

7 Weren't the divinity of Christ and the Trinity made up by Constantine?

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Christianity was different before and after Constantine - but was doctrine different as well?

Before the fourth century Roman Emperor Constantine Christians were persecuted. After Constantine the persecution lifted. His Edict of Milan in 313AD recognised all religions equally. It led to the establishment of Christianity across the world even to this day.

It also led to the first church councils since New Testament days. Christian teaching could be spelled out world wide for the first time. Being illegal it had been impossible for the Christian church to hold a conference on doctrine. As soon as freedom came, a conference followed. In 325AD the Council of Nicaea proclaimed the divinity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity in the now familiar words of the Nicene Creed.

Was the Nicene Creed a fix? Did Constantine call the tune or the Holy Spirit?

The Nicene Creed voiced the status quo. It defined what was already the case. Just as the BBC Radio 1 Top 10 doesn't define what's selling well but *reflects* what's selling well so the Council of Nicaea proclaimed what was the case rather than promoting a new line.

How can I say this? From a knowledge of Church history that has been uncontroversial until fiction writers like Dan Brown got to promote their novelties!

That an initially unbaptised man – Constantine – should convene a church council is of course remarkable. The Emperor simply used his own authority to provide a forum for Christians to unite after their persecution. This they did as their bishops, led by Athanasius, came to a common mind in rejecting out of hand the teachings of Arius.

Arius had taught Christ was a man who became God. He had implied that if Jesus could become God through hard effort we could become God too. It's an appealing doctrine. It lives on today in a lot of religions: God is someone you can get to if you really work at it!

The bishops at Nicaea knew their scripture. They knew that it was, as Paul says, *God who was in Christ reconciling the world to himself* and that *while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly... God proves his love for us in that while we were sinners Christ died for us.* (2 Corinthians 5:19, Romans 5:6,8).

The whole point of Christianity is the revelation of God in a human being bringing salvation to believers by pure unbounded grace. *God sent his only Son into the world* writes St. John *so that we might live through him. In this is*

love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 4:9-10).

What Arius taught remains an ongoing challenge to mainstream Christianity. The Arian heresy denies God was in Christ and that salvation is a gift from God. In making Christ less than he is it undermines the whole Christian revelation. It also makes Christianity a religion where you need to try hard rather than trust hard!

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The Emperor Constantine helped Christians state their truth aloud. That truth was and is the truth about God in the light of Jesus.

The Trinity is taught in the New Testament though the word isn't there.

Matthew's gospel ends with Christ's call to baptise *in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit* (28:19). The operation of the Father, Son and Spirit is there in the account of Jesus' baptism. It's taught in John Chapter 14 and implied throughout Paul's writings as when he greets his readers with *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit* (2 Corinthians 13:14). The Trinity is mentioned centuries before Constantine by 2nd and 3rd century writers like Polycarp (70-160), Justin Martyr (2nd century) and Tertullian (160-215)

When God became flesh it took centuries to find words that could properly talk of God. Constantine happened to be world ruler when this first happened.

The claim that the Emperor or Christianity itself established Christ's divinity in the fourth century flies in the face of evidence from the New Testament and three centuries of Christian writings. All of these thrill with the truth of the living Christ.

Christianity has not invented the Lordship of Christ but is, rather, a movement carried forward by it.

Total 783 words - just over 4.5 minutes to read

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