

THE POLICIES OF THE ROMAN EMPERORS
IN THE PROCESS OF CHRISTIANISATION
BETWEEN THE FOURTH AND THE SIXTH CENTURIES

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis analyzes the Christianisation process of the Roman Empire from the time of Constantine the Great to that of Justinian. The purposes of the ecumenical councils and the codes on the religious issues will be discussed in the framework of the religious policies of the emperors in that time. Between the time of Constantine and that of Justinian the Roman Empire became Christian Roman Empire. The Christianisation of the Roman Empire will be dealt with both from the religious and political point of view in this thesis.

Keywords: Christianisation, Religious Policies

ÖZ

DÖRDÜNCÜ VE ALTINCI YÜZYIL ARASINDA HRİSTİYANLAŞMA SÜRECİNDE ROMA İMPARATORLARININ POLİTİKALARI

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Bu çalışma Büyük Konstantin zamanından Justinianus zamanına kadar Roma İmparatorluğu'nun hristiyanlaşma sürecini incelemiştir. Dini konular üzerine olan genel konsillerin ve kanunların amaçları imparatorların din politikaları çerçevesinde tartışılmıştır. Konstantin zamanı ve Justinianus zamanı arasında Roma İmparatorluğu Hristiyan Roma İmparatorluğu haline gelmiştir. Bu tezde Roma İmparatorluğu'nun hristiyanlaşması hem dini hem de politik açıdan ele alınmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hristiyanlaşma, Din Politikaları

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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Signature:

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The attention and reception of people are directed by their emotional, social and physical needs. People try to find the objects, the institutions and the facts in order to meet their needs. The need for help from a divine object brought about religions. Religion is one of the most radical institutions. There were atheist people in the societies but there was not a society who had not religious belief in history. In the Middle Ages, religion dominated all parts of the societies and people's life. The rulers of the Middle Ages used religion for their political needs.

Religion is an institution which influences every steps of a human's life. It is so important that it can change and regulate the politics and lives of people. It was effective in the past and it is effective today too in the politics. Approximately 1700 years ago, there were changes in the Roman Empire in terms of the view point of the people on religion. The most important change was coming of Christianity. Paganism and polytheism were destroyed and replaced by monotheism. Christianity had started to establish its own organization before the Middle Ages. It grew rapidly and gained many members and wealth with the supports of some Roman Emperors. Christian organization became important politically and

Christianity started to influence the politics. The decline of the Roman Empire coincided with the growth of Christianity. The date 476 is regarded as the decline of the Roman Empire but there was the Eastern Roman Empire which lasted 1000 years after this date. Actually, there was not a decline of the Roman Empire. There was a change in its institutions, economy, politics and society. The old things were changing and replacing by the new things. The change came with Christianity in the Roman Empire.

This thesis will be on the political meaning of Christianisation of the Roman Empire from the time of Constantine the Great (313-337) and that of Justinian (527-565). The purposes for the ecumenical councils and codification will be analyzed. In the time of Constantine, there was no hostility and enmity against pagans. However, there was enmity in the time of Justinian against pagans. What did change in this period? Between Constantine and Justinian the Roman Empire became a Christian Roman Empire. The Christianisation of the Roman Empire will be dealt with not only from the religious and theological point of view but also from the political point of view. The Christianisation of the Roman Empire in the context of religious policies of the emperors from Constantine to Justinian will be examined. Christianity and its dogmatic issues became a part of the emperors' policies from the time of Constantine. The emperors could support a religious sect according to their political interests and they could emphasize their political attitudes according to their religious tendencies.

In the first years of the Roman Empire, Augustus searched for religious support for the imperial power. He used religion to provide

unification of the Empire. Emperor worship was the way to bind the Roman people to the state. This was called as the imperial cult in which the Roman Emperor was worshipped as a god by the subjects. The acceptance of the imperial cult by the subjects was a sign of loyalty to the Empire. The imperial cult was a tool for the emperor in order to increase his political authority. Moreover, it was accepted by the subjects, especially in the Greek cities, to present their appreciation and respect to the state for the political and economic privileges which was granted by the state¹. The idea on binding people to the state and providing unity in the Empire with religion was used in the policies of Constantine and his successors. They saw Christianity as a means for the unification of the Empire. Moreover, it was not a new thing for a Roman Emperor to join the religious issues. Religion was used for the interests of the state.

The first reaction of the Roman Emperors toward Christianity was negative and they issued persecutions against people who followed Christian faith. The Roman Empire was in desperate times when Christianity began to spread. People were exhausted because of heavy taxation and financial difficulties. They were hopeless and unconfident. They quit the official religion, emperor worship. Christianity gave hope and promised a life after death, which is far from the worldly troubles. Moreover, the abandonment of emperor worship and to accept the Christian faith was a reaction of people against emperors' pressures. It can be called

¹ Brucwe W. Winter, *The Imperial Cult, The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. By David W. J. Gill & Conrad Gempf, c. II, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), pp. 93-103 and S.R.F. Price, *Gods and Emperors: The Greek Language of the Roman Imperial Cult*, (Journal of Historical Studies, c. CIV, 1984), pp. 79-85

as passive disobedience. Persecutions occurred. But they did not bring an end to the spread of Christianity. Its followers continued to increase. In the time of Constantine the population of the Christians in the Empire was not high but Constantine needed their support to get administration in his hands and to depose his co-emperors. He wanted the pagans and the Christians to live together in harmony. He gave religious toleration in the Empire. He thought that the unification of the Empire could be brought with acceptance Christianity not with persecutions.

This thesis includes the religious policies of the emperors and the ecumenical councils as the tools which enable the emperors to control the religious life of the subjects and thus to strengthen their political authority. Moreover, the threats by the state towards the heretics and the codifications on Christianity were mentioned in the thesis. The policies of the emperors on religion were dealt with Christianity's political importance. The ecumenical councils and the codes were depended on the purpose of the unification of the Empire. One and unified world Empire ideal failed. The perceptions of the West and the East on Christianity became different. Christianity in dogmatically framework was also divided in itself. The unification ideal with Christianity was unsuccessful. The Christianization of the Roman Empire was completed until the Justinian's time although there was not a Roman Empire with its whole and former frontiers.

Ecumenical councils were the mirrors for the reflection of the effective power of the emperors on the religious affairs. The emperors could preside over the sessions of the religious councils and they could participate

in the discussions. They even could put the last decisions on the matters. The clergy needed the approval of the emperors for the decisions of a synod and a general council in order to widespread them among the people of the Empire. By this way, the approved decisions by the emperor would be accepted by the people more easily. The clergy needed the emperor and his power to settle their decisions in the minds of the people.

The emperors and the church created an official doctrine which was suitable to the interests of the state and the church organization in the Empire. The common interest of the state and the church was a doctrine which was controlled by them. By this way, the state could control the subjects. One doctrine meant people who were united by the same way. Constantine wanted to use Christianity as a means to provide the unity of the Empire. Therefore, In the Council of Nicaea in 325, the Christian belief was officially recognized and was framed by the state's control. The religious doctrine which was formulated under the supervisor of the state was imposed on the subjects. The successors of Constantine followed the same way and they imposed the doctrine which was embraced themselves on the subjects.

There were three components of the Byzantine Empire according to the Western writers. They were Christianity, Hellenistic Civilization and the Roman Empire. Christianity shaped the state system and beliefs in the Byzantine Empire. It became the mark of expression of identity. It was one of the components of identity of the Byzantine Empire. This thesis analyzes how Christianity was settled as a component of a state.

The time from the 3rd century to the 6th century belonged to both the history of Roman Empire and Byzantine Empire according to Georg Ostrogorsky. The Roman traditions began to destroy slowly and the new Byzantine style was growing. These centuries were the period of change which brought the Antique Roman style to the Medieval Byzantine Empire. Economic crises brought about the destruction of the Roman administration system. Diocletian paved the way of Byzantine autocracy with his monarchic system. The Empire began to be ruled by the emperors whose powers were depend on the divine source. Diocletian and his successors used religion and religious feelings of the subjects to rule the Empire effectively². This thesis looks this period of change in the framework of religion in politics.

In the first chapter, the difference between the Eastern and the Western parts of the Roman Empire in the economic and social perspective will be depicted. The emergence of Christianity, the events about the Christians before the time of Constantine the Great and the persecutions will be mentioned in order to give the information on the situation of the Empire and the people and on the views of the emperors on Christianity.

In the second chapter, Constantine and his reforms on Christianity will be mentioned. His ambiguous Christian identity and the controversial policies will also be quoted. Constantine was regarded as the first Christian Emperor but his conversion was not certain. He was the constructor of

² Georg Ostrogorsky, *Bizans Devleti Tarihi*, çev. Prof. Dr. Fikret Işıltan, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1999), pp.26-28

Constantinople and this construction was the starting point of the Byzantine Empire. He was an important character in history as a politician. His reforms in the administration of the Empire and in the religious affairs determined the frameworks of the policies of his successors. After him, the emperors intervened in the religious and church affairs. He brought the alliance between the state and the church and this alliance continued in the whole history of the Eastern Empire.

In the third chapter, Constantine's successors' policies on Christianity will be discussed. Julian's tries conversion to Paganism in the official religion represents the reaction of paganism to Christianity's increasing effect in the state system. The reign of Julian was meaningful because he aimed to bring paganism as a state religion to replace Christianity. Christian organization style was used by Julian in order to organize the pagans against Christianity. His acts had contradictions because he was against Christianity but Christian elements affected him also. In his time, Christianity had settled and widespread and return to the pagan empire was nearly impossible. His policies were not continued by his successors and they remained as only weak reaction to Christianity. The religious discussions and the ecumenical councils will also be mentioned in this chapter.

In the fourth chapter, the reigns of Justin and Justinian will be discussed. Justinian's reforms on the law and his religious policy will be mentioned. The Western Papacy and its claims of authority will be depicted. The Eastern churches excluded themselves from the official church doctrine

which was determined and controlled by the state as a result of the religious policies in the Empire. These churches will be mentioned in this chapter.

The subjects above mentioned will be held in the methods of historical analyses and interpretive textual. The purpose of this thesis is to show the developments and their results related to Christianity between the time of Constantine and Justinian. In this period the political theory which was depend on the belief of God given authority for the emperors and religious mentality of the Romans was shaped and survived in the Eastern Roman Empire. It was differentiated from the Roman Empire in that time. Maybe, to explain this difference the scholars needed to call the Eastern Roman Empire as the Byzantine Empire.

CHAPTER II

GENERAL LOOK ON THE ROMAN EMPIRE BEFORE CONSTANTINE

The Roman World covered a large area from the Euphrates to the Danube and the Rhine. These rivers were natural frontiers of the Empire. It included Gaul, Spain, North Africa, the Balkans, Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, Greece and the Italian peninsula. This world collapsed because of the long lasting economic, political and social problems in the 5th century but another Roman world with medieval patterns survived. The Roman Empire had been divided into two administrative parts. There were two emperors of the Empire from the time of Diocletian (284-305).

The Eastern Roman Empire lived with the Roman culture, Christianity and Greek elements for another 1000 years from the 5th century. The Roman Empire in the West declined and fell but the Roman Church lived with a supreme power representing the victory and importance of Christianity. The Popes held the universal authority of the emperors³. After the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, the emptiness of authority without a Roman emperor was filled by the bishop of Rome. The bishop of Rome was supported and given authority and privileges in the time of

³ Wallace Klippert Ferguson and Geoffrey Bruun, *A Survey of European Civilization*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958), p. 87

Constantine. There was not papacy in the 4th century. It emerged after the fall of the Western Empire. The bishop of Rome wished to hold the authority and prestige of the emperors. The Roman Empire's hierarchal structure and political authority gave the model framework for the structure of the Roman Church. Papacy emerged at this point with the idea of imperial authority.

The difference between the Western and the Eastern Empires was in the relationship of the divine and worldly authorities. In the East, there was an emperor all the time and the church was under the protection of him. On the other hand, in the West there was no emperor after 476 and the imperial power was tried to be survived by the papacy. There was a state of papacy with its wide range territory and high economic power. However, it had not equipments for protection. It had not an army because it was against war in its religious basement. Therefore, the papal state searched for protection by a powerful army. The coronation of Charlemagne as the Holy Roman Emperor by the Pope Leo III in 800 was because of the political reasons. Papacy needed protection against the Lombards, another so-called barbarian tribe, and for all the time. According to the Pope, it was also the renovation of the Western Roman Empire. He claimed that he was more powerful than the imperial powers because he distributed the title of the emperor. By the coronation of Charlemagne the Roman Church became an imperial church. Until that time the only imperial church was the one in Constantinople in spite of all oppositions of the Roman Church. Charlemagne was a powerful

help and support for the papacy. He became the protector of the Pope both against the barbarians and the rivals of the Pope in the Papacy.

There were different people from different ethnic groups and different races who belong to different cultures but there was a unique church in the Roman Empire. The Roman Church borrowed from the Roman culture. On the other hand, the Greek Church in the Eastern Empire took much from the Greek culture. These two churches had different paths but actually Roman culture itself borrowed much from the Greek culture. Therefore, they were interrelated. Two great events in the 4th and 5th centuries in the Roman Empire were the triumph of Christianity and the invasions of the barbarians. These events brought the civilization of Medieval Europe. The Pagan Roman Empire collapsed and a new empire, Christian Roman Empire emerged⁴.

Roman Empire had reached natural frontiers. There was a problem to guard the frontiers, which were so large and open to attacks. Beyond the Rhine and the Danube, there were certain people who were called barbarians by the Romans. The Huns pushed the barbarians toward the south of the rivers. There was a need for a good organization to rule these vast territories. However, there was economic and social disruption. There were epidemics which decreased the population while the barbarian population was increasing in the Empire. The barbarians had started to come by 165. On the other hand, there were Persians who threatened the eastern frontiers.

⁴Wallace Klippert Ferguson and Geoffrey Bruun, *A Survey of European Civilization*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958), p. 87

There was a shortage of money and the state could not afford to recruit Roman legions. It could not pay military expenses and the soldiers revolted. The soldiers' reaction was occasionally to kill the emperors. The new coming barbarians, German tribes, were recruited as legions to protect the frontiers. Moreover, the volume of trade declined and there was a great political crisis in the Roman Empire. There were no long lasting dynasties in the period of decline. Between 100 and 200 AD, 4 of 38 emperors died in their beds. 34 of them were assassinated. There was a continuing struggle for the imperial crown. This struggle had a great effect on the decline of the Roman economy. There were many cities, which were important for military and strategically aims, but they were burden for the Empire because they did not contribute economic activities. They were consumers. There was a population shift from the cities to the rural areas, to the great farms. The decline of trade resulted in the lack of work for the artisans and small merchants. Roman economy had been an urban- town economy but it started to turn rural economy. Prices increased. People had economic difficulties.

German tribes, Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Vandals, Burgundians, Alamannis, Suevians and Franks settled on the territories of the Empire in the West. Rome was sacked twice by Visigoths in 410 and Ostrogoths in 455. Ostrogothic kingdom was established in Italy in 476. The leader, Odoacre was formally bound to the emperor in the East. There was not a Roman Emperor anymore in the West. The Roman Empire had been divided into two to govern and protect the territories better. However, the fate of two

parts became different. After the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, the emperor in the East was called Roman emperor but there was no physical unity between the Eastern and the Western territories. The German tribes recognized the Eastern emperor who had no prerogatives over the western territories. He had not any kind of control on them. The newcomers did not attempt to replace the emperor for approximately 400 years. Roman culture, especially Roman law, influenced the German tribes. Roman law taught an organized state and how a state should be governed to the Franks who only did not recognize the authority of the Eastern emperor.

The Eastern and Western parts of the Empire were not affected in the same way from the invasions. The Eastern part had rich and productive cities like Athens, Corinth, Philopolis and Alexandria, which were also centers of culture. The Eastern economy and culture were in better situation than that of Western part. The East was productive and the West was consumer. The Persian attacks on the East were made for the aim of conquest not for plunder. Therefore, the cities of the East were not damaged by the attacks. The western part had taken many damages by the attacks of the German tribes but it could defend itself for 300 years⁵.

There was social, political and economic decline in the Roman Empire for 300 years before the collapse of the Western part of the Empire. Cultural decline also was influential. The Roman people with their continuous economic deprivation became hopeless. They did not try to

⁵ Warren Treadgold, *A Concise History of Byzantium*, (New York: Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire), p.10

stretch the conditions in order to improve their life standards. As a reaction to their situation, official religion was abandoning and the spiritual religions of the Middle East were supported. These religions gave hope for a better life after death. Emperor worship became only a formality. Pagan gods and emperor worship became inefficient to response people's wonder about life after death and their emotional needs. They could not influence people who were desperate. Paganism was replaced by Eastern religions such as the cult of Mother Goddess, Zoroastrianism and Manicheism. In the 3rd century, they were dominant religions in both East and West. They met the desire for salvation of individuals. They promised immortality and release from sins to people who follow religion. Moreover, Neoplatonism, philosophical movement of 3rd century, affected the Roman people. It was the revival of Plato's ideas with oriental ideas. It aimed to provide union of individual with the one, the supreme divine nature. It accepted all gods of all religions but believed in only one supreme god. This belief of one god paved the way of Christianity as a monotheistic religion⁶.

2.1 Emergence of Christianity

While Christianity was growing and spreading, the Roman world was dispersing. Ancient Roman Empire was declining and Medieval Roman Empire was growing with new elements. The understanding of religion differentiated medieval history from the ancient history. Two big religions emerged: Christianity and Islam. The medieval history remarks the end of paganism and polytheism. It brought the tradition of monotheism.

⁶ Wallace Klippert Ferguson and Geoffrey Bruun, op.cit., pp.83-86

In the ancient history there was one monotheistic religion: Judaism. It was not suitable to spread. The Jews believed that they were the chosen people by God. Therefore, Judaism could not spread. Jesus was preaching the message of God. Jews had believed that God would send a leader, Messiah, to liberate them. Some of the Jews thought that Jesus was the messiah they had been waiting for. In those times the Jews were deprived by the Romans. The Romans who were led by the emperor Titus had occupied Palestine. They met with a strong resistance against invasion. The emperor had destroyed Jewish temple on the hill of Zion. The Messiah was expected to lead the Jews against the Romans. The Jews were waiting for a leader for an insurrection against the Romans. They would take their revenge and would gain independence. Jesus, who was believed as the messiah, refused to take up arms and to be a leader in a fight. The Jews had been living bad times and had troubles with the Roman rulers. They thought that Jesus could save them from the Romans. Jesus' ideals were against violence.

In Galilee, Jesus spoke to people, who were the Jews, and ate bread together with them. Eating bread meant to be union with Jesus and was a promise to follow him. This seemed dangerous to the man of Pontius Pilate, who was the governor of Judea from AD 26 and 36. The crowd in Galilee called Jesus as King of Israel, King of the Jews and Messiah. Jesus refused them, became angry and nervous. He did not listen to them and left Galilee. According to Alexander, the man of Pontius Pilate, Jesus had reason to be angry because he was a dead man from that day. The people became disappointed and angry with Jesus. They gave up their beliefs on Jesus.

