

Church History



Church History

- *Introduction to Church History*
- *The Ancient Church* AD 1st-3rd centuries
- *The Rise of Christendom* AD 4th-5th centuries
- *The Early Middle Ages* AD 6th-10th centuries
- *The Age of Crusades* AD 11th-13th centuries
- *The Renaissance* AD 14th-15th centuries
- *Conquest and Reformation* AD 16th century
- *The Age of Enlightenment* AD 17th-18th centuries
- *The Age of Revolution* AD 19th century
- *The Modern Age* AD 20th century
- *The Postmodern Age* AD 21st century



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- *The Rise of Christendom* AD 4th-5th centuries
 - *Constantine: The Thirteenth Apostle (part 1)*



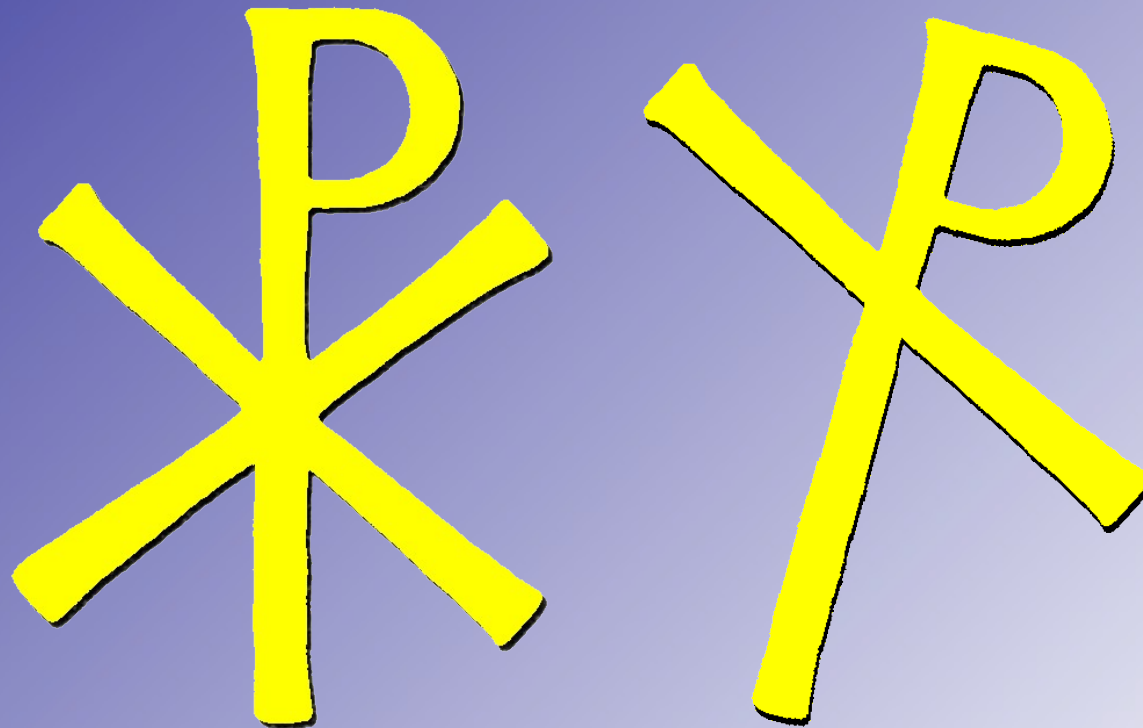
The Rise of Christendom

- Official, political support for Christianity fundamentally changed the Church
- 312 Constantine became emperor
 - The night before his final battle against Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, Constantine had a vision that clearly demonstrated to everyone his personal belief that Christ is the one, true God, right?
 - Not exactly...



