

Notes – Early Medieval Age 3

Conversion of Constantine

Permanent change

Hard to explain on strategic grounds

Starts the Christianisation of Roman Empire

Been illegal for 250 years

Romans killed Jesus

Polytheism and its ceremony was rife

First becomes tolerant

Then favoured

Then official and almost only religion

Paganism – polytheistic

Local variation

Eclectic – different gods in places times and times of life

Emotional vacuum

Denied longing of more to life

Innerness – important

Other religions – mystery

Eg Mithraism

Promise of afterlife

Appeal to elite and common

But it was alien

Romans did not always persecute

Didn't like intolerance

Judaism recognised Roman Leader

Christianity

Rejected pleasures

Emperor worship

Celebrations

Killjoy religion

Persecution was not that intense

Nero

Third century

Diocletian

Enough persecution to give it backbone but not enough to crush it

Constantine son of one of the Caesars – helpers

Of the west

Sent east to serve Galerius eastern

Not chosen next

306 Constantine rebelled

Raised empire in England

Maxentius rebelled in Rome

Milvian Bridge 312 battle

2 stories of conversion

One had a dream – Angel spoke to him and told him to make symbol

Chi and rho

Other story later

Eusebius

Marching with army

Saw a cross in the sky

On the sun

In this sign you will conquer

Chi rho

No reason to doubt Constantine's sincerity – hard to imagine
any emperor thinking Christianity was good for empire

Christianity was pacifist

Commands not to fight hit back

Saw himself favoured by fortune

Need to placate

Quite clever

Latin literature

Some Greek

Doesn't become totally committed Christian

Coins kept invincible son

Only later – just the cross

Edict of toleration

Constantine and Licinius

Christianity legalised

Returned property confiscated from Diocletian

No tax for church

Left pagan centre for moment

Built St Peters

Laterin Basilica

At his death about half of the empire had converted

What did it mean to the church?

Establishes the problem of the

Church in the world

St Augustine dealt with some of this

At start very successful

390 about 90% Christian (nominal)

Held out

Peasants – weather God

Army

Intellectual elite – Greek Roman philosophy

Battle of Chrysopolis

Found importance of

Byzantium

Constantinople

Istanbul

Bosporus – narrow canal or river

Can get to Danube and Persian border quite easily

The Difficult borders

City in richest part of empire

Like Brazil and Portugal

Brazil bigger and more important now

Facilitated division by addition of new capital like Rome

Forum

Sporting stadiums

Victory column

Palaces

Gets more devout and less tolerant

Gets more involved with doctrine

Donatists

Taught that priests were not legitimate if had sinned

People appealed to emperor 317

Involved in Arian heresy

Christ subordinate to God the father

Harsher crimes for sexual sins

Rape, concubines

Nicea 32

Dealt with Arian

Appears as head of the church

But not a bishop

Vs Diocletian

Similar

Military and Admin structure

Heavy taxes

Diocletian persecuted church but Constantine strengthened it

Ended tetrarchy but division strengthened with new capital

Constantine more successful economically

476 fall