There were also the Jews from Jerusalem who were denounced by Jesus. They were the enemies of Jesus⁷. He was also against material wealth in his teaching. He preached against the interests of the Jewish upper class. They became angry.

Pontius Pilate investigated the activities of Jesus. He always kept an eye on Jesus. He became anxious about the happenings in Galilee. The Jewish priests in the Temple of Jerusalem also searched for Jesus. Jesus had been attacking the priests, the lawyers and the Law of Judaism continuously. Jesus had controversy with them. The priests were afraid of that he would overthrow the whole system which the priests have imposed upon the Jewish nation. They were afraid of losing their authority on the Jewish people. Jesus should be caught by the governors according to the priests. Jesus escaped from Galilee to Syria. The governors of Judea and Galilee searched for him. The Jerusalem Rabbis also chased him and they tried to persuade people that he was only a rebel and an enemy of their Law. According to a priest, Caiaphas, who had relationship with Pontius Pilate, Jesus was a madman and he was seducing people from their duty alike to their religion and to the recognized authorities. The Temple in Jerusalem would take measures against Jesus. They would catch him who was a pretender and rebel against the Law. Jesus would not be the King of the Jews and he did not acknowledge that he was the promised deliverer. Then, it was easy to persuade people that Jesus was only a rebel against the Law.

⁷ *Letters of Pontius Pilate written during his Governorship of Judea to his friend Seneca in Rome*, ed. W. P. Croizer, (London: BUTLER& TANNER LTD., 1928)

The number of Jesus' followers increased day by day. He was called as agitator by Pontius Pilate. Jesus came to Jerusalem and the officers of Pontius Pilate pursued him to control his activities. Jesus was a danger for the priests and the lawyers to be removed. There was cooperation between the priests and Pontius Pilate, i.e. between the Jews and the Romans, against Jesus. Jesus visited the Temple in Jerusalem and attacked his enemies again. The priests and their works were denounced by Jesus. Pontius Pilate thought that a man who is so harsh, passionate and determined might make another appeal which might be against government. He was not an actual danger but a potential danger. He must be stopped. The governor of the Roman Empire and the priest of the Temple acted cooperatively to arrest Jesus. Jesus would be executed as a maker or a cause of sedition against Caesar by Pontius Pilate. The governor tried and condemned Jesus to death. In the trial, Jesus was accused of disturbing the peace, stirring up disaffection and claiming the King of the Jews. The priests wanted him to be accused of his attacks on their religion. The Jews claimed that Jesus regarded himself as the destined deliverer of the nation, which meant the end of both their authority and the Roman authority. He would be a danger against Caesar. He would be the Deliverer with patriotic feelings of Jews against the Romans. He was not a danger yesterday but he would be a danger tomorrow. Pontius Pilate said that it does not matter one Jew more or less⁸. However, a less Jew changed the fate of the world especially of Europe.

⁸ *Letters of Pontius Pilate written during his Governorship of Judea to his friend Seneca in Rome*, ed. W. P. Croizer, (London: BUTLER& TANNER LTD., 1928)

Jesus was punished with death. This was not the end of Jesus' teaching and message. The Jewish culture was patriarchal; therefore they could not tolerate the father and son tradition, which was introduced by Jesus. Jesus said that he was the Son of God. He spoke about God as a loving father. They must love God according to Jesus. However, the belief on God of the Jews was related with fear and respect. Jesus' preaching was not liked by the Jews. He was crucified. The crucifixion was the starting point for the growth of Jesus' teaching. It was a triumph for Christianity. The doctrines of Christianity were based on the crucifixion: God appeared in human shape in order to give his message in the best way. With crucifixion God gave an example. He suffered voluntarily for the sins of mankind. After death he raised to the sky. Father and Son were united again. The crucifixion was organized by God before. He will be back on the judgment day. When people practiced Christianity they would be awarded and the others would be punished. Holy Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) was formulated by the preaching of Jesus. This was the belief and the definition of the official Church. There were other opinions on the death of Jesus. It is said that Jesus did not die in the crucifixion. He salvaged from the crucifixion and went to Syria and India. Jesus' tomb was empty when it was opened so some people believed that his body and soul rose to the sky⁹. His message was universal not belong to a specific group of people. However, he was born in Jerusalem and in his environment there were the

⁹ Mustafa Soykut, "The Turks as the 'Great Enemy of European Civilisation' and the Changing Image in the Aftermath of the Second Siege of Vienna" in *Historical Image of the Turk in Europe: Political and Civilisational Aspects*, ed. Mustafa Soykut, (İstanbul: The Isis Press, 2003)

Jewish people. After Jesus, his message was told to the other people who were not Jews.

The message must be written down. Gospels were occurred. There were four gospels written by Mark, Matthew, Luke and John. These gospels were officially accepted ones by the church. They were summaries of Jesus' preaching. The life, birth, mission, death and resurrection of Jesus were mentioned in the Gospels. John's gospel was written in Greek. The others were written in Aramaic. John was more universal. He also wrote for the people who were not Jewish. The writers of the Gospels were known as Apostles. Among the Gospels there were the letters of St Paul in the Christian writings. These letters mentioned the problems of doctrine, ethics and church organization. The Acts of the Apostles and the Book of Revelation were also Christian works. The Gospels of Philip and Thomas condemned by the Orthodox Christianity. They were the Gnostic Gospels and regarded as the most dangerous for the official definition of the church. According to Professor Helmut Koester of Harvard University the Gospel of Thomas may be old and older than the four canonical gospels and even was used as a source document to them¹⁰. Gnostics were a group of people among the early followers of Christ and they believed in Jesus, his message and in an individual witness which is revelatory experience of divine.

2.2 St Paul

St Paul was very important for the growth of Christianity. He was known as the builder of a Christian empire. He built his empire not by

¹⁰ Nag Hammadi Scripts, *An Introduction to Gnosticism*, The Gnostic Society Library

sword but by teaching and persuasion. St Paul established the empire of Christianity by missionary work. He was a Jewish person before. He was born in Tarsus. He had to leave there and came to Damascus. The harsh Roman rule resulted in migrations for the Jews. He learned about Christianity in Damascus.

Jesus saw himself as a reformer of Judaism. He believed that the rabbis were not obedient to the Old Testament. He preached as a Jew. Few people believed him. Other Jews become opponents of him. After his death his followers tried to survive and spread his teaching. There were 12 apostles who spread the teaching of Jesus according to the Orthodox Christianity. St Paul was not among these 12 apostles. He took the teaching of Jesus out of Jerusalem. He brought it to Antioch firstly. The teaching was out of Jerusalem now and it spread quickly in the East as in the western part of the Empire.

St Paul was the first missionary and launched the missionary movement. He preached the teaching of Jesus where he went. He went to Anatolia, the Balkans and Rome. He wrote letters to the people on Christianity and its doctrine. Christianity was spread by the missionary movement of him. Christianity widespread and grew on an organizational structure. St Paul released Christianity from being a sect of Judaism. If it had stayed among the Jews it would not have been spread. Christianity after the crucifixion became an independent religion from Judaism. The Jews have been looking for a new messiah for their ideal on establishing a state.

A sect of Jews, Hassidic Jews do not accept the state of Israel because it was not established by the expected messiah.

All roads go to Rome in that time so St Paul went there. He had a universal point of view. Christianity should have become the religion of all mankind according to him. Rome was the center of the Empire. Therefore, it was the most suitable place to spread a message. Followers of Jesus were small in number at first and they were poor people: poor artisans and slaves who had economic and social disadvantages. Christianity refused slavery. Jesus promised them a good life after death. Throughout of the trips of St Paul clergy emerged. While he was traveling from place to place he appointed certain people called the Episcopi- Presbyteroi. They would survive the religious activities after him in their cities. They instructed and lead the community about the faith. Then the class of clergy started to emerge. After Paul's death this class developed. The organization of church developed and took the example of Roman state by dividing provinces. Church organized itself according to Roman administrative system. Even before Christianity became official religion church organization had started and developed. Actually, one of the reasons for its becoming official religion was this powerful and well-established organization.

Christianity was favored because Jesus was a personal Savior and a link between man and God. He preached on the salvation, on the immortality of the soul and on the releasing from sins. His preaches gave the satisfied answers to the people's questions on religious subjects. Christianity brought hope to the people for their future and the future of the

world. The second coming of Christ would establish the kingdom of God on the earth. The hope of people was constructed on this idea for the future¹¹. Worshipping was an emotional need. People want help and hope for something good for them from supernatural thing. It was a way to release from pains and problems of life. Christian faith came in a problematic time in terms of economy and social in the Empire. People found hope for themselves in another world in Christianity.

2.3 Persecutions of Christians

Roman Empire was a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic empire. This multi-cultural society was bind to the emperor with emperor-worship. The emperor was the divine authority. The emperor worship was a sign which the subjects showed their obedience to the emperor. There were many different religions and religious activities. The different religions were tolerated by the state as long as the emperor worship continues¹². The relationship between Christianity and the state was peaceful at first. The state did not intervene in the activities of Christianity. When the state realized that it was a threat for the official authority, it took measures against it. Christians refused to serve in the army because the teaching was non-violence and not to take up arms. They also rejected to give official prayers and official services which belong to a pagan system. These events shook the authority of the state on the subjects. People now were obedient to Jesus and God not to the emperor. Some emperors were very harsh against

¹¹ Wallace Klippert Ferguson and Geoffrey Bruun, *A Survey of European Civilization*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958), p. 90

¹² Mehmet Çelik, *Siyasal Sistem Açısından Bizans İmparatorluğu'nda Din-Devlet İlişkileri*, (İzmir: Akademi Kitabevi, 1999), p.6

the Christians. Persecutions were held on the Christians. The state did not interrogate the religion itself. It did not think why this religion spread so quickly. Christianity was the religion of poor people at first but in time it was embraced by aristocracy and other classes of the society. The church organization was so powerful and it threatened the state authority. The state thought of its authority and held the question politically. All emperors were not so harsh against Christians and they could survive.

In spite of persecutions, number of Christians increased and Christianity strengthened. The people who were persecuted regarded as martyrs and holiness was given to death. “Blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church” explain the rapid growth of the Church and the effect of the persecutions on Christianity¹³. Maybe, Christianity became a reaction of people to the state’s bad rule. They were not comfortable with state and they could not upraise. Now they had a faith, which shake and was against the authority of the state. They found a mean in order to be against the state. Things, which are punished and pressed, become more favorable. Therefore, the answer of Christianity to the persecutions was to grow stubbornly.

At first, Christianity was seen as a sect of Judaism by the state. Judaism had lived in the Empire by toleration. Christianity did not meet with a reaction from the state when it was spreading all over the Empire. Its quick and well-built organization attracted the state’s attention. Christianity

¹³ Kenneth M. Setton, *Great Problems in European Civilization*, (Prentice- Hall, Cliff Englewood, 1996), p. 47

had become a powerful religion. It was not a sect any longer¹⁴. Emperor Trajan (98-117) launched an organized struggle against Christianity. In 111 he issued an edict to local administrators and wanted them to persecute people who embraced Christianity. He also said them to forgive and not to punish the people who accept and turn the emperor worship. Trajan sentenced church fathers in the East. He sent the Christians in the army to exile. Moreover, he persecuted 11000 people because of their faith. Then, for 150 years there was not a systematic persecution of Christians in the Empire. The edict of Trajan was accepted and applied by his successors. The local administrators had the authority to apply it how harshly. In the reigns of Hadrian (117-138) and Anton (138-161), the properties of Christians were taken by the state. In the time of Marcus Aurelius (161-180) there was huge struggle against Christianity. Pagan people and the state accused Christians with losses in the wars, economic deprivations and the bad fate of the state because Christianity made pagan gods angry. Septimus Severus obliged to be Christian with a decree in 202. The Christianity survived underground. Until the time of Decius Christians were not disturbed by the state. Decius held severe persecutions. Everyone had to prove their faith which had to be paganism with a document. Many Christians turned back to paganism. However, the conversion of Christians to paganism might be only on the document. Their brain and heart might continue to think and to feel with Christianity. In 250 Decius commanded all citizens to take part in the emperor worship. His aim was to protect the

¹⁴ Mehmet Çelik, *op.cit.*, pp. 8-9

Empire from collapse and he held the question of Christianity. The people who refused his rule would be punished. There was great persecution until the death of the emperor. Then, the persecutions continued but sometimes they were stopped. In the times of break the diminished population of the Christians was increased by the missionaries who proposed to people to be martyrs. Christianity became more popular for the subjects and more dangerous for the state. After Decius there were not organized persecutions until the time of Diocletian (284-305). Until 303, Christianity had lived its free times in the Empire. Churches were founded in the big cities. Diocletian with the influence of Galerius started a policy against Christians. All the churches in the cities were destroyed. Christian soldiers in the army were deposed. Books of Christians were punished. Citizenship rights of Christians were taken and they were not citizens of the Roman Empire then. Christians in the government offices were also deposed. These measures resulted in revolts in Syria and Anatolia but they were suppressed by the state. Diocletian was a reformer and wanted to turn the Empire to the traditional, pagan values to turn the prosperous time of the Empire¹⁵.

Christianity had taken a deep impact in this time. Then, Constantine changed these policies. Christianity could find prosperous environment to survive. Diocletian made many reforms in administration. He thought emperor as a sacred figure and he strengthened central authority. For the aim of centralization and unity, religion was used and the emperor worship

¹⁵ Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners, A History of the Popes*, (New Heaven: Yale University Library, 1997), p. 17

was obliged to all people with severe measures. His aim was absolute monarchy and the branch of it was religion, which was represented by the emperor himself. Constantine continued and completed the reform work of Diocletian. He chose the same path with Diocletian but the religion which was used for the imperial authority was different in this time. It was Christianity.

CHAPTER III

CONSTANTINE AND HIS POLICY TOWARDS CHRISTIANS

Constantine made religion part of the state by accepting Christianity. The core of his political ambitions was Christianity. His policies towards the Christians and heretics were the surrenders of this core. His reign was a preparatory for the Medieval Europe.

Constantine started the process for the Roman Empire to become Christian Empire. He actually recognized Christianity and did not persecute the Christians. Why did he accept Christianity? Did he embrace it personally and sincerely or did he think politically in protecting Christianity? Both of the probable reasons might play important roles. He sympathized with the religion and he wanted to gain the Eastern part of the Empire where the Christian community constituted the majority of the population. The construction of Constantinople also was a sign of importance that was given by the emperor to the Eastern Empire. The emperor's authority on Christianity increased and the emperor became the head of the Church. This situation was current for the Eastern Church. The church was under the sway of the emperor in Constantinople.

Constantinople was at one of the best junctions for sea connection and commerce. Constantine called it as New Rome. New Rome

differentiated from Rome because it was in the East and it was influenced by the eastern culture and life style. New Rome became the center of the Roman Empire and of the religion under the guardianship of the emperor. On the other hand, Rome was only religious center with its autonomy. In Rome the bishops were independent and they thought that their sacred authority was superior to the imperial and worldly authority. However, this distinction between the Eastern and the Western Churches was not clear in the time of Constantine. Constantine's reign was a starting point for the distinction and differentiation between them. Constantine created Constantinople and he and his successors created for them a center of the Empire and a center of church in which they could supervise all works of the state and religion. Constantinople's religious and central authority was raised by the special concessions which were presented by the emperors. In Rome they could not succeed this. Therefore, they founded another city for their absolute authority in state and religion. The most important thing for Constantine was the prosperity of the state and his political ambitions. He inspected the persecutions on the Christians were in vain and dangerous for the unity of state¹⁶.

When paganism was dominant in the state the emperor was worshipped. In the Christian times the sacred characteristic of the emperor continued. Therefore, the emperor became a supreme character of the church in the East. In Rome he could not succeed this supremacy. The Pope

¹⁶ Mehmet Çelik, *Siyasal Sistem Açısından Bizans İmparatorluğu'nda Din- Devlet İlişkileri*, (İzmir: Akademi Kitabevi, 1999), p. 15

from the tradition of the two apostles was the supreme authority with his sacred nature over the temporary power in Rome.

In the time of Constantine, the Christians were tolerated and their religious activities were made legitimate. Christianity became a religion with privileges given by the state. Many edicts were issued and religious freedom was given to the Christians and all others. Christian clergy's public office responsibilities were abandoned. Public funds were opened for the Church. Christianity was glorified and became a good source of power for Constantine and his successors. There was not persecution of pagans but there was a discouragement on them.

Constantine had been in the East in the time of Diocletian and Galerius. He was born in the Latin speaking part of Illyricum, in today's Nis in Serbia. His enemies had larger armies than him but he defeated them. He supported Christianity in his army and in the Empire although Christianity was the faith of the minority¹⁷. Constantine and Licinius, the emperor in the East, were neutral against the persecutions in the time of Diocletian and Galerius. The co-emperors Maxentius and Maximinius had issued persecutions when they ascend to the throne. They were defeated by Constantine and Licinius. Constantine and Licinius tolerated Christianity but Licinius did not want to go further in the reforms for Christians. Constantine defeated him also in 324. He took no action against paganism. In the time of Constantine, the Christians were the minority part of the

¹⁷ Warren Treadgold, *A Concise History Of Byzantium*, (New York: Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire), p. 19

population but their organization was well-built and powerful. Constantine thought to take Christians as allies for the advantages of the state because they had an organized power which the Empire needed¹⁸.

Constantine worshiped the Sun God with the influence of his father. His mother was Christian and he had been influenced by her also. He sympathized with Christianity. Constantine did not give up worshiping the Sun God until the end of his life because by this way he provided for the allegiance of the pagan subjects. Christian priests became his advisors and he gave back properties of the churches in his territories and he built churches. On the other hand, Licinius had also given back the church properties in his own lands. Maximinius, the co-emperor in the East, was persecuting Christians and Licinius defeated him¹⁹.

Constantine realized the benefits of the support of church and clergy. He wanted to establish a universal monarchy and for the sake of this purpose the alliance with the church was important. He forecasted that the Christians were widespread and they could not be stopped by persecutions. Then, he wanted to use the advantages of Christianity, which was a powerful religion. He made use of Christianity for the administration of his huge empire²⁰.

His political reforms were related with his ambitions which were established on the foundation of Christianity. Constantine followed Diocletian and continued the administrative reforms begun by Diocletian.

¹⁸ Wallace Klippert Ferguson and Geoffrey Bruun, *A Survey of European Civilization*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958), p. 91

¹⁹ Warren Treadgold, *op.cit.* pp.18-19

²⁰ Wallace Klippert Ferguson and Geoffrey Bruun, *op.cit.*, p. 91

Diocletian saw the emperor as a sacred figure which had to be worshipped. The principle of absolute monarchy and administrative centralization was strengthened in his time. The Senate no longer had an effective role.