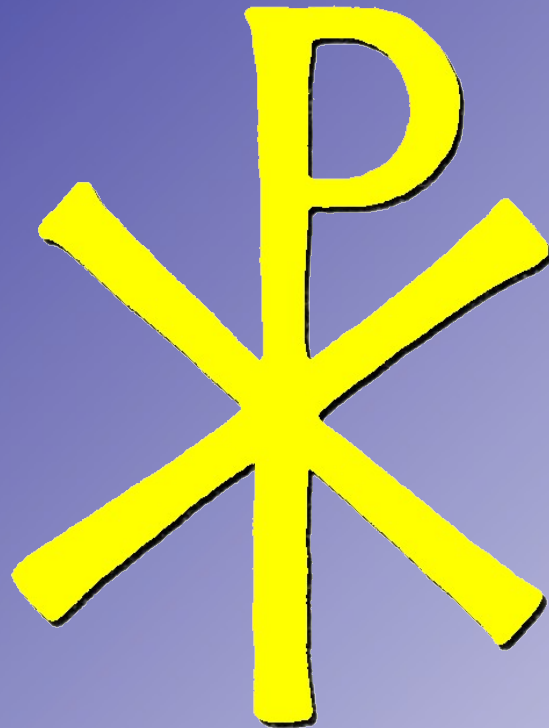
The Rise of Christendom

- Funky little teaching moment—
 - Constantine was told in his dream that he should put the “heavenly sign” on his men's shields, and that “*in hoc signo vinces*” (“in this sign, you will conquer”), and then he was shown the sign...
 - Eusebius described it this way—
 - Lactantius described it this way—
 - *Either way, it's what we call the “Chi-Rho”*



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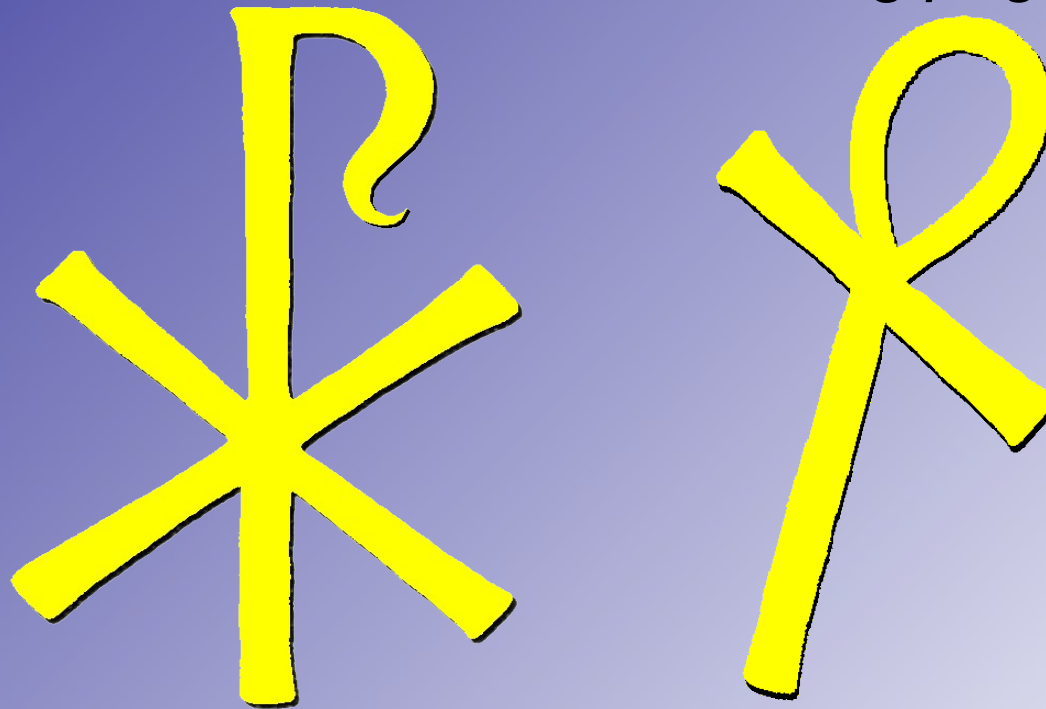


- **X** or “Chi”
- **P** or “Rho”
 - The first two letters in the Greek word, *Χριστός* (or “Christ”)
- (Note: this symbol had never been associated with Christianity prior to this vision)



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 - **So why the “Chi-Rho” and not the cross or the Ichthus, both of which had been in use for years?**
 - Interestingly, both of these symbols are actually reminiscent of other, existing *pagan* symbols



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- In fact, *this* one—called the *labarum*—had been used by Roman soldiers for centuries as part of their Mithras cult (the symbol was from the Egyptian god Harpa-khered—a princely lock of hair on the head of a stylized sun—and the name was probably Celtic, picked up in Gaul)



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- In fact, *this* one—called the *labarum*—had been used by Roman soldiers for centuries as part of their Mithras cult
- So why would Constantine’s vision tell him to use a symbol that would seem so familiar to—but be possibly misleading for—his troops?

