

1 **Constantine and Christendom**

2 **Constantine's Conversion**

- In 312, Constantine defeated a rival to become the Roman emperor.
- Constantine had previously seen a vision in which a cross appeared in the sky with the words "In this sign conquer."
- He became convinced that his victory was due to the help of the Christian God.

3 **Imperial Favor**

- Constantine openly and unreservedly favored Christianity, officially legalizing Christianity in 313 with the Edict of Milan.
- Constantine personally sponsored and oversaw the Council of Nicea, where the church condemned Arianism.
- Constantine was baptized shortly before he died.

4 **Christendom**

- Christians' attitudes toward the Roman state changed after the Edict of Milan.
 - Christians were overjoyed to find persecution ended.
 - Christians felt overwhelmingly grateful to Constantine.
- Constantine and later emperors saw Christianity as a unifying force for the empire, just as emperor worship once was.
- Emperors took an active role in church affairs.
 - Emperors intervened in doctrinal disputes.
 - Emperors often influenced such things as appointments to church offices.

5 **In 380, emperor Theodosius I made Christianity the empire's only legal religion.**

"It is our will that all peoples we rule shall practice that religion which the divine Apostle Peter transmitted to the Romans. We shall believe in the single Deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, under the concept of equal majesty and of the Holy Trinity. We command that those persons who follow this rule shall embrace the name of Catholic Christians. The rest,

however, whom we adjure demented and insane, shall sustain the infamy of heretical dogmas, their meeting places shall not receive the name of churches, and they shall be smitten first by divine vengeance and secondly by the retribution of our own initiative, which we shall assume in accordance with divine judgment.”

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- Many Christians were convinced that these developments were part of God’s plan to spread Christianity, and the church accepted the government’s help in doing its work.
- Church and state were essentially unified, being viewed as two arms of the same body.
 - In the west, where the Roman government was relatively weak, the church often dominated the state.
 - In the east, where the Roman government was relatively strong, the state often dominated the church.
- Society began to be viewed as identical with the church—the idea of Christendom.