The administrative reforms of Diocletian and Constantine had much influence on the Byzantine Empire. The strict centralization of power and a vast bureaucracy had continued through Byzantine history. The purpose of centralized power in the Empire and the autocratic characteristic of it needed Christianity as a powerful weapon. Constantine wanted to use this weapon in order to bind his subjects to himself and to the Empire. He searched for an identity among the people through religion.

According to Eusebius, the writer of *Church History*, Constantine needed and expected a divine sign and help for his battle against Maxentius beside his military power which was weaker than that of his enemy. He believed that he would be invincible with divine help and protection. Allegedly, he saw a miracle and a sign of a cross on the sky. His army also saw the miracle. On the cross, “conquer by this” was written. At the night of this miracle’s day Constantine dreamed of Christ with the same sign. Christ said him to use this sign as a safeguard. Then, Constantine used the sign against his enemies and his army carried the sign as an emblem. Constantine attributed holiness to his victory on Maxentius at Milvian Bridge, near Rome. He might have thought that he could provide his authority as emperor in the West easily and he would be a powerful emperor in the eyes of people. People would appreciate an emperor who was supported by

divine powers. He was inspired and informed by the divine manifestation and divine teaching. He devoted himself for this teaching in his life²¹.

It was claimed that Constantine thought only of the political benefits of Christianity and because of his purpose of universal monarchy he supported Christianity. On the other hand, it was indicated that he personally believed in Christianity as a faith. As a politician he thought for the sake of the Empire. Maybe he abandoned his personal feelings. Many leaders made some self-sacrifice for the favor of their subjects and their society. We must look at what he did. He made the Empire a free world for the Christians. Constantine's point of view on Christianity must be held in the framework of politics not in his private conscience.

About Constantine's conversion Jacob Burchardt, the writer of *The Time of Constantine the Great*, depicted him as a political opportunist and claimed that he has used Christianity for his political purposes²². Constantine was seen as a Christian but his personal feelings were never showed. Constantine had a secular spirit and had enormous feelings for power. He saw Christianity as a source to get world power. The religion itself was not important whatever paganism or Christianity. The source of power was important for him. He was unreligious man. Among his personal feelings, his political feelings were shown excitedly by the edicts and actions which were the favor of Christians.

²¹ Kenneth M. Setton, *Great Problems in European Civilization*, (Prentice-Hall, Cliff Englewood, 1966), pp.73-74

²² *ibid*, p.69

On the other hand, Norman H. Baynes, in his work, *Constantine the Great and the Christian Church*, expressed opinions which were opposed to Burchardt. He believed and claimed that Constantine converted Christianity and totally embraced it. He assumed that Jacob Burchardt's tension for Constantine is a prejudice and he assessed the past with the values of his days. Edward Schwartz, in his work *Kaiser Constantin und die christliche Kirche*, supported that Constantine was the first emperor who held a huge power in the Church and in the Council of Nicaea and he was superior to the church. He used the organizational characteristics of the church for his ambitions. He wanted to be the sole administrator of the Roman World and he wanted his pagan and Christian subjects to be obedient to him alone. Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria from 328, opposed Constantine in the Arianist dispute because of his patriarchal ambitions not because of the true doctrine or not because he defended the independence of the Church. Both Constantine and Athanasius focused on power according to Schwartz²³.

French historian Boissier, in his work *Fall of Paganism*, said that Constantine was not concerned about any religion; he preferred the religion which would bring the most benefit to him. On the other hand, he indicated that it was risky for a politician to support the minority part of the population. Adolph Harnack, the writer of *The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, agreed with Jacob Burchardt and Boissier and claimed that Constantine chose to support Christianity to get benefits of the

²³Kenneth M. Setton, *Great Problems in European Civilization*, (Prentice-Hall, Cliff Englewood, 1966), pp.66-69

powerful church. Constantine wanted to introduce the Christian Church to the organism of the state. In the time of Constantine, Christians composed of one tenth of the total population and they had not political importance. They had not taken any part in political affairs. The political theory on the conversion of Constantine became invalid because of this reason according to Alexander A. Vasiliev. Some historians said that Constantine was influenced by the Zoroastrian state church in Persia. Moreover, Constantine was the continuator and executer of a policy which was commenced by the others. He was not the sole champion of Christianity according to some historians. Henri Grégoire, in his work, *La 'conversion' de Constantin*, said that before Constantine Licinius followed a policy of tolerance toward Christianity.²⁴

Constantine was not an Agnostic and a despot nor one who exploit religion for the sake of state according to Francis Dvornic. He was sincere in his conversion and absolutely believed in the Holy Spirit. He embraced also autocratic monarchy which gave absolute authority to the emperor on his subjects and made him holiness. The emperor was the representative of God and Christ to impose Christian teachings on the subjects²⁵.

The letters of Constantine to Anulinus, the proconsul of Africa, and to Caecilian, the bishop of Carthage, on the properties of the Church and the discussions of the bishoprics can prove the attitude of Constantine towards

²⁴ A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1952), pp.45-49

²⁵ Francis Dvornic, *Konsiller Tarihi*, (Ankara: TTK, 1990), p.4

Christianity²⁶. He ordered the return of property to the Church in his letter to Anulinus in 312 before the Edict of Milan. He called Anulinus as honored, beloved and esteemed in his letter. He wrote that the confiscated properties which belonged to the church would be restored because the Church had the right to own them. This attitude was formed on behalf of rightness by Constantine. In his letter to Caecilian, the bishop of Cartage, he gave economic support to the Churches in North Africa and ordered the support of imperial power. He mentioned the Donatists, who were opposed to the legitimacy of bishopric of Caecilian, as persons of unstable mind in this letter. He had given commands to Anulinus, the proconsul, and to Patricius, the vicar of Africa, that they would inspect the matters of Donatists. Caecilian could go to these officials when he found the people in “*this madness*”. These officials would turn these people from their error, he said. In another letter to Anulinus, Constantine released clergy from the services to the state (liturgies). The clergymen who belong to holiness must serve only to the holiness; they must perform their divine worship only. They would be free from all public burdens because they had supreme service to the Deity. This service was already a huge benefit for the state according to Constantine²⁷.

Why and how he followed a policy on the favor of the Christians is not the subject. The result was his policies and support for Christianity. The numbers of the churches increased in his time and the Christians could

²⁶ Kenneth M. Setton, *Great Problems in European Civilization*, (Prentice-Hall, Cliff Englewood, 1966), pp. 69-70

²⁷ Eusebius, *Church History*, Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd series, (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1990) Vol.I, pp.380-384

openly assemble and the thinkers could discuss and write on Christianity freely. This brought the division of opinion on interpretation of theology.

Constantine mentioned a supreme god in his letters. He wrote on the favor of the Christians and their god. He believed in this god and in his victory through its help. His letters tell us the behavior and attitude of Constantine toward Christianity. He embraced Christianity certainly whatever the reason, political or personal. The point is the situation of Christianity in the Empire and its effects on the future of the Empire. He wrote about the holiness and holy on the situation of the Catholic Church.

3.1 Edict of Milan

Constantine and Licinius, the emperor of the Eastern Empire met in 313 at Milan and agreed on a policy of freedom for all religions in the Empire. They issued Edict of Milan and brought religious freedom in the Empire. Christians were not going to be persecuted because of their belief. The Edict of Milan gave equal rights Christianity with the other religions. The Edict of Milan did not denounce paganism. It did not mean the predominance of Christianity in the Empire²⁸.

Before Constantine, Gallienus recognized Christianity as a legal religion with an edict of toleration in 260 or 262. He accepted that he had failed because the persecutions did not stop Christianity's spread. When he was dying because of cancer in 311, Galerius stopped the persecution of

²⁸ A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1952), p.52

Christians because he thought that his ill was a punishment of Christian God. The edict of Galerius promulgated that:

Christians may exist again, and may establish their meetings, yet so that they do nothing contrary to good order. Wherefore, in accordance with this indulgence of ours, they will be bound to pray their God for our estate, that of the commonwealth, and their own²⁹.

According to Paul Lemerle, there was no Edict of Milan: Licinius and Constantine met in Milan in 313. The policy which would be followed on the Christian question might be one of the subjects of this meeting. There were two documents from this period. Licinius issued a decree in June 313 for the governor of Bithynia. This decree gave liberty of conscience and property to the Christians. This is in fact the document known as Edict of Milan according to Paul Lemerle. The second document is a prayer. It was composed by Licinius and thought to his soldiers before the battle against Maximinus. These documents were issued in the East. Licinius proclaimed these documents in order to gain the support of his Christian subjects in his battle against Maximinus. On the other side of the Empire Constantine wanted Christians' support for his battle against Maxentius so he approved these documents³⁰.

According to many historians there was one edict of tolerance which was issued by Galerius in 311. It recognized Christianity and gave Christians the right of assembly.

Licinius confirmed the edict of Galerius in 313 in Nicomedia, modern day İzmit, by a proclamation. The document from the meeting of

²⁹ Eusebius, *Historia Ecclessia*, viii, 17, 9-10, in A. A. Vasiliev, op.cit, p.51

³⁰ Paul Lemerle, *A History of Byzantium*, (New York: Walker, 1964) pp. 11-13

Constantine and Licinius in 313 at Milan was not an edict but a letter to the governors of provinces in Asia Minor and in the East. They explained how the governors should treat Christians in the letter according to A. A. Vasiliev and Henri Grégoire³¹.

Kenneth M. Setton also argued that there was no Edict of Milan and the policy of Constantine on Christianity was already demonstrated by the letters written to Anulinus and Caecelian. Otto Seeck, Norman H. Baynes, Henri Gregoire, J.Knipfling and Erich Caspar claimed that no Edict of Milan was proclaimed. On the other hand, Licinius wrote to the governor of Bithynia on 15 June 313 on the policy which was applied toward the Christians. This document was called as Edict of Milan³². Constantine and Licinius proclaimed that:

In our watchfulness in days gone by that freedom of worship should not be denied, but that each one according to his mind and purpose should have authority given him to care for divine things in the way that pleased him best, we had given orders that both to the Christians and [all others liberty should be allowed] to keep to the faith of their own sect and worship...When I, Constantine Augustus, and I, Licinius Augustus, had come under happy auspices to Milan, and discussed all matters that concerned the public advantage and good, among the other things that seemed to be of benefit to the many, - or rather, first and foremost- we resolved to make such decrees as should secure respect and reverence for the Deity; namely, to grant both to the Christians and to all the free choice of following whatever form of worship they pleased, to intent that all the divine and heavenly powers that might be favorable to us and all those living under our authority. Therefore, with sound and most upright reasoning we resolved on this counsel: that authority be refused to no one whomsoever to follow and choose the observance or form of worship that Christians use, and that authority be granted to each one to give his mind to that form of worship which he deems suitable to himself, to the intent that the Divinity may in all things afford us his wonted care and generosity...³³

³¹ A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1952), p.52

³² Kenneth M. Setton, *Great Problems in European Civilization*, (Prentice-Hall, Cliff Englewood, 1966), p.75

³³ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, X, 5, 1-14, II, 445FF., in Kenneth M. Setton, *op. cit.*, p.76

This proclamation sounds the independence of belief for all subjects. Christians were given the right to believe and to worship freely by the emperors. This was toleration of Christianity. If the proclamation was called as Edict of Milan, i.e. the toleration of Christianity there was obviously an Edict of Milan. Moreover, the Christians' places to gathering would be restored by economic support of the state. The confiscated churches and the private buildings of Christians would be restored to them. They mentioned that they did all these things for the common and public peace and the divine care for them would continue. With saying that "our generosity and enactment may escape the notice of no one" they hoped to be loved and obedient by their subjects.

The war between Constantine and Licinius in 324 was depicted as a religious one by Eusebius in his work *Church History* and Constantine also saw this war as a religious war according to Norman Baynes³⁴. After this war, Constantine wrote again on the matters of Christianity for the declaration of his attitude. He wrote a declaration both in Latin and Greek languages on how "he and not himself was the author of his past victories". He wrote to the churches of God and to the heathen. In his letter to the heathen, Constantine mentioned the Divinity as against the danger and the evil for the human race and the commonwealth. This Divinity was the supreme and true God. He believed that he was an instrument to defeat evil and the dangers with the aid of divine power and to perform the Divine will on earth. He believed that he was chosen by god for these works. He would

³⁴ Kenneth M. Setton, op.cit., pp.77-78

bring the grace of God and remedies for all people especially the people of the East who had lived in suffering for years.

It was unavoidable that Constantine thought in political framework when he decided his policy on Christianity because he was a politician. He had to think in the circumstances of politics. He thought again politically in his battle against Licinius who started persecutions against Christians. Constantine aimed to stop these persecutions with his battle but the main reason was to rule alone. Licinius deposed Christians from the governmental affairs and from the army. He confiscated the properties of many Christians. The Christians could not assemble and continue their education by the prohibitions of Licinius. Their worshipping rights were restricted. The different policies of the two emperors resulted in a war. Constantine defeated Licinius in 324 and could adopt his religious and political ambitions in every part of the Empire.

3.2 Constantine's Policy against Heretics and the Council of Nicaea

Constantine believed that God gave him the power to bring peace and unity in the civilized world by the help of Christianity. He saw Christianity as an instrument of unity and concord in the Empire. However, Christianity even in itself was not unified. In this situation he saw himself as a reconciliatory to bring unity in the Church. His successors also followed him and took the problems in the church as their main duty. Constantine had the ideal of unity in the church and in the Empire. The situation in the

Church did not fit with his ideal and he tried to create his ideal by imperial power.

The deviant belief of a minority in the Church was called as heresy by the dominant part of the church. The division between the accepted view and the rejected view was made by the political powers after a debate of opposing sides. Christianity has to define clearly the doctrine to defend itself against pagans in the time of attacks so the debates of dogma started.

3.2.1 Donatist Dispute

When Constantine came to Constantinople he saw that the bishops in the East could not solve the problem of Donatists. Then, he decided that the bishops must have a leader who had to show the way to them³⁵. Constantine's attitude toward the heresies was in style of condemnation. Donatists were regarded as heretics.

The church of North Africa was divided in itself. Bishop of Cartage, Caecilian was not accepted by a group, which followed Donatus and was called as the Donatists. The Donatists did not accept people who quit the religion during the persecutions and then repent as Christians. Constantine thought that such disputes make people opposed against God and as well as himself. He said that he would not be comfortable until all people accept Catholic religion with the binds of fraternity in 314. Constantine said that the Donatists were in a "*mad furor*". These people had gone away from the holy Catholic law, according to Constantine. He decided that there would be

³⁵ Norman H. Baynes, *The Byzantine Empire*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 83

a person in Rome for judgment on Caecilian and on all who were against Caecilian, the Donatists. The Donatists attributed Caecilian as an unworthy priest because before he repented he had abandoned the faith during the time of Diocletian's persecutions.

The Donatists had written to Constantine and wanted him to send bishops from Gaul for deciding who the real bishop of Carthage was to be. Constantine wanted the Pope Miltiades, who was the bishop of Rome, to appoint three bishops from Gaul for an investigation in Africa. This was the first direct intervention of an emperor in the affairs of the Church³⁶. It is significant that the church itself wanted an emperor's intervention and it resorted to the imperial power to solve its problems. The other significant point is that the emperor commanded the Pope. This meant he saw himself superior to the spiritual power and could command over it.

The bishop Miltiades of Rome requested a church council, which decided on behalf of Caecilian against the Donatists. There was a synod in Rome with Gallic bishops, fifteen Italian bishops, the Pope, Caecilian and the Donatists. This synod excommunicated Donatus and declared Caecilian as the true bishop of Carthage in October 313. Then, the Donatists went to Constantine again. He called a council of many bishops in Arles. The new pope, Sylvester I did not go to Arles. Constantine respected the Papacy and he approached the issue with respect. Constantine ratified the decision of Council of Arles on the Donatist issue. The synod wrote the Pope and asked

³⁶ Eamon Duffy, *Saints & Sinners, A History of the Popes*, (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 21

him to send their decision to the other bishops. It recognized the seniority of the Pope rather than the emperor.

Constantine wrote a letter to the Catholic bishops in the council of Arles. According to him, the judgment of the bishops must be regarded and accepted as the judgment of the Lord himself. He condemned Donatism and its supporters. Moreover, he wanted the Vicar of Africa to send the Donatist people to the court and find them guilty. He attributed that the Donatists were “the evil purpose of the devil”. Constantine in this letter wrote his feelings on the true faith, which belonged to Catholicism according to him. The Catholic law was the true law and heresy must return to this law. According to Constantine, God would not allow heresy. He said “the hated wishes of certain people” about the Donatists’ ambitions. He had sent the Donatist issue to the bishops for the judgment of Christ. The bishops would not take any decisions which were not coming from the teachings of Christ³⁷.

The Donatists appealed to Constantine for judgment but he passed the issue to the bishops, because he thought that he was not authorized to decide on the religious issues. This shows that the respect of Constantine for the church was high. Constantine ordered his officers to bring the people who supported the views of Donatism and to punish them with the worse punishment than death.

³⁷ Kenneth M. Setton, *Great Problems in European Civilization*, (Prentice-Hall, Cliff Englewood, 1966), p.72

3.2.2 The Dispute on Arianism

The Donatist issue was not related with the discussions on dogma. However, the dispute on Arianism was born on the essence of the Christian faith and it threatened the security of the state.

Arius, a priest in the church of Baucalis from Alexandria, defended that Jesus was less than God but more than a man. He emphasized on the human character of him. He did not accept the father and son tradition, which was the basis of Christian dogma. He subordinated Jesus to God. The name of his sect was Arianism. Arianism became so effective. Arius had supporters from the church of Antioch and the Origenists. The dispute on Arianism became bigger and spread from Alexandria to all over the East and to the other parts of the Empire in the time of Constantine. The emperor's attention was attracted on this dispute.

The Holy Trinity was the essence of Christianity. Its destruction attracted many opponents. Orthodox Christians called themselves true believers against heresy. They defended Holy Trinity and differentiated themselves from heresy with the adjective of true. Heresy was only a different idea from the accepted view but it could not be tolerated and it was a kind of sin. It was not the true faith. Arianism was popular among the so-called barbarian tribes. The hate against barbarians and against the sects of Christianity combined and caused intolerance. The Christian East divided into branches because of the dispute on Arianism. Athanasius who was a deacon first then became the bishop of Alexandria was the chief opponent

of Arius. He was the leader of a group of clergy who defended the faith against Arius's doctrine.

Before Christianity became the official religion, even during the time of Constantine the numbers of various churches were many and Christian thinkers could openly write and discuss. The faith of Christianity on the Holy Trinity was not understandable and was obscure, therefore the disputes on the son and God relationship started and the heresies occurred. Christianity was divided into various opinions and interpretations theologically. Constantine realized that Arianism would be a great threat in the near future. He thought not only from the religious point of view but also from the political point of view. He supported that the people who had the same faith were governed more easily. He considered heretics as a great danger for the unity of the Empire. Constantine also thought that Arianism could prevent the conversion of pagans to Christianity. He wanted to stop the spreading of this teaching. He intervened in controversy and held the control.

