsed'* during the Diocletian persecution [306]. Meletius thought Peter was too lax, and Peter had him excommunicated. There was a further period of persecution during which Peter was martyred and Meletius himself was sent to the mines. He returned to Egypt and founded a schismatic church with clergy of his own *ordination*.

325 June *The Council of Nicaea*

Council of Nicaea meets

[a] Members of the Council

[1] *Western*: Hosius of Cordova

[2] *Africa*: Caecilian of Carthage [of Donatist fame]

[3] A couple of presbyters

[4] 13 provinces of the Empire are all represented except Britain

[5] *Eastern bishops*:

Egypt: Alexandria - Alexander and his young deacon Athanasius

Nile - Coptics Paphnutius and Potammon

Western desert - two Arians

Syria: Antioch, Eustathius; Jerusalem Macarius [Alexander's supporters]

Tyre, Laodicea, Caesarea: Eusebius

Pontus: Marcellus of Ancyra [non-Arian]

Asia: Arianisers: Eusebius of Nicomedia, Ephesisi, Nicaea, Chalcedon [Maris]
 Syrian churches: James of Nisibis [Aramaic speaking] Armenia: Restaces, Crimea:
 Theolophilus the Goth
 India: John the Persian

[b] Agenda:

The idea of drawing up a creed as a test for the bishops. Most creeds modelled on baptismal formula of Matthew 28.19

1. An Arianising creed presented by Eusebius of Nicomedia - rejected outright
2. Eusebius of Caesarea put forward the Creed of Caesarea - accepted at once.
3. Athanasius and Marcellus accept the creed and proposed amendments.

Two decisive areas were :

[a] essence of the Father as God is unknown, so John's Gospels "an only-gotten who is God" = that is, 'from the essence of the Father'

[b] was made man checks an Arian assertion which saw the Lord having no more than a human body

4. Arians did not object: but there later issues are seen to be four in number:

[i] 'from the essence' and 'of one essence' are seen as materialist expressions implying the Son is a separate part of the essence of the Father

[ii] 'of one essence' is Sabellian

[iii] 'essence' and 'of one essence' are not Scriptural words. This carried weight.

[iv] 'of one essence's contrary to church authority. [Authority question].

5. Now the Creed involved the revolution of a universal test.

6. Arians become evasive and duplicitous. Bishops sum up the sense of Scripture.

7. All sign - although some with misgivings. [Eusebius of Caesarea unhappy and gives his reasons later.]

8. Constantine: wants a verdict. All signed except two Arians from Egypt, Secondus of Ptolemais and Theonas of Marmica. They, with Arius were sent into exile. Eusebius of Nicomedia gave a qualified assent.

9. Other matters:

a. Easter to be celebrated not on Passover but Sunday of resurrection.

b. Melitian schism:

db The Council of Nicaea sorted out the issue of the Melitian clergy. They should be allowed to continue functioning but be obedient to Alexander, who had succeeded Peter. Their bishops, if legally elected, might take the place of Catholic bishops when the latter died. Melitius himself was to retain the title of Bishop but to have no see.

When however, Athanasius succeeded Alexander in 328 it all broke down and the Melitians, encouraged by Eusebius of Nicomedia, again went onto schism. The Melitians sustained themselves as a small sect until the 8th century.