

COVER SHEET

- Course: Global History
- Grade: Ninth Grade
- Unit: The Roman Empire
- Topic Task: How did Christianity change from persecuted sect to state religion in the Roman Empire?
- Pre-knowledge: Early Societies; Greece
- Vocabulary: emperor, Pax Romana, sect
- Common core standards: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information; Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text; Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.
- Author: Bayard Faithfull
- Document list: Acts 16, Tacitus, Annales, (64 ce), Eusebius, (303 ce), The "Edict of Milan " (313 ce), Theodosian Code (380 ce)

TASK

Historical Background

Cesar Augustus ruled the Roman Empire from 27 bce to 14 ce, expanding the size of the empire and beginning the Pax Romana—a period of stability and peace. The Roman Empire spread from Western Europe to the Middle East and Northern Africa, and included many different cultures and religions that were connected by Roman roads and protected by the Roman army. The religion of the Roman Empire was polytheistic—believing in many gods—but they tolerated many other religions throughout their territory.

During Cesar Augustus' rule, Jesus of Nazareth (2bce-31ce?) lived and gathered a following among Jews in the area around Jerusalem, part of the Roman Empire. Jesus was executed under the rule of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea. Followers of Jesus eventually began to identify themselves as Christians (followers of Jesus Christ) and spread throughout the Roman Empire.

Activity

This is a primary document activity. A primary document is any document created by those who witnessed or participated in events of the past. There are some questions you should ask whenever you read a primary document.

- Who is saying it? Can the person be trusted? What might be the person's perspective or agenda?
- What is the context? How can we connect this document to the broader historical context?
- What is its significance? What can we, as historians today, say about the past based on this document?

Your task for the day is:

- Read the inquiry question;
- Read and annotate the documents;
- Answer the reading questions in your “Questions Packet”;
- Use evidence from the readings to support your answers and, finally;
- Write an argument that answers the essay question.

Inquiry question: How did Christianity change from a persecuted sect to a state religion with the Roman Empire?

Document A:

In the first century ce, Paul was an important missionary for the Christian Church, traveling through the Roman-controlled Middle East, Turkey Greece and Italy. “Over 30 years, Paul clocked up around 10,000 miles, traveling across the Roman Empire. He preached in some of the empire’s most important cities. Although places like Ephesus, Philippi, Corinth and Athens looked magnificent, they were also home to tens of thousands of poor, desperate people who were the perfect audience for the Christian message of eternal life.” (PBS, “The Roman Empire,” <http://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/empire/christians.html>).

The text below is from the Christian New Testament book Acts and describes Paul’s arrest in Phillipi (a city in the Roman Empire) in around 49 ce. At this time, many Romans struggled to distinguish Jews and Christians.

Acts, Chapter 16

But when her masters saw that the hope of their gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas, and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. When they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, “These men, being Jews, are agitating our city, and advocate customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans.” The multitude rose up together against them, and the magistrates tore their clothes off of them, and commanded them to be beaten with rods. When they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely, who, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison, and secured their feet in the stocks.

Vocabulary

magistrate- a local official

stocks- a device made of wood to confine ankles, used for punishment.

Document B:

On July 16, 64 ce, the “Great Fire” destroyed large sections of the city of Rome. In the days after the fire, rumors that the emperor Nero had started the fire spread. The historian Tacitus wrote the entry below.

Tacitus, Annales, (64 ce)

And so, to get rid of this rumor Nero set up as culprits and punished with the utmost cruelty a class hated for their abominations, who are commonly called Christians.

Christus... Thus those who confessed (i.e. to being Christians) were first arrested, then on evidence from them a large multitude was convicted, not so much for the charge of arson as for their hatred of the human race. Besides being put to death they were made objects of amusement; they were clothed in hides of beasts and torn to death by dogs; others were crucified, others were set on fire to illuminate the night after sunset.

Vocabulary:

culprit- One charged with a crime.

crucified- To put a person to death by mailing to a cross.

Document C:

Eusebius was a Roman historian who would become a Christian bishop in 314 ce.

Eusebius, (303 ce)

This was the nineteenth year of the reign of Diocletian in Dystrus (which the Romans call March), ... and royal edicts were published everywhere, commanding that the churches should be razed to the ground, the Scriptures destroyed by fire... if they persisted in the Christian profession, be deprived of their liberty. And such was the first decree against us. But issuing other decrees not long after, the Emperor commanded that all the rulers of the churches in every place should be first put in prison and afterwards compelled by every device to offer sacrifice [to the Roman gods}.

Vocabulary:

edicts- Proclamations with the force of law.

razed- To demolish.

Document D:

Constantine was the emperor of the Roman Empire from 306-337 ce. Though his mother was a Christian, Constantine did not become a Christian until he was 42 years old in the year 312 ce, after winning an important battle with his troops.