On the other hand, after the defeat of Licinius in 324, Alexandria became the second important city of the Roman Empire and Egypt became the wheat store for Italia. The economic importance of these provinces was high for the Empire and because of the economic sources of these cities the emperor was attracted by the religious disputes. He sent his advisor, bishop

Hossius, to Alexandria to calm down the dispute. Hossius could not succeed to bring peace in the Alexandrian church³⁸.

Alexander of Alexandria was the bishop of Arius. A council of one hundred bishops from Egypt and Libya condemned Arius. The council was held by Alexander³⁹. The doctrine of Arius was condemned by Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria, in 318. It was condemned by Egyptian council with 100 bishops. However, Arius continued to spread his doctrine. Firstly, Constantine sent letters to the bishop of Alexandria and Arius, with Hossius, bishop of Cordova. He tried to settle the arguments but his letters were not effective. Hossius told the problem with all aspects and its importance to Constantine. Then Constantine decided on a general council at Nicaea to settle the dogmatic controversy.

Constantine convoked the first ecumenical council in order to condemn heresy. Many bishops from the East and the West gathered at Nicaea. The Council of Nicaea adopted the Nicene Creed in which Jesus Christ was recognized with full divinity and humanity. The dogma of Holy Trinity and the doctrine for the Christian religion were settled for the first time in this council. Council of Nicaea was a triumph for the Holy Trinity and the Orthodox faith. The state took a part in the religious disputes and directed them beginning with Constantine. This was the first time an emperor took a part in deciding on religious dogma. This affected the future relations between the state and the church. In the future the emperors

³⁸ Francis Dvornic, *Konsiller Tarihi*, (Ankara: TTK, 1990), p. 6

³⁹ Peter L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), p. 17

followed the policy of Constantine and they took their parts which were executive in the religious issues. The Council of Nicaea was the first example of Caesaro-Papism, which meant that the emperor was both an administrator and a kind of pope.

The council was opened on 19th June in 325 in the presence of the emperor. The bishops who joined the council of Nicaea were mostly coming from the Eastern part of the Empire. Bishops from the West were few. The bishops of Carthage and Milan and two representative priests of the Pope Sylvester were among the Westerners who joined the council of Nicaea. The Pope did not come because of his old age and sent two representatives. Arianism was older than the Roman and Orthodox faith and it was also spread in the West but the problem of Arianism was seen as the problem of the Eastern churches mainly by the bishops of the West. However, this council was held for the sake of unity in the church and the West also took its part in the council. Most of the sessions were presided over by Constantine. Among the bishops, Hossius of Cordova, who was the chief religious advisor of the emperor, had a very important role in the council.

The process of assembling at this council was the same with that of Roman senate. The emperor lectured about the reason and aim of the calling a council and the subject of the council at the opening speech of the sessions. The bishops expressed their views one by one as the senators did at the senate's meetings. 318 bishops accepted the formula, which was

proposed by the emperor. The Creed was formulated and ratified by the bishops and the emperor⁴⁰.

The first subject of the council was Arianism. In the council, Arianism was regarded as heresy and condemned. However, it could not stop the Arian controversy. Arianism survived and gained new supporters. The successor son of Constantine in the East even supported Arianism.

The other subject was the date of Easter which was not fixed by all the churches in the Christian world. There was not a common date for Easter celebration between the churches in the Empire. The council did not determine a fixed date but it said that there would be a union between the churches. The emperor himself insisted on a union celebration. The document about Easter from the council said that Constantine summoned the council to bring peace in the Empire, he himself dealt with “what was good for the Catholic Church”. The Romans and the Alexandrians had agreed on a common date but the other Eastern Churches did not accept this date. In the council it was asserted that the Eastern Churches should agree with the Romans and Alexandrians on the date. All the Eastern churches who had a different practice signed this decision. Constantine in his letter on the council of Nicaea to the churches said that “Christian Easter must be celebrated on the same day by everyone. The churches must conform to the practice followed by Rome, Africa, Italy, Egypt, Spain, Gaul, Britain, Libya, Greece, Asia, Pontus and Cilicia”⁴¹. The decision of the council said

⁴⁰ Francis Dvornic, *op.cit.*, p.7

⁴¹ Peter L’Huillier, *op.cit.*, pp. 20-23

that the date of Easter would be the same Sunday in all churches. The discussions continued on the date after the council. The laws were issued in 413 and 423 against people who celebrated Easter on a different date from the Catholic Church's celebration. They would be sent to exile. In time there became a union date.

The Council of Nicaea dealt with the problem in the church of Egypt which was created by Meletius and his followers. Meletius was the bishop of Lycopolis in the Thebaid and he saw himself authoritative to attain bishops and priests to the churches in his region. By doing this he challenged the authority of the bishops of Alexandria. In the time of persecutions between 305 and 311, his actions were against the rights of Alexandria as a bishopric. He brought a schism in the church of Egypt. The Meletians were 35 bishops in the time of the Council of Nicaea. The bishop of Alexandria had had the right to control all episcopal activities because of the centralizing tendency. The power must be in one hand and its control would be easy by the state. The Council of Nicaea asserted that the authority to control episcopal activities in the region (Egypt, Libya and Pentapolis) belonged to the church of Alexandria. The status of Meletius and the bishops who were appointed by him was decided by the council. The decisions on the schism created by Meletius in the council were written in the synodal letter to the churches of Egypt, Libya and the Pentapolis. None could be ordained as bishops without the approval and consent of the bishops of the catholic and apostolic church of Alexandria according to this letter. In the Canon 6 of the council it was underlined that anyone who

became a bishop without the consent of the metropolitan would not be accepted as a bishop. The prerogatives of the churches in Antioch and in the other provinces would be preserved according to Canon 6 of the Council of Nicaea. The Meletian schism was not doctrinal but threatened the hierarchal and centralized structure of the church.

There were canons which depicted the laws which the bishops should obey. There would be three bishops to decide on the issues of the bishops. The subjects about church discipline were also discussed in the council. Not many new laws on the church discipline were issued but the old laws which had been ignored were reemphasized. Metropolitan system was brought by the council. The bishops in the metropolitans gained privileges rather than the other bishops in the provinces. There would be Exarques in Rome, Alexandria and Antioch. The Exarques were in all centers of provinces. The emperor had a chief role in the organization of the council and in the council itself.

Roman church had the first place in the council and then. The emperor recognized the power and authority of the bishops and respected them but he was aware of his own authority also. According to him, everything which decided in the holy council of bishops was coming from the God's desire.

The importance of the Council of Nicaea was that it brought a new dimension in the relations between divine and worldly powers. The emperor for the first time was in the ecclesiastical disputes and from now and then

emperors had more powerful and authoritative positions in the church affairs⁴².

Constantine saw a great danger in Arianism for the Empire. Unity of faith was the best for the unity of the Empire. He wanted peace and order in the church and in the Empire. Constantine called for the first ecumenical council. When this council met Christianity was not the official religion. Constantine attributed himself an authority to intervene the church issues. From that time emperors could call ecclesiastical councils and the power of emperor on the church or in the church had increased.

This council decided on the doctrine and created a creed. It also condemned heresy. The hierarchy and authority of the bishoprics were decided. Moreover, it brought laws on the bishops. These were the main elements of this council and the other councils then. All ecumenical councils dealt with these subjects for the aim of unity and state control in the church.

3.3 Constantine's Attitude towards Arianism

The council did not put an end to the dispute on Arianism and brought about many new similar movements and complications. Constantine himself started to change his attitude toward the Arians. He realized that the Nicene decisions did not coincide with the beliefs of the church majority and conflicted with the desires of people in the East⁴³.

⁴² A.A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, (Wisconsin :The University of Wisconsin Press, 1952), p. 54

⁴³ *ibid.*, pp. 56-57

He had arguments with Eusebius of Nicomedia who was an Arian bishop. Eusebius said that the saying “Father and Son are of the same substance” might mean that Christ came from the Father. Constantine was influenced by these arguments and could not produce stable policy in regard to Arianism. He exiled Athanasius and then he recalled him⁴⁴. Maybe he was confused and could not find a way to go on safely and peacefully. When he died in 335 in Nicomedia, he had been baptized by Eusebius. The policies of Constantine on Arian controversy showed that he had not understood Christian faith truly and perfectly⁴⁵.

Constantine gave his support to the semi-Arians who claimed the Son resembles the Father only. He deposed and exiled Athanasius in 335. This was an important point in the change of Constantine’s thought on the religion. Constantine thought on political rather than religious because he wanted to bring an end the disputes in Egypt which was one of the most important and richest cities in the Empire. The Arians believed that if the emperor was the representative of God in a holy empire, believing in the Son was a threat for the authority of the emperor. In this situation, both the emperor and the Son became the representatives in the world and the idea of absolute monarchy was endangered. Constantine might be influenced by this idea. His son Constantius absolutely believed in this idea and served for it⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ Warren Treadgold, *A Concise History of Byzantium*, (New York: Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire), p. 24

⁴⁵ *ibid*, pp.24-25

⁴⁶ Francis Dvornic, *Konsiller Tarihi*, (Ankara: TTK,1990), p.9

One of the outcomes of Constantine's policies towards Christianity was the loss of independency of the church. On the other hand, Christian Medieval Europe was a product of Constantine's embracement of a religious policy on the favor of Christianity and his containment in the religious affairs. The main characteristic of Medieval Europe was Christianity and its dominance on the all parts of life. The most important characteristic of Byzantine Empire was Christianity. With his conversion and his possessiveness of Christianity with his imperial protection Constantine put an important stone in creating the prosperity of Europe and the Roman Empire.

In Byzantine Empire the situation and the relationship between the divine power and worldly power, religion and state, continued as in the time of Constantine. In the West, after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, the role of the emperor was held by the Church with its chief, the Pope.

Constantine was an illiterate man. He did not understand the religious issues. He forced his subjects to embrace the Nicene doctrine which was different from the doctrines in the Eastern part of the Empire with political interests. There were many churches in the East, as Armenian Church and Syriac Church. The Nicene Creed excluded the beliefs of the Eastern Churches. Moreover, the Gospels of Philip and Thomas, the Gnostic Gospels, were not accepted as canonical in the council. They told the life of Jesus historically best.

CHAPTER IV

CONSTANTINE'S SUCCESSORS UNTIL JUSTINIAN

Constantine's successors dealt with the defense of Christianity against heretics and the defense of the Empire against the invaders. While they were fighting against barbarians they were divided by the religious disputes.

There was a rivalry between the East and the West in the time between the reign of Constantine and the reign of Justinian. Firstly, because of Arianism the religious policies of the Eastern and the Western Empires conflicted. Then, new doctrines, Nestorianism from the church of Antioch and Monophysitism from the church of Alexandria occurred and made the situation worse. The attitude of the churches of Constantinople and Rome was different to the new doctrines most of the time. Sometimes, Rome fought against Constantinople which supported these doctrines. Sometimes, they fought together against the doctrines which were regarded as heresies. At the end, they agreed on the same point against the heresies but the important parts of the Eastern Church, Alexandria and Antioch alienated themselves from Rome and Constantinople. Christianity developed in different ways in the East and the West. The vitality of the Roman Empire in terms of politics and authority of emperors was in the East.

Constantine's successor in the East, Constantius (337-361) embraced the Arian doctrine. He followed the religious policy of the last years of his father's life. He carried out a persistent Arian policy. He recalled the Arian bishops to the service and deposed the Orthodox bishops. He issued edicts on behalf of Arianism and convoked councils. Arianism lived its most prosperous times in the reign of Constantius. There were still many pagans in the Empire. The Roman senate and aristocracy were still mostly pagan. Constantius had issued some oppressive edicts against the pagans.

Constantius believed in autocracy and declared that "what I want must be regarded as the rule". He wanted union in religion. Many church councils were convoked in his time. These councils which Constantius supported had contradictory decisions. For example, Council of Antioch in 341 decided on behalf of Nicene Creed but Council of Arles in 353 had a conclusion with Arian tendency. Constantius approved and followed the decisions of the councils in the time of his reign he did not lead them. Constans, the emperor of the Western Empire, was an orthodox and supporter of Athanasius and the Pope Julius.

The diversion between the East and the West was powerful that time. They both believed in the Nicene Creed but their interpretation to the doctrinal matters were different. Arianism began to divide the Eastern and the Western churches. Constans, the emperor of the West, had wanted a common council of the Easterners and the Westerners and he persuaded his brother. However, the subject of Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria and

an ardent opponent of Arianism, resulted in two different councils. Council of Sardica was divided as the Eastern and the Western.

The council of Sardica in 343 was held by both the Easterners and the Westerners. The subjects were the question of the deposition of St Athanasius and his colleagues and the question of the faith. The Easterners and the Westerners met in Sardica. The Easterners refused to join the council and the discussions unless the joiners of the council excluded Athanasius and his followers. They returned to Thrace where they held a separate council. They excommunicated Hosius, the bishop of Cordova, Athanasius and the Pope. The council at Sardica of Westerners restored Athanasius and excommunicated the opponents of him. They accepted the Nicene Creed. Both the councils thought that they were right. In the council of Sardica the gap between the Eastern and the Western churches revealed⁴⁷.

The problem of Athanasius represents the diversity, which resulted from Arianism, between the Western and the Eastern Churches. The Eastern bishops had condemned the Pope's right to receive into communion a man. The Pope had accepted Athanasius into communion. Athanasius and his friends were regarded as equals among the Western bishops. The Westerners stressed the right of Rome as a final court in diverse matters on the other bishops of the Empire in the council of Sardica. The Easterners wanted to be free in their own matters and they did not accept the absolute authority of Rome.

⁴⁷ Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners, A History of the Popes*, (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1997), p.23-24

Constantius had a great enthusiasm to solve the doctrinal matters in the Empire. Synods in Arles in 353 and Milan in 355 condemned Athanasius. Liberius, the bishop of Rome, Athanasius and Hosius were the opponents of the emperor as he thought and he took action against them in the Council of Arles and Milan in 355. They were actually the opponents of the religious policy of the emperor and he regarded them as obstacles for his absolute control on the church. Liberius was sent to exile. Hosius of Cordova protested the emperor against persecutions.

There was a struggle between the Pope Liberius and the emperor on Athanasius' position. At the end, Liberius excommunicated Athanasius too after the pressures of the emperor who wanted the support of the Pope to control the Eastern Church effectively⁴⁸.

In regard to the policies on paganism, in a union edict, Constantine and Constantius in 342 wanted the temples to be untouched and uninjured. They wanted Rome's construction to survive. According to them the superstitions must have been eradicated but the temples must not have been destroyed⁴⁹. Constantius ordered the abolition of superstitions and sacrifices of paganism. The person who did not obey this command would be punished. He said that this obligation was the law of his father, Constantine. However, Constantine had not taken any action against paganism. He had not given any harm to the temples and paganism. He had given toleration of faith⁵⁰. In another edict, Constantius forbade to enter to the temples. Temples would

⁴⁸ *ibid*, p.25

⁴⁹ Codex Theodosianus, XVI, 10.3

⁵⁰ Codex Theodosianus, XVI, 10.2

be closed down⁵¹. These edicts had little effect. Constantius himself did not want to be destroyer of temples. Constantius had sympathies for the Easterners, opponents of Athanasius. However, his views were not strict and permanent. He tried to find a way to reach to the most of the population in terms of faith and policy. He did not specify strictly the faith he believed. He took the widest measure of belief like his father⁵².

Athanasius in his *Historia Arianorum* of 358 depicted Constantius as the forerunner of Antichrist. He did not accept the time as a peaceful time with Christians and not a time of persecution. The enemies of Christ issued persecution which was never arisen before⁵³. He regarded Arianism and its spread as a persecution which was mainly made in his interpretation of dogma. The words of Athanasius show the ideas of the Western Church on the religious policies of the East. The Western Church was independent from these policies. It could reject the emperor's chosen sect and could call it heresy.

The reign of Constantius was a period of triumph for Arianism in the Eastern part of the Empire. Constantius' successor Julian followed a different path in his religious policy from his cousin, Constantius and his uncle, Constantine.

⁵¹ Codex Theodosianus, XVI, 10.4

⁵² J. Stevenson, *Creeds, Councils and Controversies*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1989), pp.27-28

⁵³ Athanasius, *Historia Arianorum*, ed. J. Stevenson, in *Creeds, Councils and Controversies*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1989), p. 77

4.1 Julian's Reign

After Constantius, Julian came to the throne in 361. He adopted not Christianity but paganism. He tried to revive paganism and he wanted to make it state religion. The emperor himself held the organization of paganism, which must be brought to the level to fight Christianity. He reorganized pagan worship and the priesthood. He borrowed numerous characteristics from Christian organization. He ordered that the pagan temples reopened and sacrifices made to the gods. The triumph of paganism was not a menace for the Christians at first. The emperor announced that every man could follow his chosen religion without fear. He thought that, in this freedom environment, Christianity would be disunited and the sects would be free and disunited Christianity would be no longer dangerous for paganism⁵⁴. Then, the emperor brought some restrictions on the Christians about their teaching and studying. He recalled the enemies of Arianism from exile. They had been exiled in the time of Constantius. He removed Christians from important state offices and forbade them to teach in schools.

In his letter to the Athenians (270C-272A) Julian mentioned his days in exile. He was sent to exile by Constantius because of his religion to Ankara and Cappadocia. Constantius with the fear of abdication by his relatives sent them to exile and forced them to live a sort of prison life. Julian wrote that his brother died because of this deprived life and he was saved by philosophy. They could not take education, could not see their

⁵⁴ A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1952), p. 73

friends. They lived as slaves. This kind of life in six years might draw the route of Julian's religious policy during his reign.

According to the writings of Ammianus Marcellinus, Julian pretended to have embraced Christianity. In fact, he had abandoned it long time ago. He could not show his personal feelings. A few people knew his real faith. Until he gained power sufficient to defend himself, he did the necessities of Christianity: he went to the church and prayed⁵⁵. In his same work, Ammianus Marcellinus wrote that Julian admired to the worship of the gods from his earliest childhood. When he became an adult he absolutely believed in them. He had fears and he lived his faith secretly. When he held the absolute power and when he saw there was no reason to fear he released himself. He issued decrees on the favor of paganism. He invited the priests of the different Christian sects to his palace and explained them everyone could live his faith without fear, there would be no obstacle⁵⁶.

Julian described Christianity "as a sort of disease" in the Rescript on Teachers (362). He described how education must be done. The teaching matters should have been from Greek culture. Christians would be excluded from education⁵⁷.

