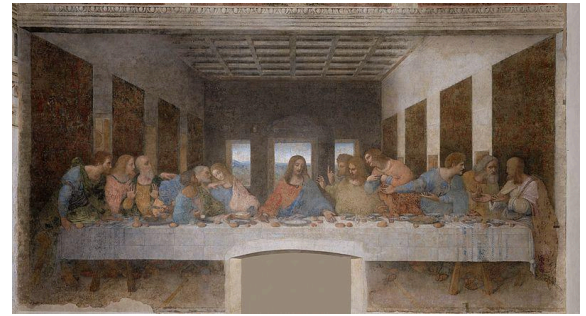


# History of Christianity

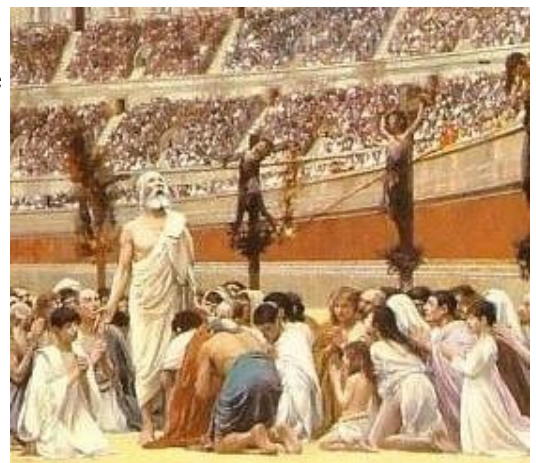
## I. Jesus

- A. Christian history begins with Jesus of Nazareth, a Jew who was born in a small corner of the Roman Empire.
- B. Little is known of his early life, but around the age of 30, Jesus was **baptized** by John the Baptist and had a vision in which he received the blessing of God.
- C. After this event, he began a ministry of teaching, healing, and miracle-working.
- D. He spoke of the "kingdom of God," condemned religious hypocrites and interpreted the **Mosaic Law** in new ways.
- E. He spoke before crowds of people, but also chose 12 **disciples** whom he taught privately.
- F. They eagerly followed him, believing him to be the long-awaited **Messiah** who would usher in the kingdom of God on earth.
- G. After just a few years, however, opposition mounted against Jesus, and he was ultimately executed by **crucifixion** by the Romans. (Occupied State)
- H. Most of Jesus' followers scattered, dismayed at such an unexpected outcome.
- I. But three days later, women who went to **anoint** his body reported that the tomb was empty and an angel told them Jesus had risen from the dead.
- J. The disciples were initially sceptical, but later came to believe. They reported that Jesus appeared to them on several occasions and then **ascended** into heaven before their eyes.



## II. After Jesus

- A. The remainder of the first century AD saw the number of Jesus' followers, who were soon called "Christians," grow rapidly.
- B. Instrumental in the spread of Christianity was a man named Paul, a "zealous Jew" who had persecuted Christians, then converted to the faith after experiencing a vision of the risen Jesus.
- C. Taking advantage of the extensive system of Roman roads and the time of peace, Paul went on numerous missionary journeys throughout the Roman Empire. He started churches, then wrote letters back to them to offer further counsel and encouragement. Many of these letters would become part of the Christian **scriptures**, the "New Testament."
- D. In the second and third centuries AD, Christians struggled with persecution from outside the church and **doctrinal debates** from within the church.



## III. Constantine and After

- A. A major turning point in Christian history came in the early 4th century CE, when the Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity.
- B. The Christian religion became legal, persecution ceased, and thousands of pagans now found it convenient to convert to the emperor's faith.

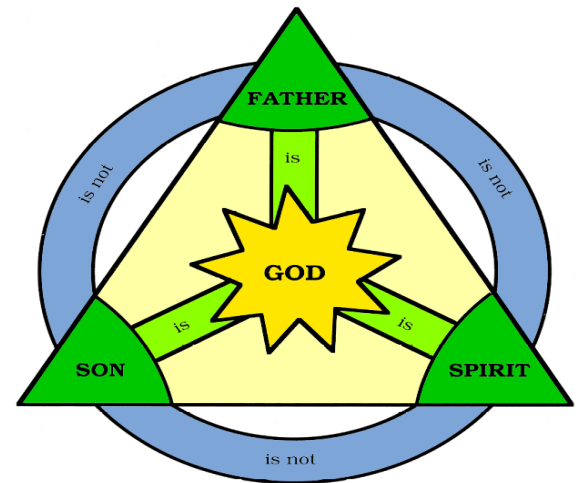
- C. Allied with the Roman Empire, Christianity gradually rose in power and hierarchy until it became the "**Christendom**" that would encompass the entire western world in the Middle Ages and Renaissance.
- D. Emperor Constantine hoped Christianity would be the uniting force of his empire.

#### IV. Religious Disagreements

- A. However, there were still disputes over the "nature" of Jesus. God or less than God but more than Man.
- B. In 325 CE, Constantine called the **Council of Nicea** so that the bishops could work out their differences. They declared the Son (Christ) to be of "one substance" with the Father.

#### V. East vs. West

- A. In the meantime, the considerable religious, cultural, and political differences between the Eastern and Western churches were becoming increasingly apparent.
- B. Religiously, the two parts of Christendom had different views on topics such as the use of icons, the nature of the Holy Spirit, and the date on which Easter should be celebrated.
- C. Culturally, the Greek East has always tended to be more philosophical and abstract in its thinking, while the Latin West tended toward a more pragmatic and legal-minded approach. Why?
- D. The political aspects of the split began with the Emperor Constantine, who moved the capital of the Roman Empire from Rome to Constantinople (in modern Turkey). Upon his death, the empire was divided between his two sons, one of whom ruled the western half of the empire from Rome while the other ruled the eastern region from Constantinople.
- E. These various factors finally came to a head in 1054 AD, when Pope Leo IX **excommunicated** the patriarch of Constantinople, the leader of the Eastern church. The Patriarch condemned the Pope in return, and the Christian church has been officially divided into West ("Roman Catholic") and East ("Greek Orthodox") ever since.



#### VI. The Start of the Reformation

- A. In the 1400s, some western Christians began to publicly challenge aspects of the church.
- B. They spoke against the abuse of authority and corruption in Christian leadership. They called for a return the gospel and a stripping off of traditions and customs like **purgatory**, the **cult** of the saints and relics, and the withholding of the **communion** wine from non-clergy.
- C. They began to translate the Bible - then available only in Latin - into the common languages of the people (the **Vernacular**).