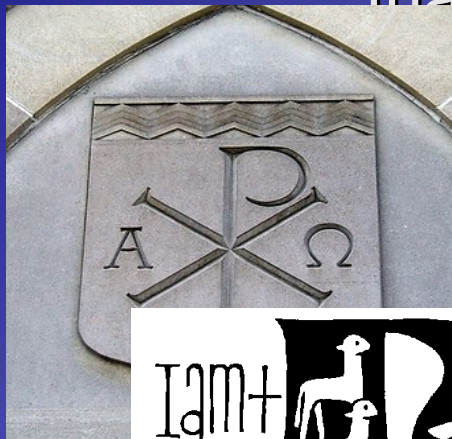


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why the “Chi-Rho” and not the cross or the Iota, both of which had been in use for years? Interestingly, both of these symbols are actually reminiscent of other, existing *pagan* symbols



- Interestingly, even later on—up to the present day—the Christian “Chi-Rho” has often been drawn with the same open bottom to the P, just like the ancient, pagan *labarum*
 - Syncretism tends to default back to its original forms



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 - **Bear in mind, this wasn't the *first* vision that Constantine had had**
 - **Two years earlier, while outside the temple of Apollo, Constantine had seen a vision of the sun god, Apollo, and the goddess Victory giving him laurel wreaths and telling him “that the rule of the whole world should belong” to him**
 - (Note: though Constantine's mother, Helena, was a Christian, his father, Flavius Constantius, had followed Apollo before his conversion)



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 - So why the “Chi-Rho” and not the cross or the Ichthus, both of which had been in use for years?
 - **Constantine’s syncretism worked. Following the directions from the vision, he put the sign on everyone’s shields, and won the day against Maxentius**



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- Official, political support for Christianity fundamentally changed the Church

312
313

Constantine became emperor

Constantine issued the Edict of Milan

- Though he didn't declare himself to be a Christian until 314, Constantine *did* issue an edict that greatly helped the Church
 - When Licinius (who now ruled the Eastern Roman Empire) married Constantine's half-sister, part of the arrangement was that he would agree to issue this joint edict with Rome, which included the following:
 - 1) officially allowed Christianity to be openly professed within the Empire
 - 2) restored confiscated properties to Christian congregations
 - 3) exempted Christian clergy from municipal civic duties



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- Interestingly, the version of the Edict that *Licinius* distributed in the East allowed the worship of "any Divinity whatsoever in the seat of the heavens," rather than specifically allowing the worship of Christ

- So was that indicative of him being more even open-minded than Constantine, or less specifically supportive of the Church?



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- Though he didn't declare himself to be a Christian until 314, Constantine *did* issue the the Edict of Milan in 313
- Remember—this *did not* create a Christian empire, as some people think
 - It simply *legalized* Christianity within the *non-Christian* Roman Empire
 - The *first* truly Christian kingdom was traditionally Osroene, in Turkey, when King Abgar V was converted 250 years earlier (back in 62, by a disciple named Thaddeus)
 - The first *historically documented* Christian kingdom was Armenia, back in 301, under King Tiridates III (evangelized by Gregory the Illuminator)



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- Also in this year, Constantine gave the Lateran Palace—ancestral home of his second wife, Fausta (who was the sister of his recently defeated rival, Maxentius)



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- Also in this year, Constantine gave the Lateran Palace—ancestral home of his second wife, Fausta—to Pope Miltiades as the official Papal residence
 - It is still used as offices by Vatican staff to this day
 - It was a great show of support for the Church... but it also placed the Pope in Constantine's debt—and under his thumb



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Constantine convened Council of Arles

- Pope Miltiades was much more open to forgiving those whose faith had lapsed under Diocletian than Marcellus had been
 - As a result, followers of Bishop Donatus of Carthage appealed to Constantine, demanding that he put a stop to this leniency—since the Pope was under Constantine's authority
 - Christian leaders who had turned other Christians—and holy books—over to the Romans for burning were now being placed back into leadership positions
 - How comfortable would *you* be with this as a churchgoer?



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 - “The Church must be a community of saints, not sinners,” Donatists argued
 - The Church is no place for those whose faith is weak, or who sin too easily
 - Do you agree or disagree? In what ways do we still echo this sentiment today?



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 - As a result, Donatus and his followers were excommunicated, but they also
 - 1) deposed any leaders who had actively handed over holy books
 - 2) decided to excommunicate anyone who participated in any games
 - 3) decreed that Easter would be celebrated on the same day for all congregations everywhere—under pain of excommunication



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- **Starting at this point, the Church began to flourish and grow again**
 - Great scholars like Eusebius of Caesarea and Lactantius from North Africa became bishops and church historians
 - Lactantius even became a tutor to Constantine's beloved son, Crispus (born to his *first* wife, Minervina), who was later named Caesar of the East