Julian compared his attitude toward Christians with his predecessor's. He said that many Christians were sent to exile, were killed and were put into prison. The villages of heretics were destroyed in the time

⁵⁵ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXI. 2.3-5, ed. J. Stevenson, in *Creeds, Councils and Controversies*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1989), p.53

⁵⁶ *ibid*, XXII.5.1-4, p.54

⁵⁷ Julian, Ep. 42 (36), 422A-424A, ed. J. Stevenson, *op.cit.*, pp.61-62

of his predecessor. According to him his reign was the contrary to his predecessors' in respect to attitude toward Christians. He recalled the people who were sent to exile and confiscated properties of Christians were given back. No one was obliged to take part worship to pagan gods against his will. He said that he had behaved to all Christians with kindness and benevolence and any Christian has suffered violence and they were not force to worship against their will in his one of the writings⁵⁸.

The turn back in the religious policies of an emperor to paganism from Christianity was an interesting point of the Roman history. Before Julian, Christianity was strengthened by the emperors and was embraced by the state. Therefore, the revival of paganism as a state policy could not survive against Christian policy. If the religious policy of Julian had been followed by his successors, it could have been permanent but Julian was alone in his attempts to bring back paganism as the state religion.

After the death of Julian, Christianity revived and pagan temples began to be closed. His restrictions for Christians were removed but the pagans continued to celebrate their rites until the reign of Theodosius I who was an ardent orthodox Christian. Jovian permitted everyone to worship what his conscience dictated⁵⁹. After the failure of the pagan revival, Christianity became again the imperial religion and again Arian controversy began to diverse the Eastern churches. Christianity was restored to its

⁵⁸ Julian, Ep. 43(40), 424C-425A, ed. J. Stevenson, in *Creeds, Councils and Controversies*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1989), pp.63-65

⁵⁹ Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III. 25.4-9, 17-18, ed. J. Stevenson, op.cit., p. 69

former position during the reign of Jovian. He was a supporter of Nicene Creed. He proposed religious toleration both for pagans and Christians.

4.2 Valentinian I and Valens

On the death of Jovian after a short reign, Valentinian I (364-375) was chosen as emperor by the generals of the army in the West. He gave the rule of the East to his brother Valens (364-378). Valentinian I in the West tried to follow a democratic religious policy. There was an independent environment for a while in his reign. He followed the Nicene Creed personally but he was tolerant of other creeds. He issued a decree that “each man was granted with the freedom of worshipping whatever his conscience said him.” Valentinian I did not intervene in the religious affairs and did not issue any laws in the religious matters. He was neutral in the religious differences. There was religious toleration in the Empire and the religious parties were free in the time of Valentinian I⁶⁰.

The dogmatic controversy was in the East and the emperor of the East dealt with it. Valens followed the example of Constantius and gave his support to the Arians. Valens was intolerant towards other creeds. He made persecutions against the other sects. During the reign of Valens, Arianism was dominant in the East. The religious disputes continued. Anomoeism and Homoeism were two interpretations in Arianism which started to be divided in it. Valens supported the homoean party. He sent some orthodox bishops to exile. Arians in that time began to suffer from divisions and quarrels

⁶⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, XXX 9.5, ed. J. Stevenson, in *Creeds, Councils and Controversies*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1989), p. 70

among themselves. They had no definite statement of their faith to hold them together. Following Valens' death, Arianism was deprived of imperial support and began to perish. The disputes on Arianism ended but new problems which derived from theological discussions were waiting for the Western and the Eastern Churches.

Valentinian I and Valens issued an edict against Manichaeans. They could not assemble and if they assembled their teachers would be punished. The properties of Manichaeans would be confiscated to the treasury. Manichaean doctrine was called as the profane doctrine in this edict⁶¹. This edict shows the emperors' behavior to the other belief. The toleration of Valentinian I was also limited and he did not follow totally democratic policy on religion.

4.3 Reign of Theodosius I

Gratian the son of Valentinian I had succeeded his father in the West. He chose his colleague in the East a Spanish count, Theodosius I (379-395). Gratian and Theodosius I were grown in the West and they were strictly orthodox.

Theodosius I believed in absolute monarchy and he was very enthusiastic to control religious matters. Theodosius I issued an edict which confirmed that anyone who did not follow the orthodox faith was a heretic on February 28, 380. As soon as Theodosius I entered Constantinople Demophilus, the Arian bishop of the church of Constantinople was deposed.

⁶¹ Codex Theodosianus, XVI. 5.3

The meetings of the Arians and other heretics were forbidden and their churches had to be given back to orthodox bishops by an imperial edict.

Theodosius I held the problem of Arianism to crush it. In 380, he issued an edict threatening all heretics with legal punishment. Moreover, the imperial edicts restored all orthodox bishops and Arians were forbidden to hold services or built churches. All churches in Constantinople were given to the Nicaeans. Only the people who believed in Nicæan Creed were regarded as Catholics. Arians were exiled. Arianism took its last breath in that time.

His restrictions on pagans were as harsh as on the heretics. In 391 and 392, Theodosius I issued strict laws against paganism. Sacrifice to pagan gods was forbidden because it was regarded as treason. Pagan temples were destroyed by radical Christians or they were closed and converted to churches by the state. Meanwhile, in the West Gratian had removed the altar and the statue of Victory in the Senate at Rome.

Theodosius I understood that the religious disputes which divided people could also resulted in political divisions among people⁶². He thought that he could solve the religious problems by increasing the state control on the religious affairs. Religious divisions could threaten the unity of the Empire and the power of the emperor. Hence, he issued a strict and determinant religious policy against the pagans and the heresies. Theodosius I had deadly impact on paganism. On the other hand, the heresies could not be stopped and the religious disputes in the churches continued.

⁶² Auguste Bailly, *Bizans Tarihi*, çev. H. Saman, (İstanbul: Tercüman Yayınları) , p.24

4.4 The Second Ecumenical Council

In the time of Constantius and Valens there were discussions on Arianism between the orthodox of the East and of the West. Actually, there was not dogmatic question between two orthodox parts but the East wanted to be independent from the see of Rome and any other church of the West before the Council of Constantinople⁶³. In the time of Theodosius, Arianism had lost power because the Arians had been divided among themselves but the church councils continued to assemble and to condemn Arianism.

The Council of Aquileia in 381 was a Westerners' council by the influence of the bishop of Milan, Ambrose. The Easterners could have joined it if they wanted. From the letter of Ambrose, it is understood that Arianism was discussed in the council of Aquileia and decisions against Arianism was taken⁶⁴. In Epistle X.8 Ambrose asked the emperor to help in carrying out the council's decision. Ambrose accepted the authority and power of emperor to adapt the decisions of Church but he did not avoid opposing to the emperor. Ambrose excommunicated the emperor Theodosius I who ordered the massacre of civilians at Thessalonica after the murder of an imperial official before he had refused the imperial authority on ecclesiastical matters.

Theodosius' aim was to bring peace and harmony in the church and in the state. The religious disputes had resulted in the destruction of political stability in the state. The emperor also wanted to regulate the organization

⁶³ Peter L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), p.105

⁶⁴ Ambrose, Epistle, X.1-4, ed. J. Stevenson, in *Creeds, Councils and Controversies*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1989), p.125

of the churches. The authority of the church of Constantinople among the other churches should have been increased by the state in order to bring the religious institutions under the control of the state. Therefore, he held an ecumenical council in 381 at Constantinople to reassert the Nicene Creed and to end the doctrinal disputes. The aim of the council was to bring unity in the Christian world. The council confirmed the declaration of the Nicene Creed. In the time of Theodosius I, Orthodox doctrine strengthened and was accepted as the state religion. The other religions and doctrines were not allowed in the Empire. The bishops of the council appealed to Theodosius I to take approval of him. They wrote a letter to Theodosius I and explained their decisions and aims. They wanted him to ratify the conclusion of the council. The bishops wanted to have the support of law for their decisions.

Second ecumenical council was the triumph of Orthodox doctrine. Canon 1 of the Council of Constantinople ratified the faith of the Nicene Fathers. It regarded other creeds as heresies and condemned them.

There were canons for the rights of bishops and the churches in the council. Canon 2 said that bishops who were outside of a diocese must enter churches in their own regions. The bishop of Alexandria would administrate the affairs of Egypt only, and the bishops of the East must deal with the affairs of the East only. The privileges of the church of Antioch from the Nicaean Council would be preserved. Asian, Pontic and Thrace dioceses would administer the affairs of their regions only. The bishops could not go outside of their dioceses for the purpose of ordaining or any ecclesiastical function. The central administration system was tried to be strengthened

with these decisions of the council. The organization of the bishops was settled.

The council also established the rank of patriarch of Constantinople in relation to the bishop of Rome. The patriarch of Constantinople shall rank next to the bishop of Rome. The Church of Constantinople was regarded as superior to the other churches in the East. Canon 3 said that the bishop of Constantinople shall have the Primacy of honor after the Bishop of Rome, because Constantinople is New Rome. This canon was not against Rome but against Alexandria which tried to impose its heretic thoughts on all churches in the time of Arian controversy and wanted to be the master of the Eastern churches⁶⁵. This canon was a political decision. It was issued in order to increase the state influence on the religious life. The center of religion and the state would be in the same city and the state would be able to manage the affairs of the church easily. This canon disturbed the churches of Alexandria and Antioch very much. Their authority was passed by Constantinople. The council aroused the reaction in Antioch and Alexandria whose bishops were opposed the place of the bishop of Constantinople.

On the other hand, this decision was unacceptable to Rome. This was seen as an imperial claim to control of the church. Constantinople did not have apostolic past which was needed for precedence. The council disregarded the apostolic characteristic of Rome and said that it had been the capital of the Empire and it had the primacy in the church. Therefore, the new capital of the Empire should have had the primacy after Rome. The

⁶⁵ Francis Dvornic, *Konsiller Tarihi*, (Ankara:TTK, 1990), p. 11

bishop of Rome, Damasus and his successors refused to accept the canons of the Council of Constantinople. This was the Western reject to the imperial interests on the church. A council of Western bishops after a year declared that the Church of Rome had the primacy over all the other churches because of the apostolic precedence. Besides, the second church in precedence was Alexandria and the third one was Antioch because they were apostolic churches.

Theodosius I declared that there could be no toleration in religious matters. There was a state religion which was controlled by the emperor. Theodosius I wanted to be the head of the church affairs in the Empire and the aim of his religious policy was to create a single Nicene Creed. He also aimed to create a unique and uniform church but failed. He believed that emperors' authority should be on the church and religious life of his subjects⁶⁶. At this time, Saint Ambrose claimed that the issues of the church and questions of doctrine should not be intervened by the temporal powers.

The emperor who was the representative of God in the world became the highest rank of the church with the policies of Constantine and Theodosius. They supported the power of emperor with new roles such as the head of church. According to them, religious unity with the emperor as its representative and symbol was the real unity of the Empire⁶⁷. The emperor's authority on the church was accepted by the Eastern bishops but the Western ones opposed it as long as they could.

⁶⁶ A.A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1952), p. 79-83

⁶⁷ Auguste Bailly, *Bizans Tarihi*, çev. H. Saman, (İstanbul: Tercüman Tayınları), p.24

4.5 The Council of Ephesus

The administration of the eastern provinces was difficult for the central government because their population composed of different races and they favored different religious doctrines of Christianity such as Arianism. When Nestorianism and Monophysitism emerged as different doctrines from the official and accepted one the eastern provinces became more problematic for the state.

The council of Nicaea had established that Christ was both God and man. Arguments started on the two natures of Christ. In Antioch, a doctrine which supported that the two natures are separate was embraced. The founder of the doctrine was the Antiochene presbyter Nestorius. Because of him this new doctrine was called as Nestorianism. The human nature of Christ was more important according to Nestorianism. Christ was only a man became God. The Church of Antioch embraced the teaching in the end of the 4th century. Nestorianism said that there was no complete union of the two natures of Christ. Then, it concluded that the human nature is independent from Divine nature in Christ.

When Nestorius became the patriarch of Constantinople a period of religious disputes started. Nestorius tried to impose the teaching of Antioch upon the whole Eastern churches. He persecuted his opponents. Nestorius started to fight against Arians as soon as he became bishop and he decided to destroy a chapel of the Arians in the fifth day after his ordination. The churches of Rome and Alexandria protested and condemned him and his teaching.

“Give me, O Emperor, the earth purged of heretics, and I will give you heaven as recompense. Assist me in destroying heretics, and I will assist you in vanquishing the Persians” were the famous words of Nestorius to the emperor after he became the bishop of Constantinople in 428. These words explain the reciprocal alliance between the state and the church in the East. The state fought against the heretics for the church and gave economic and political support for it.

Nestorius wrote about his teaching to the clergy in all parts of the Empire. He gained many supporters. His activities for spreading the teaching brought about religious disputes and divisions in the Eastern Church. The Church of Alexandria rejected the teaching of Antioch and then it started to spread its own teaching, Monophysitism, on the Eastern Churches. The two doctrines clashed in the East. These two doctrines were the demonstrations of the rivalry between the churches of Antioch and Alexandria.

Trouble arose because the issue became political. The bishops of Alexandria were against Nestorius and Antioch’s doctrine because there was a harsh struggle between Alexandria, Antioch and Constantinople. They quarreled with each other for being the chief church in the East. They all wanted to be the leader of the Eastern Christians. Moreover, Alexandrian bishops embraced Monophysitism which stressed the divine nature of the Christ. This was averse to Nestorianism which upheld the human character of the Christ. The followers of Cyril of Alexandria, the founder of Monophysitism, believed that the human nature was completely absorbed

by the divine substance in Christ and Jesus Christ has one-divine nature. The incompatibility between Antioch and Alexandrian churches was not only because of the theological differences in this situation. Both of them wanted to be on the first rank church in the East.

Nestorius wrote letters on his thoughts on the faith to the Pope but he was not answered. The Pope was anxious about the situation in Constantinople. He rejected the doctrine of Nestorius.

Cyril, the bishop of Alexandria, also wrote to the Pope for support in his struggle against Nestorius. He also tried to get support of the emperor, Theodosius II and the imperial family. Rome and Alexandria came together against a common enemy. The Papacy investigated the doctrine of Nestorius and concluded that the opinions of Nestorius were not related to the orthodox faith. Then, Rome summoned a council in August 430 and condemned Nestorius. If Nestorius did not change his doctrine in ten days, he would be excommunicated. Cyril also called a council. The bishops under authority of Cyril went to Nestorius in order to tell him the demands of Rome and Cyril's twelve anathemas. Cyril wanted to compose Christological doctrine according to the Alexandrian terminology. This demand was refused by the Nestorians and by many other bishops in the East. Then, the emperor called a general council for the peace of the church and in order to settle the arguments between the bishoprics. In this situation the churches of Rome and Alexandria were against the churches of Constantinople and Antioch. The importance and the accuracy of the Roman council on Nestorius were ignored by the imperial decision on a general

council. The emperor thought that nothing had already been decided on the matter and everything would be decided in this council in complete independence. But this did not any objection by the Papacy. The Pope sent his representatives to the council⁶⁸.

The bishop John of Antioch and his supporters wanted to put Cyril on trial for his anathemas so Cyril opened the council of Ephesus before the coming of John of Antioch and the papal delegates. John who was a sympathizer of Nestorius would have been an opponent in the council. Cyril had the support of bishop Memnon of Ephesus and bishop Juvenal of Jerusalem. They and their group of bishops played decisive roles in the council. The council tried to compose a religious declaration which was suitable to the Nicene doctrine. Nestorius' thoughts were found as contrary to the Nicene faith. Nestorius was excluded from all rank in the church. The first 6 canons of the council were related with the problem of Nestorius. Nestorius and bishops who were recruited by Nestorius were deposed. There was not a new dogmatic definition after the council of Ephesus. The second letter of Cyril to Nestorius was accepted as the expression of the Nicene faith.

When John of Antioch arrived at Ephesus prepared a separate council to condemn Cyril and his activities. The papal delegates supported Cyril and the decisions which were taken before their arrival. Then in a meeting the council excommunicated John and his followers.

⁶⁸ Peter L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), pp. 145-146

John of Antioch sympathized with the views of Nestorius but he did not agree with Nestorius' doctrine wholly⁶⁹. The members of John of Antioch's council in 431 declared that they assembled a synod according to the command of the emperors and to the grace of God. Cyril was excommunicated and dismissed from episcopate and from all ecclesiastical office because he held a private meeting without John of Antioch and the papal legates and he did not mention heretics (the Apollinarians, Arians, and Eunomians) in this synod. Cyril and Memnon were blamed of the originator of all the disorder and irregularity. John of Antioch's council accepted the faith of Nicaea and anathematized heretical propositions of Cyril. The second ecumenical council represented the clashes between the Eastern Churches. The church of Antioch and Constantinople were against the churches of Rome, Alexandria, Jerusalem and Ephesus.

The council of Ephesus upheld the views of Cyril and deposed the bishop of Constantinople, Nestorius from all ecclesiastical offices. This was assigned that the church of Alexandria started to increase its authority over that of Constantinople and Antioch.

Nestorius said that Cyril behaved as a judge and as both bishop of Alexandria and bishop of Rome. He meant that Cyril was as authoritative as the bishop of Rome in the council. He said Cyril was everything⁷⁰. Isidore of Pelusium, in Ep. I. 310, said that many people who assembled at Ephesus

⁶⁹ Francis Dvornic, *Konsiller Tarihi*, (Ankara: TTK, 1990), p. 13

⁷⁰ Nestorius, *The Book of Heracleides*, French tr., F.Nau, p.117; English tr. From J.F. Bethune- Baker, *Nestorius and His Teaching*, pp.38-39

thought that Cyril searched for his own animosities and he disregarded to serve in correct belief of Jesus Christ.

Two letters were written to the Pope and to the emperor to inform them about the decisions of the council of Cyril. Theodosius II sent a letter in the first days of August and wrote that it was necessary to follow the faith of Nicaea and the deposition of Nestorius, Cyril and Memnon. He wanted reconciliation between the churches. He invited the leaders of the rival assemblies to return home. Nestorius returned to his monastery in Antioch, he was replaced by Maximian in Constantinople. Cyril and Memnon were held as prisoners in Ephesus but Cyril managed to escape and returned to Alexandria. After that an imperial edict allowed him and Memnon to take up again their duties as bishops.

The problem of disunion between the churches in the East continued after the council. The aim of union was not succeeded. Pope Celestine and his successor Sixtus III (from July 432) tried to restore the relations with John of Antioch and his followers. The emperor also dealt with this problem and searched the ways for reconciliation between John of Antioch and Cyril, i.e. the churches of Antioch and Alexandria. In 433, John accepted the deposition of Nestorius and the condemnation of his doctrine. This reconciliation was called as Formula of Union. The Formula of Union was considered as an official definition of the church and the final act of the third ecumenical council. It stopped the disputes between Antiochians and the Alexandrians for a time. A law of August 8, 435, prohibited the adherents of Nestorianism to call themselves Christians; they were

forbidden to hold meetings. Nestorianism survived in Syria and Mesopotamia after its condemnation. The state had taken measures against the Nestorians. There was a Nestorian school in Edessa which was an important center of Nestorians. The school was closed in the time of Zeno in 489 because of the religious policy favoring Monophysitism. The teachers and the pupils of the school went to Persia and founded a new school there to spread the teaching.