The "Edict of Milan " (313 ce)

Therefore, your Worship should know that ... concerning the Christians and now any one of these who wishes to observe Christian religion may do so freely and openly, without molestation. We thought it fit to commend these things most fully to your care that you may know that we have given to those Christians free and unrestricted opportunity of religious worship. When you see that this has been granted to them by us, your Worship will know that we have also conceded to other religions the right of open and free observance of their worship for the sake of the peace of our times, that each one may

have the free opportunity to worship as he pleases; this regulation is made we that we may not seem to detract from any dignity or any religion.

Vocabulary:

molestation- Disturbance or interference.

concede- To accept

Document E:

Theodosius I was the emperor of Rome between 379 and 395 ce. He made Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire in 380 ce.

Theodosian Code (380 ce)

It is our desire that all the various nations which are subject to our clemency and moderation, should continue to the profession of that religion which was delivered to the Romans by the divine Apostle Peter... let us believe in the one diety of the father, Son and Holy Spirit, in equal majesty and in a holy Trinity. We authorize the followers of this law to assume the title Catholic Christians... the others, since in our judgment they are foolish madmen, we decree that they shall be branded... heretics.

Vocabulary:

clemency- a merciful or kind act.

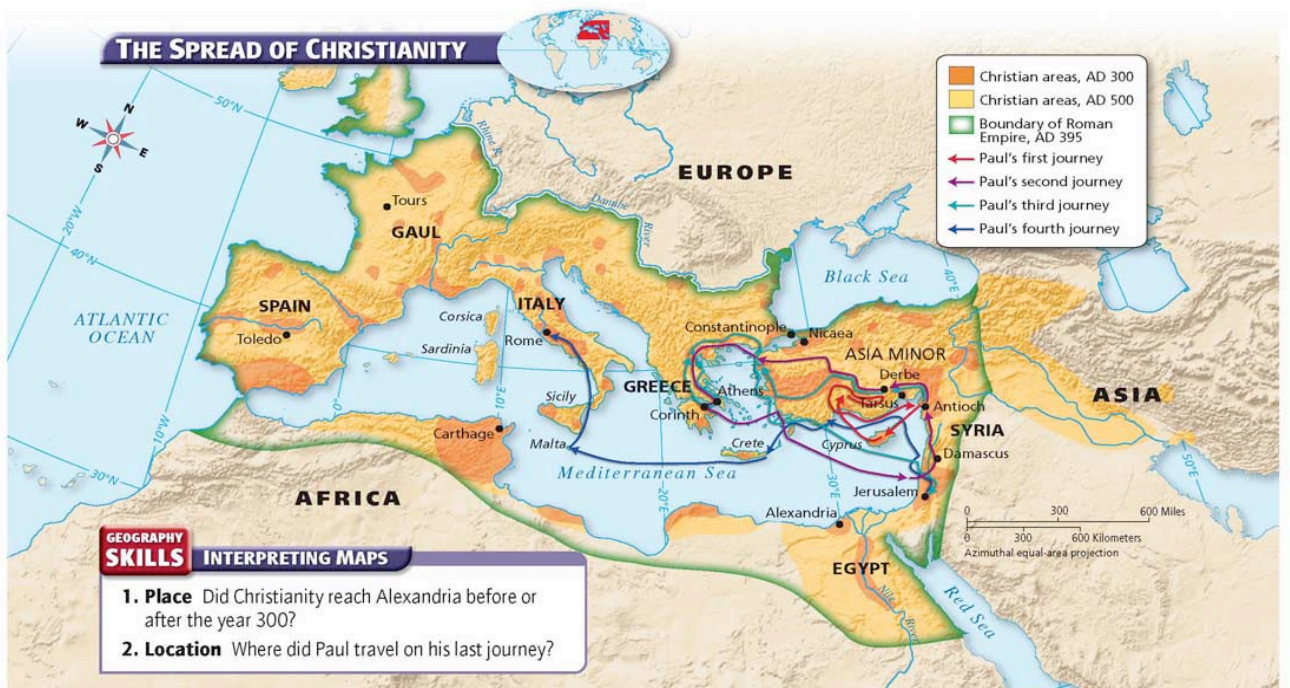
moderation- Mild or calm behavior.

apostle- a missionary of the early Christian Church.

deity- a god

heretic- a person who publicly disagrees with official teachings of the church.

Map:



Reading Questions

Document A

1. When does the event in this document take place?

2. What does this document tell you about the persecution of Christianity in the Roman Empire? Use evidence from the document (specific information/quotes) to support your answer?

Document B

1. Who created this document? When?
2. What does this document tell you about the persecution of Christianity in the Roman Empire? Use evidence from the document (specific information/quotes) to support your answer?

Document C

1. Who created this document? When?
2. What does this document tell you about the persecution of Christianity in the Roman Empire? Use evidence from the document (specific information/quotes) to support your answer?

Document D

1. Who created this document? When?
2. What does this document tell you about the acceptance of Christianity in the Roman Empire? Use evidence from the document (specific information/quotes) to support your answer?

Document E

1. Who created this document? When?
2. What does this document tell you about the acceptance of Christianity in the Roman Empire? Use evidence from the document (specific information/quotes) to support your answer?

Map

1. What does the map tell you about the spread of Christianity in the Roman Empire between 300 and 500 ce?