The third ecumenical council was a victory for the doctrine, which was supported by Cyril and Alexandrians and for the church of Alexandria. It destructed the authority of the church of Constantinople. Cyril's and the church of Alexandria's doctrine was not purely orthodox and suitable to the Nicene Creed. Their doctrine accepted the divine nature of Christ only. This doctrine resulted in disputes and disunion in the church.

4.6 The Council of Dioscorus

The patriarch of Constantinople and the Pope Leo I opposed Cyril's teaching, Monophysitism which spread in Egypt and many other parts of the East. The Pope was disturbed by the heretical ideas and the political ambitions of the patriarch of Alexandria. Because Cyril and his successor Dioscorus were so powerful in the East. There could be a new papacy in the East. Therefore, the Pope intervened in the issue and condemned the Monophysitism.

Dioscorus was an ardent bishop for the hegemony of his church over the whole Eastern churches. He fought for the triumph of the Alexandrian faith. He had supporters in the diocese of the East and in Constantinople.

Eutyches was an ardent supporter of Alexandrians in Constantinople. He was the archimandrite of a monastery in the capital. He had networks to reach the Emperor. He tried to influence the emperor and pull him in the church affairs. Eutyches was accused of heresy in a synod by bishop Eusebius of Doryleum in 448. Flavian, the archbishop of Constantinople had influence in the accusation of Eutyches. The Pope Leo who was not pleased with what happened in Constantinople wrote to Flavian and stressed the co-existence of the two natures of Christ. This writing was known as the Tome of Leo. Flavian had written to the Pope Leo to inform him about the problem of Eutyches. Now, the churches of Constantinople and Rome were together against the church of Alexandria. Dioscorus did not accept the condemnation of Eutyches. The emperor Theodosius was not pleased with the condemnation of Eutyches too and he was doubtful with the orthodoxy of Flavian, he was under the influence of Monophysites.

In 449, a council was convoked by the emperor in Ephesus in order to restore Eutyches and for the condemnation of Flavian and his followers. Dioscorus was the dominant character of the council. Dioscorus' aim was to hold Alexandrian church as the dominant one in the East. Roman delegates wanted the letter of the Pope to Flavian to be read in the council but this request was not considered. The authority of the churches of Rome and Constantinople was passed by the church of Alexandria. Cyril's anathemas were approved by the meeting. The teaching of Dioscorus was accepted as the orthodox one and the opponents of the teaching were condemned. The

emperor supported the council's decisions. The Pope called it as robber council and demanded another general council to the emperor.

Dioscorus said that the Nicene Creed was the only true faith and nobody could create a new interpretation on the doctrine or could change the Nicene Creed. Bishops and clergy who make alteration on the religion would be removed from their rank and laymen would be deprived of communion. Dioscorus said that his council confirmed the Nicene Faith. Flavian, the bishop of Constantinople become a scandal to all churches and the Catholics everywhere according to Dioscorus. He was to be deposed from all Episcopal offices. The members of the council deposed him. All bishops in the council agreed on this and the decision was to be announced to the emperors. The authority of the church of Constantinople was ignored by the church of Alexandria again. The Alexandrian bishop could depose the patriarch of Constantinople with the support of the emperor.

Bishop Flavian disclaimed the authority of bishops who were attended the council. Flavian appealed to the Pope Leo on the council of Ephesus in 449 and wanted help on the controversies in the East. Flavian said that Dioscorus refused any general consideration of the decisions of Nicaea or of Ephesus 431. He wanted help for the right faith which has been recklessly destroyed and for the laws of the church in his appeal. He wanted the Pope to call a general council both of East and West.

The council had condemned the opponents of Monophysitism. It failed to establish harmony in the church. This was the second victory of Monophysitism. Dioscorus tried to persuade the members of the council to

accept Monophysitism. The emperor accepted new doctrine. The council was condemned by the Pope. Religious crisis and the disunion of the churches continued because the other bishoprics were against the authority and the doctrine of the Alexandrian church.

Dioscous' follower, Anatolius succeeded Flavian in 450. The new archbishop wrote to the Pope and informed his election. The Pope Leo did not write to the archbishop but he wrote to the emperor on this situation. He recognized Anatolius on condition that he accepts the second dogmatic letter of Cyril and his own Tome to Flavian as adequate expressions of Catholic doctrine. He sent his representatives to investigate the situation in Constantinople. The Pope wanted to keep an eye on the church affairs of the East in order to survive its leadership over the churches but the Eastern churches neglected the claims of precedence of Rome on the other churches.

4.7 Code of Theodosius II

The code of Theodosius II is regarded as the most valuable source on the internal history of the Roman Empire of the 4th and 5th centuries. It includes the period when Christianity became the state religion. It can be considered as a sort of summary of what the new religion brought about in the field of law. It contained the decrees of the Christian emperors from Constantine to Theodosius II⁷¹. In the code of Theodosius II the idea of the unification of the Empire was stressed strongly. Theodosius's Code included restrictions against pagans and heresies; their religious and civil

⁷¹ A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1952), p. 102

activities were prohibited. Some of the edicts in the code demonstrated that the emperors' religious policies and their intervention in the religious affairs.

A heretic group Apollinarians and all other followers of diverse heresies were prohibited from all places, from within the walls of the cities and from the society in the edict of Gratian, Valentinian II and Theodosius I. They could not ordain clerics and could not have the right to prepare religious meetings in public or private churches. The bishops who were appointed by them before would not be regarded as bishops then⁷². The Apollinarians and other heretics were condemned in also Codex Theodosianus XVI.5.12&13 of AD 383 and 384 and Codex Theodosianus 33 of AD 397 and Codex Theodosianus 65 of AD 435.

Gratian, Valentinian II and Theodosius I issued an edict to the people of Constantinople on the profession of the Catholic faith in 380. The edict said that all the people who were ruled by these emperors should believe in one faith which was the Catholic one. The emperors commended that the people who accepted the Catholic faith would carry the name of Catholic Christian. The others who did not believe in this faith would be heretics and their meeting places would not be called as churches. These people would be punished by God and then by the emperors according to divine judgment⁷³.

⁷² Codex Theodosianus, XVI.5.14

⁷³ Codex Theodosianus XVI. I.2

In 391, with an edict which was signed by Valentinian II, Theodosius I and Arcadius, paganism was prohibited. No one could sacrifice animals, could go to the shrines and to the temples. None could pay respect to the images. If someone did not obey these measures against the pagan gods he would be guilty by divine and human laws. Judges and governors who enter a temple for the purpose of worship or a journey would pay money to the state⁷⁴. The emperors in 392 wrote to Tatian, the Praetorian Prefect on the punishment of heretics. The heretics would pay ten pounds of gold and the land which they used for the heretical activities. These would be sources of the treasury⁷⁵.

In Codex Theodosianus XVI.10, 16, it was commanded that the temples in the country districts would be destroyed. The successor of Theodosius I in the West, Honorius and Theodosius II prohibited the persons who did not embrace the Catholic faith to service in the imperial palace. They said that the people who disagreed with them in faith and religion would not be associated with them in any way in Codex Theodosianus, XVI.5.42. In Codex Theodosianus, XVI.10.21, pagans were excluded from military and civil service. This edict was issued by Honorius and Theodosius II in 7 December 415. The pagans would not be admitted to the imperial service and they would not be reaching to the rank of administrator or judge, because they were polluted by the profane false doctrine or crime of pagan rites according to these emperors. Honorius and

⁷⁴ Codex Theodosianus, XVI. 10.10

⁷⁵ Codex Theodosianus, XVI.5.21

Theodosius II issued another edict in 8 June 423 on punishment of Manichaeans and the people who celebrate the Easter on another day with the others. These people were mostly Jews and pagans. They were sent to exile. On the other hand, they said that the truly Christians must not disturb and not abuse the authority of religion on Jews and pagans who are living quietly and orderly. The Christians who were violent against persons living in security or plunder their goods would be punished to restore the properties triple or quadruple amount of what they robbed. The governors and office staffs and the provincials who permitted the Christians to attack to the pagans and Jews who lived peacefully would be punished in the same way⁷⁶. Pagan temples were destructed in that time c.391.

Another code shows the discrimination among people in terms of their religions. Marriages of Christians and Jews were prohibited by the edict of Valentinian II, Theodosius I and Arcadius in 388. Jews could not be married to a Christian woman and Christians could not receive a Jewish woman. The marriage of Jews and Christians was regarded as a crime and the punishment for these people who did not obey this rule would be decided by the public⁷⁷.

4.8 The Fourth Ecumenical Council

Valentinian III became the emperor of the whole Roman Empire after the death of Theodosius II. The sister of Theodosius II, Pulcheria married with Marcian and he became the emperor of the Eastern Empire.

⁷⁶ Codex Theodosianus, XIV.10.24

⁷⁷ Codex Theodosianus, III.7.2; IX 7.5

Pulcheria was an enemy of Monophysitism. Marcian needed Valentinian's approval in order to be the emperor of East. Therefore, the religious policy must have been suitable to the Western one. The Alexandrian power of the religious affairs in the East must be stopped. The depositions of the Robber Council were abolished. Eutyches was sent to exile. Anatolius and his bishops accepted the Tome of Leo⁷⁸. Marcian wanted to hold an ecumenical council in order to exclude the followers of Monophysitism and the teaching itself from the official church doctrine but the Pope did not see a necessity for a council. It was enough the abolition of the depositions of Robber council. Marcian insisted on a council to regulate the dogmatic problem in the East in order to establish harmony in the church and to condemn Robber Council. The Pope accepted reluctantly and sent his representatives. He thought that the council was for the restoration of deposed bishops after the council 449 and there was no need to discuss on the faith because the faith was described by his Tome. The acceptance of his Tome was needed in the council only⁷⁹.

Marcian called the council at Chalcedon in 451 to anathematize the heresy and to settle the doctrine of Holy Trinity as the orthodox one. The heterodox doctrine had been discussed much in the East and had resulted in divisions should have been pronounced against. The authority of the Alexandrian church had been increased in the Empire. This meant that the political power of the emperor on the religious affairs decreased because the

⁷⁸ Peter L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996, p.185

⁷⁹ *ibid*, p.186

gravity of the religion was far away from the church of the capital. The aim of Marcian for a new ecumenical council was to strengthen the position of the church of Constantinople among the other bishoprics. The center of the religion and the state would be in the same city and they would be connected each other again. One of the eyes of the emperor could be on the church in the capital. He could control the religious affairs by this way. The political power of the emperor had been passed by the authority of the Alexandrian church and with a new council the state control on the religious activities should have been revitalized.

The council condemned the acts of the Robber Council of Ephesus. Dioscorus was deposed and excluded from every episcopal and priestly dignity in the council. Dioscorus had excommunicated the Pope and did not accept the letter of Leo to be read at Ephesus in 449. He acted very arbitrarily. The main reason for the deposition of Dioscorus was not dogmatic question but his arbitrary behaviors and his excommunication of the Pope Leo⁸⁰. The proclamation of Dioscorus on Flavian and Eusebius was read at the council of Chalcedon and Dioscorus was anathematized and condemned ardently. The bishops of Chalcedon said the names of the Pope and the patriarch of Constantinople together when they accepted the decisions on Dioscorus. This shows that the equal authority of the patriarch to the Pope was accepted by the bishops.

⁸⁰ Peter L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), p.189

Imperial commissioners wanted a new definition of the faith in the council. The Roman delegates and many other bishops did not want a new definition in the council of Chalcedon. The Roman delegates thought that there was Pope Leo's Tome which already had settled the doctrinal question. Besides, the Council of Ephesus in 431 forbade the composition of a new formula. Marcian thought that an official definition of the Church with Christological doctrine of the church was necessary. A commission was set up to formulate a new definition. The work and statement of commission was accepted in the council and it became the dogmatic definition of the 4th ecumenical council. The second letter of Cyril to Nestorius and his letter to the Antiochians with the formula of Union of 433, the Tome of Leo and Flavian's profession of faith were used by the commission's bishops to formulate the Chalcedonian definition. The creeds of Nicaea and of Constantinople have been renewed in the council of Chalcedon. The faith of these councils was reconfirmed by Chalcedonian council as Catholic and Apostolic faith. The first canon of Chalcedon accepted that all canons which were issued by all ecclesiastical councils up to the council of Chalcedon would continue in force. The dogmas approved by the council became the fundamental stone of the religious teachings of the Orthodox Church. The declaration said that Christ was a single person in two natures without confusion or change, division or separation.

In the 6th session of the council of Chalcedon, the emperor Marcian and the empress Pulcheria attended. Marcian said that there must be a single and well-defined faith and anyone could attempt create another

interpretations different from the faith of the apostles and of Nicaea and from the letter of Leo to Flavian. He announced severe penalties against those who might seek to cause troubles regarding faith.

The decisions of the council had also political importance. This council affirmed the authority of the Pope. The bishop of Rome should have the first place in the Church. On the other hand, 28th canon of the council declared that the bishop of Constantinople became the highest church authority in the East after Rome. In the 6th session, when the papal legates were absent, the members of the council accepted the 28th canon. Canon 9, 17 and 28 were related with the Church of Constantinople. Canon 28 attributed equal privileges to Constantinople with Rome. It said that Rome had been imperial city and had seniority. Now, New Rome, Constantinople, must have the privileges of the elder imperial city as a bishopric. Constantinople would be second after Rome. The metropolitans of Pontic, Asian and Thracian dioceses would be ordained by the Archbishop of Constantinople.

The church of Constantinople and the people in the capital were against Monophysitism. Emperor Marcian could get the support of the bishop Anatolius and of the clergy of the capital with giving privileges to the see of Constantinople in the council of Chalcedon⁸¹.

The council wrote a letter to the Pope Leo to inform him what they decided and wanted his guidance to the council. Leo annulled canon 28 of Chalcedon in 22 May 452 in his letter to Marcian, Pulcheria and

⁸¹ *ibid*, p. 110

Anatolius⁸². He said that Rome, Alexandria and Antioch were coming from the apostolic tradition. They were privileged because Petrus and Paul were there.

The Pope was not comfortable after the council because the patriarch of Constantinople had had enormous privileges which were the same with the bishop of Rome. The area which bound to the authority of Constantinople was widened. This point disturbed Rome. It had already lost the privileges as a capital of the Empire and now it lost its authority over many churches⁸³. This situation brought the Eastern and the Western churches to the opposite sides. Although not confirmed by the Pope the canon 28 was generally accepted in the East.

There were decrees about church disciplinary in the council. There were canons on clerical discipline and on the laws which bishops had to obey in the council of Chalcedon. Canon 3 of Chalcedon determined that bishops, clerks or monks could not administer possessions or undertake matters of business, or intrude into worldly ministrations, unless they were called by the laws to the guardianship of minors. This canon was based on the draft of the emperor Marcian. The emperor wanted the clergy to deal with only the services of God. By doing this, he discriminated between the people who served in worldly affairs and holy affairs. He controlled who would deal with what. There must not be confusion between the services for the sake of strict control by the state. Monks would be subject to the bishop

⁸² Leo, Ep.CV,2-3, to the Empress Pulcheria

⁸³ Francis Dvornic, *Konsiller Tarihi*, (Ankara: TTK, 1990), pp. 17- 18

of their city. Anyone could establish a monastery without the approval of the bishop of the city according to canon 4. The monastic life could control through the bishops who were controlled by the state. Canon 7 said that people among clergy and monks could not enter state service or any worldly office. Those who did so and did not repent would be anathematized.

In the Edict of emperor Marcian in 7 February 452 after the council of Chalcedon said that diversity of opinions on the orthodox religion among the people had settled in common consent and concord. However, he was wrong he made an early decision. The doctrinal disunity continued in the Empire.

There was disobedience in Jerusalem, Alexandria and Antioch against the decisions of the council of Chalcedon. The bishops revolted. They were angry with Constantinople's high authority and superiority among the Eastern Churches and in the Empire. The revolts in Alexandria became permanent. There was a separation from the center. Monophysitism survived in Egypt, Syria, and a part of Asia. The church in Egypt abandoned Greek and adopted the Coptic language at these times. Theological disputes resulted from national and political rivalries. Independent movement against Constantinople found its basis. The Egyptians regarded the supporters of Chalcedonian doctrine as the supporters of the emperor and the Empire. They found a neutral religion for themselves: Monophysitism. They demonstrated their disobedience to the emperor by the way of religion. Monophysite churches increased in the Egyptian and Syrian provinces and the pressures of the state on the Monophysites also increased. Many people

were killed by the state to secure order in the provinces. There were persecutions of the Monophysites. Monophysite people opposed to the state which did not provide them with religious freedom and the national feelings provoked this opposition in Egypt and Syria.

The state which opposed Monophysitism in the 5th century excluded the eastern provinces where the majority of the population supported Monophysitism. The Council of Chalcedon was important turning point in the history of Syria and Egypt. After the council the number of the heretics increased. These provinces started to enter the influence of Persia which was a permanent enemy of the Empire in the East. Monophysite people searched for secure life and went to Persia. The Monophysites in Persia influenced the Monophysites in the Empire.

The eastern provinces, especially Egypt and Syria had vital economic value for the Empire. Their loss meant enormous economic damage. Emperor Zeno (474-491) saw the danger and wanted to bring peace and unity in the Empire. He had worked in Antioch as a soldier before he became an emperor. Therefore, he knew the situation in this part of the Empire. Zeno issued in 482 the Act of Union, or Henoticon to reach some mutual agreement between the doctrine of Orthodox Church and the doctrine of eastern provinces. The Henoticon tried to avoid mentioning too clearly the two natures and any sign of disrespect toward either the orthodox or the Monophysitic teachings. The Henoticon recognized the religious foundations developed at the first and the second ecumenical councils and ratified the third council. It anathematized Nestorianism.

The Henoticon did not satisfy either the orthodox part or the Monophysites. The patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch were reconciled with the Henoticon but the monks who were provoking the people could not be pacified. The Pope, Felix III, rejected it. He was still uncomfortable with the autonomous tendency of the Eastern churches. He excommunicated the patriarch of Constantinople. He hoped to pacify the patriarch with fear. However, the schism broke out between the churches of the East and the West until 518 because the patriarch, Acasius excluded the name of the Pope in the church prayers. This had a big impact on the Christian unity. Then, the emperor Anastasius I (491-515) supported Monophysitism openly in his religious policy. The two parts of the Roman Empire were going to different paths. Anastasius I tried to make the Empire an Eastern Empire because he understood the Empire could not separate from Greek and Asia. Roman Empire became a memory which was respected only. There was nothing Roman in the Empire. It became a Greek and an oriental Empire according to him. The Council of Chalcedon seemed a victory of the Roman Church but it brought divorce between the Roman Church and Eastern one⁸⁴.

The religious policy of Anastasius I pleased the people of Egypt and Syria, but it was opposed by the people and church of Constantinople. His struggles did satisfy neither Alexandria nor Antioch at the end.

Zeno's and Anastasius' religious policies which favored Monophysitic doctrine were important both from the dogmatic and the

⁸⁴ Auguste Bailly, *Bizans Tarihi*, çev. H. Saman, (İstanbul: Tercüman Tayınları), p. 41

political point of view. By the end of the 5th century, the Western part of the Roman Empire had practically detached itself from Constantinople. The eastern provinces –Egypt, Palestine, Syria- became more important to the eastern half of the Empire. Zeno and Anastasius understood that the center of gravity had shifted. They tried to find the ways of attaching the eastern provinces to the capital because of their importance. These ways were related with religion which was seen as a powerful means for unity again. The Henoticon was the first step toward the reconciliation with the Monophysites. Anastasius followed a definite Monophysitic policy. Their Monophysitic policies confronted by the orthodox movement in the capital, in the Balkans and in Asia Minor. Anastasius did not succeed in bringing about the desired peace and harmony in the Empire. The religion in which union for the Empire was sought meant disunion itself. The Roman emperors could not see the danger in using religion for the unity of the Empire.

CHAPTER V

THE REIGNS OF JUSTIN I AND JUSTINIAN

Justin I followed an orthodox religious policy and supported the Council of Chalcedon. He searched the ways of reconciliation with Rome. He forced the Eastern bishops to accept a formula which was prepared by the Pope Hormisdas. The formula included the subjects of Acasius, who had been the bishop of Constantinople, and his teaching and Calcedonian faith. It underlined the primacy of Rome and said that Rome was an apostolic see which was the defender of the true faith.

Justin started a period of persecutions against the Monophysites. With the influence of his nephew, Justinian, he reconciled with Rome and the schism of Acasius came to an end. The emperor accepted the conditions of the Pope. He agreed to exclude Acasius and his successors. The names of Zeno and Anastasius were quitted from the church's prayers because they had supported the heretic belief.

Justin confiscated the Arian churches and made them orthodox churches. Arian Gothic people were forced to convert to Catholicism. Gothic king in Italy Theoderic wanted help from the papacy to stop the policies against the Arians in the Empire. The Pope John was wanted to go to Constantinople in order to persuade the emperor to end the persecutions,

to return the confiscated churches and to allow the forcibly converted people to turn their Arian beliefs. He accepted to go to Constantinople in order to want toleration for the Arian population. The Pope was met with a great joy in Constantinople. The emperor behaved him with high respect. On the Easter Day, the Pope went to the Hagia Sophia on a throne higher than that of the Patriarch of Constantinople. He celebrated people before the emperor in Latin and used the ritual customs of Rome. Moreover, he was allowed to place the Easter crown on the emperor's head. This had been made by the Patriarch before. All these things symbolized the authority of the Roman Church on the church of Constantinople and on the emperor. Justin accepted to treat in toleration to the Arians and to return their confiscated properties but rejected to allow the converted Arians to turn back their previous error. Theoderic was not pleased the consequence of the Pope's journey. After the Pope John, the Pope Agapitus I behaved as an ambassador and ally of the Gothic Kingdom in Italy and tried to persuade Justinian to postpone his conquest of Italy. The Popes helped Theoderic and tried to provide good relationship with him, who was a heretic; because they had no military power and he could not fight him. The Popes were not harsh against the heretics and there was a kind of toleration in the relationship of the Popes and the Gothic king for the sake of the interests of the two sides.

After the reign of Justin, which lasted seven years, Justinian ascended to the throne of the Eastern Roman Empire. Justinian wanted to establish the absolute, autocratic power of the emperor as the single source of authority. He made reforms in the administration, economy and the law.

He completed the predecessors' work from Diocletian in making the Empire as autocratic.

He had the ideals of an emperor both Roman and Christian. He considered himself as a successor of the Roman Caesars. He thought that it was his sacred duty to restore a single empire. As an orthodox Christian ruler, he had to defeat the Arian Germans in the territories of the Roman Empire. He had the mission of spread the true faith among the pagans and heretics⁸⁵. The Roman and Christian ideals crossed with orthodoxy. It was right to impose a single orthodoxy on all and to make authoritative decisions about the doctrines and organization of the church. According to Justinian, the power of the emperor comes from god. He combined the idea of empire with the idea of Christianity. He hated the new comers of Europe because they were invaders and heretics. His wars were made in order to reconquer and for holiness.

He thought that it was the right of the emperor to decide on religious dogma and to force his opinions on the church and on the subjects. He became the effective head of the church in the matters of faith as well as government. Meanwhile, the church became practically a department of the state. The Greek Church was never after able to free itself altogether from the supervision of the emperors. He favored papacy and the West in his religious policy. Pope Hormidas sent his representatives to Constantinople in order to put an end the sect divisions after the Justinian's ascend to the

⁸⁵ A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1952), p. 133-134

throne with Justinian's wish. Theodora, Justinian's wife favored Monophysitism because of the importance of the provinces in the East⁸⁶.

Theodora was the representative of the Eastern part of the Empire. She had intimate relationships with Syria and Egypt. However, these provinces were heretics who deserve torture according to Justinian. He thought that Eastern Roman Empire lost its splendor faith when it separated itself from the West. He did not accept so-called supremacy of Constantinople on the West. According to him, all countries which composed the Roman Empire earlier were bind to the emperor, himself⁸⁷. He concentrated on the West. In this case, the empress dealt with the East.

The idea of Roman World Empire and state supremacy were the most powerful in the time of Justinian. He tried to organize reunion of the Roman World Empire as a Christian-Orthodox state and to ascend the power of state supremacy to the highest level. He was a conqueror, a legislator and a reformist. He united the idea of World Empire and the idea of Christian state notion⁸⁸. The idea of Roman World Empire influenced his politics. This was the effect of Christianity on the Roman ideals.

According to Peter Sarris, the reign of Justinian was the most determined period of ruling in the Roman Empire since the time of Diocletian. The religious policy, the law, provincial administration,

⁸⁶ Paul Lemerle, *A History of Byzantium*, (New York: Walker, 1964), p.47

⁸⁷ Auguste Bailly, *Bizans Tarihi*, çev. H. Saman, (İstanbul: Tercüman Yayınları), pp.75-76

⁸⁸ Halil Demircioğlu, *Roma, Bizans ve Justinianus*, (Türk Tarih Kurumu Belleten, Nisan 1963, sayı:106), p. 165-170

economic policy and imperial ideology in his time were the main elements of the reassertion of imperial dignity⁸⁹.

The reign of Justinian is regarded as the climax of the Christian Roman Empire. Justinian achieved much. His conquests revived Roman civilization in the West. But his conquest policy taught that the East and the West could not be reconciled and that good finance is the basis of successful government⁹⁰. In the time of Justinian, the Empire had already turned to an Eastern Empire. The predecessors of him in the 5th century had already abandoned the West for the safety of the East while they were maintaining their theoretical rights in the West. Justinian turned to the West and set his ambitions on the West. Actually, he turned his face to the past. His reign was an error which interrupted the normal and inevitable course of history⁹¹.

Justinian's respect and love for the past of the Empire prevented him to see and understand the realities of the contemporary. He could not see and perceived the main reasons of the division of the East and the West. The division was needed because one emperor could not rein the huge territory and the Empire had different economic, social, political and geographical characteristics in the Eastern and Western parts. Justinian acted with his religious feelings. His political and economic plans were not well-built on the conquest of the West. He could not understand completely the reason of the division of the Roman Empire and the differences which enlarged in

⁸⁹ Peter Sarris, *The Eastern Roman Empire (306-641)*, ed. By Cyril Mango in *The History of Byzantium*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.42

⁹⁰ Steven Runciman, *The Byzantine Civilization*, (London: Methuen&C.Ltd., 1993), p. 35-39

⁹¹ Paul Lemerle, *A History of Byzantium*, (New York: Walker, 1964), p. 45

time between the East and the West until his time. Justinian had been sleeping two or three hour in a day. These hours sleeping is not sufficient for a person to think and comprehend the ideas and situation healthy and carefully.

5.1 The Code of Justinian

Justinian can be regarded as a jurist. He ordered the codification of the Roman laws and regulations from the Ancient times to the present. The constitutions of the Empire which were used from the time of Emperor Hadrian were compiled. He prepared a legislative work because he believed that god gave the right to interpret and to create laws to the emperors. The code of Justinian dictated the autocracy of the emperor strictly. It influenced the political thought of Byzantine Empire and Western countries. There were four compilations which were the Digest, the Novels, Codex Justinianus and the Institutes. These four composed of Corpus Iuris Civilis. It has contributions to the establishment of present laws.

Justinian wanted to combine the Empire with a combined law system. He wanted to give order and unity to the Empire. He inherited the Roman legislation because Rome had legal system which the state had been given order and unity and the emperor had been given absolute power. Many ethnic groups would be tied with both one religion and one law system. The composition of laws of Justinian was regarded that it would give confidence to the Empire which was a multi-ethnic and multilingual. The army and the traditions from Rome were not sufficient to secure the unity of the Empire. Religious and legal doctrine of Justinian which was

depended on the church and the Roman law brought feel of confidence to both the ruled and the ruler⁹². His belief on autocracy of emperor brought about a lawmaker. According to him, in domestic affairs the law was so powerful weapon as military. The laws were compiled and revised because they could not meet the needs of a Christian and a centralized empire.

Law must be suitable to the values of the time and the society which was mostly Christian and had Hellenistic characteristics in their life styles. It must be coincided with Christianity and the traditions of Hellenistic East. Christianity had influences on the codes on family. Christianity prevented the legislative rights of the members of other religions. Moreover, emperorship autocracy was strongly stressed in the code of Justinian. Monarchic power was based by the law⁹³.

It was claimed that Christianity reflected its characteristics in the codes especially on slavery in Codex Justinianus. The masters' rights on their slaves were restricted and new prohibitions were brought for the masters' treat to slaves⁹⁴. The slaves who were given their liberty gained the right of being Roman citizen⁹⁵.

Codex Justinianus determined the rights of people on the things, such as water, rivers, seas and private properties, and depicted the conditions of possession of properties and succession. Conditions of buying

⁹² G.L. Seidler, *Bizans Siyasal Düşüncesi*, çev. Mete Tunçay, (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1980), p.25-28

⁹³ Georg Ostrogorsky, *Bizans Devleti Tarihi*, çev. Fikret Işıltan, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1999), p.70

⁹⁴ Codex Justinianus, Book I, VIII,2

⁹⁵ Codex Justinianus, Book I, V,3

and selling the properties and the relationship of tutorship, adoption, guardianship and marriage were also determined in the codes.

There were the old laws coming from the Roman law, from the Twelve Tables and also new laws. The old laws were reinterpreted in the framework of Christianity and the contemporary conditions. Old traditions and new traditions were interrelated in the codes. Some of the laws on the traditions such as marriage and daily life continued without any change. The Code of Justinian was the combination of new and old.

5.2 Justinian's Religious Policy

Justinian's political career depended on the formula of one state, one law and one faith. He realized that the church might serve as a powerful weapon in the hands of the government⁹⁶. He wanted to make secure his political power, to strengthen the government and to find religious support for the throne. The fundamental aim of Justinian's church policy was the establishment of closer relations with Rome. He defended the Council of Chalcedon. In the first two years of his reign, he issued severe edicts against heretics. Arians were persecuted in his conquests. The Jews, the pagans and the heretics suffered much because of his harsh policies against them. He believed in the necessity of a unified faith in the Empire and was intolerant with the other faiths. Some persecutions were issued. People who were called as heretics could not enter governmental offices. Their properties and churches were confiscated by the state.

⁹⁶ A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1952), p.148

Justinian was a Christian emperor who thought that the power of emperor was coming from God. He fought for universal power. Both Roman and Christian ideals were the basic reasons of his fight. The victory of Christianity and the revival of the Roman Empire had equal importance for him. Any emperor from the time of Theodosius I have not struggled to strengthen Christianity and to extinguish paganism like Justinian. Paganism was powerful even in his time in the science and cultural area although the number of the pagans was low. In 529, Justinian ordered to close Athenian academy which was the home of Neo-Platonism. He took the right of education from pagans. The scientists from Athens migrated to Persia and moved the Greek culture there. The old religion was died in his time and an important part of human history was closed⁹⁷.

His relations with Monophysites had political importance. His wife, Theodora kept a Monophysite monastery in the imperial palace. Theodora supported Monophysitism and with her influence, Justinian followed a peaceful policy against Monophysites at the beginning of his reign. He issued decrees of tolerance for the Monophysites and accepted their representatives at Constantinople in 535. The bishop Anthimus who was a Monophysite was appointed as the patriarch of Constantinople by Justinian. Justinian had theological discussions with the Monophysites to influence them with the orthodox belief. He also accepted the belief that one of the branches of Christ was crucified. This attitude did not bring the

⁹⁷ Georg Ostrogorsky, *Bizans Devleti Tarihi*, çev. Fikret Işıltan, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1999), p. 71

Monophysites to his side⁹⁸. On the other hand, the Pope opposed his policy and Justinian needed the support of the West for the Ostrogothic war and the policy of conquest in the West. Union of the faith and church was needed for the conquest policies in the West. This brought a tendency against Monophysitism. The Pope, Agapitus, did not accept the Patriarch of Constantinople, Anthimus. Justinian threatened him but he did not abandon his decision. At the end, Justinian deposed the patriarch. The successor of the patriarch would be decided by the Pope. The new Patriarch of Constantinople respected the superiority of Rome and accepted the formula, which was prepared by the papacy to stress the Holy Trinity, to demonstrate his faith. There was the Pope's primacy over the whole church, in the East and in the West.

Monophysites were persecuted. In spite of persecutions, Monophysitism survived. Its leaders were in Constantinople, in the palace of the empress herself. Theodora understood the importance of eastern provinces which were the richest in the Empire. She supported Monophysites for political reasons as well as her personal beliefs.

Justinian appointed Paul as the patriarch of Antioch, which has been held by Severus, a Monophysite before. Paul deposed the supporters of Severus. There was a revolt in Antioch then. Paul sent many people to exile. Then, Justinian wanted him to resign. The patriarch of Antioch was changed but the persecutions and pressures on the Monophysites continued.

⁹⁸ Francis Dvornic, *Konsiller Tarihi*, (Ankara: TTK, 1990), p.20

The persecution policy of Justinian against Monophysites deepened the gap between Syria and Egypt and the capital. The hate of Syria and Egypt against the center increased. Monophysitism became the means of propaganda for the separatist powers in the independence movements in these places. Justinian expected to reconcile the Monophysites with the orthodox but he failed. In the last years of his life, he apparently favored the Monophysites.

After the death of the Pope Agapitus an imperial candidate for the papacy was supported by Theodora. He was Vigilius, the papal ambassador in Constantinople. He pretended as a sympathizer of Monophysitism in order to gain the support of Theodora and he promised her to restore the Monophysite patriarch Anthimus and to repudiate the Calcedonian faith. However, until he went to Rome the candidate of the Gothic Kingdom had become the Pope. The Gothic King wanted to prevent an imperial candidate's papacy. After the conquest of Rome, the Pope was arrested by Belisarius with the influence of his wife and Theodora who were the supporters of Vigilius. The Pope was accused of helping a Gothic army to enter Rome. Vigilius was elected as the pope by the clergy. One pope had been deposed and murdered by another one with the imperial support⁹⁹.

The Pope was a supporter of the Empire now and the conquest of the West was succeeded. Then, it was the time to provide conciliation with the Monophysites in the Empire. Justinian decided to condemn the writings of

⁹⁹ Eamon Duffy, *Saints & Sinners, A History of the Popes*, (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 43

three writers who had supported a “two nature” Christology and the opponents of Monophysitism in their writings. The writers were Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus and Ibas of Edessa who had Nestorian ideas. Justinian thought that by condemnation of these writings he could have gained the support of the Monophysites and could have secured the eastern provinces in the frontiers of the Empire.

Justinian condemned the three chapters which belonged to these writers and were accepted in the Council of Chalcedon. His act attracted much opposition in the western churches and the African churches. Theodoret and Ibas had been restored to their positions by the Council of Chalcedon. This act of Justinian was regarded as against the council. Actually, he did not convoke a synod of bishops and he did not ask the opinions of bishops before the condemnation of the texts. This was the reason for the opposition of the bishops to the Justinian’s decision. The African bishops excommunicated Justinian. Then, Justinian convoked a church council to repeat his decision with the approval of the bishops¹⁰⁰.

The Eastern bishops accepted the condemnation of the three chapters but the West was against it. The Pope Vigilius was arrested and brought to Constantinople. He accepted to condemn the three chapters. In the West, Vigilius was denounced as a traitor to Roman Orthodoxy. The African bishops excommunicated him. Then, Justinian allowed the withdrawal of the Pope’s condemnation but he had the secret promise of him to renew the condemnation later. The Pope and Justinian agreed on a council in order to

¹⁰⁰ Francis Dvornic, op.cit., p.20

settle the matter but Justinian published his own edict to condemn the three chapters in 551.

In the fifth ecumenical council in Constantinople, the writings of the three writers, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus and Ibas of Edessa and their Nestorian ideas were anathematized. Their defenders were warned with threat of deposition and excommunication. By condemning these texts with the support of Papacy Justinian hoped that he could break the power of the Council of Chalcedon and could reconcile the orthodoxy with Monophysitism. The Pope and the Western and African bishops again rejected to condemn the texts. Justinian forced the Pope to accept the decision of the council. The African bishops accepted it a few years later. The bishops of Milan were opposed to the decision until 570. On the other hand, Monophysites also did not satisfy with the council's result.

The Pope boycotted the Second Council of Constantinople. Justinian decided to neutralize Vigilius. He exposed the secret promise on the condemnation of the three chapters of Vigilius in the fifth council. The council condemned both the three chapters and the Pope. Justinian emphasized that it was the man Vigilius not the see of Rome condemned. This event was a failure of the papacy in regard to its authority and leadership which were gained for Rome over the previous century. After Vigilius his successor Pelagius (556-561) accepted the fifth council's condemnation of the three chapters in order to secure the support of the emperor. This action was denounced in the West. The papal prestige in the

West was ruined by Vigilus and Pelagius. The churches of Milan and Aquilea and all the bishops of Istria broke the communion with Rome.

In the time of Justinian, religious elements entered to the imperial ceremonies and the divine and worldly powers of the emperor were strongly stressed. Justinian controlled the administration of the church and he issued many edicts which were related with the organization of the clergy. He was effective in the appointment and the deposition of the bishops. He regarded the decisions which were approved by him as suitable to the faith.

Justinian discussed on the natures of Christ with a Nestorian, the bishop Paul of Nisibis. He could discuss the theological matters as a theologian. He defended in this discussion that “Christ is perfect man in His human nature, as He is truly also perfect God because He is one hypostasis which possesses two perfections”¹⁰¹.

Justinian saw the Pope and the bishops as his servants. He intervened in the church affairs and church laws. He administered church life. He presided over the church synods and wrote theological articles and hymns. He had the right to take the last decision and approval in the problems of faith and religious traditions. The emperor’s authority on the church and religion was in the highest level in the time of Justinian. His successors and predecessors were not as effective as him on the religion as the supreme authority. He administered both the state and the church.

¹⁰¹ Emperor Justinian, *Dialogue with Paul of Nisibis*, Translated by Dr. Jeffrey Macdonald, 1998, The Saint Pachomius Library

The writings of the Diocese Agapetus to Justinian show that the claims of Justinian in regard to being chief authority on the whole affairs in the Empire and in the Church was accepted and supported by the bishops of the East. According to Agapetus, the emperor was like a God in the world who can do everything. He was sent by God to make useful things for the people. The emperor's power and authority was attributed to him by God¹⁰².

Religion was more determinative in the state system and in the law during the time of Justinian. It entered the law in more powerful and effective style. One of the triple characteristics of the Byzantine Empire, Christianity, was settled in most complete way in the state system. The disputes on religion continued but the state tried to suppress them by force. The diversity between the Roman Church and the Eastern Churches became clearer.

5.3 The Eastern Churches

Although the Roman Emperors aimed the union of the Empire with the help of Christianity, the deviant beliefs and churches from the orthodox belief has been occurred. There were Eastern churches who had released themselves from the orthodox Christian belief as a result of the religious policies of the Roman Emperors.

There were local churches in the early day of Christianity in each city. The smaller communities in the countryside were bound to the church of the city. By the end of the second century certain local churches were

¹⁰² Agapetus, in Ernest Barker, *Bizans Toplumsal ve Siyasal Düşünüşü*,(Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, çev. Mete Tunçay,1995), pp.70 and 72

recognized as exercising leadership over the other local churches of an area. These churches had been associated with one or more of the apostles. They became principle sees. In the Council of Nicaea, in 325, the right of principality and their priorities were determined by the leadership of the emperor Constantine. Rome has the priority and was followed by Alexandrian, Antiochene and Jerusalem's churches. The people who bound to these churches were different from each other because they were from the different parts of the world and had different cultures. Their only common point was their religion, Christianity. However, their different cultures brought different interpretations and applications in Christianity itself. This situation brought many problems to the people who did not believe the faith determined by the imperial powers and by the so-called superior church, Rome. These churches were Chaldean Church in Persia, the Malabar Church in India, Coptic Church in Egypt, The Ethiopian Church, the Western Syrian or the Jacobite Church, the Syrian Church of India and the Armenian Church.

The East Syrian Church emerged and adopted Nestorianism. It was called also as Chaldean. Nestorianism went to Persia as the Chaldean Church and to India as the Malabar Church. Theodore of Mopsuestia and his school of Edessa had an important role in spreading of Nestorianism in the Eastern Church. He and his school prepared the way of Nestorians¹⁰³. Nestorianism lived in Ctesiphon, Nisibis and Persia with the protection of

¹⁰³ Adrian Fortesque, The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume V, Transcribed by Christine J. Murray, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05230a.htm>

Persian kings. Nestorian Church spread towards the East and sent missionaries to India and China. The Eastern Syrians adopted Nestorianism to demonstrate their national and anti-imperial feelings.

The Monophysites were also called as the Non-Chalcedonians because they did not accept the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon. Coptic Church, The Ethiopian Church, the Jacobite Church, the Syrian Church of India and the Armenian Church embraced Monophysitism. According to Monophysites, the Orthodox Church and doctrine supports worldly welfare and worldly life and it wants to develop them in the minds of people. There were the differences in the people's social and economic interests and colliding tendencies behind the discussions on the dogmatic definition and the division of the churches¹⁰⁴.

5.3.1 The Jacobites

The Jacobites are the followers of James, Jacob Bradeus in Syria. They were Monophysites. Political opposition between native population of Syria and the Greeks affected the spread of Monophysitism in Syria positively¹⁰⁵. They composed of national Syrian Church.

The Jacobite Church was born and developed in the time of the emperor Justinian. Jacob was sent to organize the Monophysites in Iran in the time of Justinian by the influence of Theodora. Then the Monophysites became Jacobites. Theodora had sent him to Syria to organize the Eastern

¹⁰⁴ M.K. Levchenko, *İstoria Vizenti, Moskva-Leningrad, 1940*, p.38 in G. L. Seidler, *Bizans SiyasalDüşüncesi*, (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi,1980) ,p.24

¹⁰⁵ Adrian Fortesque, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume V, Transcribed by Christine J. Murray, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05230a.htm>

Christians. Jacob's activities in Anatolia, Syria and Egypt revitalized Monophysitism.

5.3.2 Coptic Church

Monophysitism became the national religion of Egypt. It spread quickly after the Council of Chalcedon which condemned Monophysitism. People of Egypt saw Cyril of Alexandria and his successor Dioscorus as their heroes¹⁰⁶. Monophysitism became an expression of Egyptians' national feeling against the imperial authority and government officials as it has been mentioned before. Coptic Church in Egypt embraced Monophysitism. The Copts have many monasteries and they use their old language liturgically. Many of the priests speak Arabic because Coptic is a dead language now. However, after the Council of Chalcedon the Egyptians preferred to use the Coptic language as a reaction to the state.

5.3.3 Abyssinian Church

Abyssinians, the Monophysites in Ethiopia, were bound to Egypt. The church of Abyssinia was founded by St Frumentius, who was appointed by the Church of Alexandria in 326. The supremacy of the Patriarch of Alexandria has always acknowledged by the Abyssinians who regarded themselves as the daughter church of Alexandria. Therefore, they accepted the doctrine of the Egyptian church, the Monophysitism.

¹⁰⁶ Adrian Fortesque, The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume V, Transcribed by Christine J. Murray, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05230a.htm>

5.3.4 The Malabar Christians

The Malabar Christians were Nestorians firstly then some of them converted to Monophysitism. The Malabar Church emerged in the 6th century. Firstly, the Malabar Church was bound to the Catholicos of Seleucia-Ctesiphon and was Nestorians. Then Jacobites sent their bishop to establish a Jacobite Malabar Church. There were Nestorians, Jacobites and Catholics who were converted by the Portuguese after the 16th century in India. The Syriac Christians of Malabar claimed that the Apostle St Thomas went to India and founded their Church. According to Gnostic Acts of Thomas in Syriac, St Thomas brought the Gospels to India¹⁰⁷. He was martyred in India in AD 72. The Syriac Christians of Malabar call themselves Christians of St Thomas who came to India in AD 52. It is believed that his body was brought to Edessa in the 4th century.

5.3.5 Armenian Church

Armenian nation was the first among the heathen nations that embraced the holy faith of Christ. The Apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew went to Armenia and preached the doctrine of Christ. The foundation of the Church was laid there by these apostles according to belief of the Armenian people. Armenian Church was the First national Christian Church established among the heathen nations.

Before the sixth century, the Armenian Church was bound to the Metropolitan of Caesera. It suffered persecutions from the Persians. It had

¹⁰⁷Kathleen Mc Vey, <http://sor.cua.edu/Personage/Quadishe/StThomas.html>, The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, Ephrem the Syrian Hymns (Paulist Press, 1989)

been honored branch of the Catholic Church until the sixth century. Then, Monophysitism spread through Armenia from Syria. In 522 the primate Abraham I excommunicated the defenders of Chalcedon. Then the Armenian primate, Nerses, rejected the Council of Chalcedon in 527 in the Synod of Duin. From that time, the Armenian Church became isolated from the rest of Christendom. It became a national church. The name of Armenian and nationality became identical with their churches and religion.

5.3.6 Syriac Church

The Council of Chalcedon brought division in the Church of Antioch. It was divided as Syrian or Syriac Orthodox Church and Eastern Orthodox Church of Antioch. The Eastern Orthodox Church had the support of Justinian. There was a struggle over the Church among the bishops who wanted to be the Patriarch of Antioch. In 518, Patriarch St Severus was deposed and exiled from Antioch by the Emperor Justin. The seat of the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch passed to the different monasteries including Quartmin, Quenneshrin, Malatya, Amid (Diyarbakır) and settled in Mardin in 1293. Then, it went to Syria in 1933. Finally, it passed to Damascus in 1959.

5.4 Rome's Claims on Superiority and the Reaction of the Other Churches

The Popes created a Christian Rome not the emperors. The emperors went to the New Rome. The popes built churches and basilicas in Rome¹⁰⁸.

¹⁰⁸ Eamon Duffy, *Saints & Sinners, The History of The Papacy*, (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1997), p.29

St Jerome translated the Bible from Hebrew into Latin. He rewrote the Bible in a sophisticated style. The Vulgate Bible emerged. Jerome's translation was the first draft of the today's Bible. Pope Siricius (384-99) regarded Rome as the head of body of the churches. The Pope was seen as the Church's supreme lawgiver by the Roman Church. The Pope Innocent I (401-417) wrote to the African bishops and said that every decision which was taken by them should be confirmed by the authority of the Roman Church. The Roman clergy saw themselves as supreme lawgiver who had the divine right for deciding on law and for controlling and approval of the all matters in all churches. The Roman primacy was accepted by the churches in Italy, Gaul, Africa and Sicily in the 5th century. The Popes had the authority to call synods and to preside over them. They appointed the bishops and controlled the activities of the churches, mainly in the West. They decided on the canons.

For the Eastern Churches, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople and Jerusalem the Pope was the Patriarch of the West. The Eastern Churches governed themselves. They did not appeal to the Pope for the elections of the bishops and for the synods they called. They ordered their own life and worship. Rome was only an apostolic see in the West and a court of appeal in special circumstances for the Eastern Churches.

In 381, the Council of Constantinople's decision giving the privileges of Rome to the Church of Constantinople was a great threat for the Roman Church's authority. After the council, the Popes founded a vicariate at Thessalonica. The bishop of the vicariate was given authority to

govern the affairs of the church freely. Papacy did not want to lose its authority on the Balkans.

Leo the Great (440-61) took the Apostles, Peter and Paul, as the fundamental of Roman claims for primacy. He tried to increase the Roman authority over the churches of the West. The emperor of the West accepted formally the papal jurisdiction over all the Western Churches in the time of Leo. The Pope dealt with the heresies in the West ardently. His Tome, which proclaimed that there are two natures in Christ, human and divine, unmixed and unconfused, was read in the Council of Chalcedon and the bishops of the council said that Peter had spoken through Leo. Leo the Great strengthened the Roman claims on primacy. He served as a politician and tried to secure his territories from the invasions of the so-called barbarians. He spoke to Attila and persuaded him to go back according to Leo. However, Attila had to go back because of epidemics.

God and Caesar were not the same but they were allies according to mentality of the Western Churches. This mentality emerged with the claims of Pope Liberius and Ambrose on the superiority of the divine power to the secular power. Even in the time of Constantine the bishops of Rome made distinction between Church and the Empire. The loyalty of the bishops of Rome to the Eastern Emperor increased after the conquest of Italy by the Gothic kings who were Arians. However, in 484 when Acasius, the Patriarch of Constantinople embraced Monophysitism with the support of the emperor Zeno the schism between Rome and Constantinople occurred. The Bishops of Rome tried to establish closer relationships with the Gothic

kings. They made a clear distinction between the divine and secular power in order to prevent imperial claims for authority on the Church. The Pope Gelarius (492-6) said that as a Roman born he respected the Roman Emperor but there were two powers which ruled the world: the sacred authority of bishops and royal power and the priestly power is much more important. The emperors should be obedient to the ecclesiastical authority and should not try to make it obedient to their will according to Gelarius¹⁰⁹.

The authority of the Roman Church, which had been established by these Popes and claims, has been shaken by the reign of Justinian. Justinian's claims for authority collided with the Roman Church's claims. He also thought that there were two powers: priestly and royal as Gelarius but the priestly power would be obedient to the royal power. He saw the imperial power superior to the religious power.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid*, pp.36-38

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The Roman Empire became a Christian Empire because of the religious policies which were started by Constantine. Constantine took Christianity under the protection of the state. Theodosius I made Christianity official religion of the Empire. He also sought for union and peace at the state by the help of the religion like Constantine. He believed that the emperor was the representative of God in the world and his authority should be on the church and religious life in the state. He was so ardent and strict in his religious policies. On the other hand, in the West the bishop of Milan Ambrose reacted to Theodosius' claims of authority on the religious life with the same enthusiasm. He asserted that the temporal powers should not intervene in the religious issues. With the policies of Constantine and Theodosius I the emperor became the highest rank of the church in the East but the West started to go on a different path. The rivalry between Alexandria and Antioch made contributions to the separation of the East and the West from each other. The new doctrines Nestorianism and Monophysitism became the signs of this rivalry. The churches of Alexandria and Antioch wanted the most powerful Church in the East. The church of Constantinople with the imperial support and importance became as an

undefeatable rival to Alexandria and Antioch. The Church of Rome also did not want the wide authority of the church of Constantinople. This brought the separation of the Church of Rome and the state. The churches of Alexandria and Antioch detached themselves from the state in time slowly too. Constantinople's authority increased gradually. Christianity was settled in the state system and in the law completely in the time of Justinian.

How Christianity was incorporated in the state in the Western and in the Eastern parts of the Roman Empire in the time between the reigns of Constantine and Justinian is depicted in this thesis. Religion became more important in that period. The East and the West parts of the Empire were composed of many different ethnic groups from each other and even in themselves. The people, whose languages, economic activities, life styles and cultural values are different, perceives the same fact in different ways and a fact can be grown in different ways in the lives of different people. In the case of the Christianisation of the Roman Empire the situation was similar this: In the Western and in the Eastern parts of the Empire, Christianity entered in different ways into the politics.

Christianity became official religion in the Roman Empire's territories. It implemented different in the East and in the West. The only source of political unit was the Pope in the West. In the East, the religion and the state were under one director, the emperor. In the East and in the West Christianity was the official religion. This was the common point but the divorce point was that in the East there was unity of forces. In the West there was not unity of forces. The Pope needed always an emperor for

military power. He could legitimize his authority with the religion but he could not defend the territories. Therefore, Charlemagne was crowned by the Pope in 800. The Pope was the political and the religious power in the West. The emperor in the East was out of this organization in the West. The East was important and prior to the West until 600s. The emperor was powerful and effective in the affairs of the West until that time but the authority of the Pope was also so high in that time.

Religious policies of the emperors, the ecumenical councils and the codes were powerful dynamics of the autocratic system in the Eastern Roman Empire. The councils wanted to put the bishops in a determined order in terms of faith, their responsibilities, their rights and life styles. Religious policies of the emperors were the tries to create a determined order in the religious activities of the country. Everything must be determined with their limits and their power. Everything must be controllable by the state with their dynamics.

The church was independent before the Christianity was tolerated by the state. It was an enemy of the state but in its own affairs it was free. Church gained a different kind of freedom when it was accepted by the state and it could act freely in its missionary works and other public activities without the sword of the state on its head. It started to enter the governmental works. The state protected it with laws and granted economic support. However, in this prosperous situation a part of freedom of the church started to disappear. The church became bind to the state. It must pay the price of the state's help. The price costs expensive. The state became the

authoritative part in the affairs of the church. For the state it must control such an organized power according to its own interests. Therefore, the state became the head of the church. Because, the state recognized Christianity. The grant came from the state. It was unavoidable an alliance between the church and the state and this situation brought the superiority of the state. It was inevitable the interference of the state in the church affairs. The state fought against Christianity and it could not overcome it so it accepted by entering actively and authoritatively in the affairs of the church. If Christianity will live in the Empire, it must live under the control of the state. Moreover, Christianity also served the purpose of union in the Empire. The religious union would create peace and union in the country against the outer dangers.

There was a powerful bond between the state and the church because their interests were common. They fought together against the dangers who threatened the settled order which was depending on the divine power. This alliance brought the Church under the trusteeship of the state. The emperor was both the commander of the army, the legislator and the protector of the church and the true faith. He was chosen by God and the representative of God in the Empire. The state and the Church alliance started in the time of Constantine the Great and continued throughout the history of the Eastern Roman Empire¹¹⁰.

¹¹⁰ Georg Ostrogorsky, *Bizans Devleti Tarihi*, çev. Prof. Dr. Fikret İşiltan, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1999), pp.28 and 44

The emperors tried to construct their hegemony over the subjects by the help of religion. They needed to bind their subjects to themselves with a powerful weapon. It was religion which provided fear for God and the representative of God in the world, the emperor. On the other hand, the imperial color was purple which frightens people unconsciously. The reason for choosing this color might have been binding people to the imperial power with fear.

The religion must be in the framework which was drawn by the emperor. Therefore, the emperor intervened in the religious affairs. The religion meant the survival of the Empire and political authority for the emperor, in the Eastern Empire. In the West, there was not an empire after 476 so the things were different in terms of relationships between the religion and the kings. There were kings who tried to establish their rules in the Western Roman Empire's territories. They needed the help of the representative of the religion, who was powerful and authoritative as an administrator of a Papal Kingdom, in order to make legitimate their authority in the territories which they had occupied. They were already powerful and settled the territories. Their need to legitimate their authority paved the way of relationships between the Pope and the kings. On the other hand, the Pope needed the military power of the kings. These reciprocal needs brought about dual headed system in the West: the religious power and the administrative power.

Roman Emperors preferred Christianity rather than paganism and Judaism. Judaism was not suitable to widespread and to impose the all

Roman peoples. Paganism was not dogmatically and was not have an organized character. It was freely worshipped. On the other hand, Christianity as a monotheistic religion was exclusive and had monarchic structure which was perfectly suitable for an Empire. For the emperors who wanted absolute control in the state and religion, Christianity which was eligible for a hierarchal and organized system became the most important tool to strengthen their political authority.

Even in our time religion is effective in the politics. Today, American invasion in Iraq has religious reason as one of fundamental one. George W. Bush is a conservative person and his policies are directed by the influence of religion. In the American invasion economic reasons are the most effective ones but the effect of religion can not be ignored. The invasion in Iraq is supported by American people generally because they feel that they are threatened by Muslim attacks. American people were affected by the September 11th attacks so much. They were mostly religious people; they introduce themselves with their religions also. Therefore, their perceptions on the politics of their country on the other people who embrace the other religion are captivated by religious feelings. The reasons of the attacks on 11th September 2001 can be seen as economic basically because they were against the hegemony and exploitation of USA in all over the world. They came from people who have another religion from the majority of American people. American conservatism and mentality which is directed by the ideals on hegemony is the reason of the invasion in Iraq. The American policy is only one of the examples. Moreover, it is interesting that

the European Union is composed of only Christian countries. One of the reasons of the rejection to the Turkey's membership in European Union is the religion which is different from the members. Therefore, it is not unacceptable that the religion's role and influence in the politics of Roman Empire. 1700 years ago its power and influence in the politics were bigger than today's. It was in the state system. We can say that our state systems are democratic, liberal and secular theoretically today but in practice our politics are far from being democratic and secular.

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