

TOPIC 3.5

EMPEROR CONSTANTINE INVENTED CHRISTIANITY. FACT OR FICTION?



Conversation Points

- ★ I would rather read the book than watch the movie.
AGREE or DISAGREE?
- ★ I have no regrets. **AGREE or DISAGREE?**
- ★ I am lonely. **AGREE or DISAGREE?**

Reflection

Our preacher was born to an English father named Graham. Graham had emigrated to Australia with *his* parents, George and Alice, when he was just 11-years old. He was glad to leave war-torn London and was still haunted by the Nazi blitz which destroyed their neighbour's home. Upon arriving in Australia, his parents settled in country Victoria, near Bannockburn. Graham was never much interested in school, "*You can't learn anything from a book*" he would often say. He left school at the age of thirteen and had various jobs: a butcher's assistant; a used car salesman, then, when he was a bit older, an interstate truck driver.

In the 1950s the way that country boys met country girls was at a "bush dance." This is where Graham, a nominal Anglican, met an enthusiastic Methodist named Heather (one of Neil and Ruby's seven children). Heather was working as a mothercraft nurse and lived in small town called Bunyip, on the other side of Victoria. After a time of courtship, on January 3rd, 1959, Graham and Heather were married.



The newly wedded couple moved to the Grovedale, just outside of Geelong, and built a new house there. But after a few years, Graham and Heather were not able to keep up the mortgage repayments, and they lost their new home. This came at a bad time for the couple because Heather was now pregnant - and there were

complications with the baby, doctors told them “*Your baby is not going to survive the pregnancy. We’re so sorry to let know you this*”. But Heather turned to God in prayer and pleaded with God for the life of her unborn child. Like that of biblical Hannah, Heather prayed, “*If You spare the life of this baby, I will give him to You for You do with him whatever You want!*” The doctors again told Heather that there was no point in continuing with the pregnancy and that they should terminate it. But Heather said *no* and was hoping that God would answer her prayer and accept her generous offer.

In August, 1963, Heather was now full-term and was having contractions. But there now more problems. The baby was breached (legs first instead of head first) and doctors were sure that the baby’s umbilical cord was either strangling (or had already strangled) the baby to death. Heather was told that she could not deliver the baby and that this would need to be done surgically. She silently and prayerfully reminded God of her deal. Moments later in the operating theatre, the doctor removed the apparently lifeless baby and handed him to his mother for her to at least hold her unfortunate baby just momentarily. As she held her baby—and much to the surprise of the nurses and doctor present—the baby suddenly moved and began to cry!

After a time of recuperation for Heather in *Baxter House*, where the sickly newborn was also taken from her to be monitored by nurses who were more accustomed to such newborn babies dying, it was much to the surprise of all the nurses that the baby had *not* died. A few weeks later, Graham and Heather walked into the small Methodist church in Geelong with their son for him to be christened. At that part in the sacred ritual, the minister asked, “*How do you name this child?*” The proud father, with three of the four child’s grandparents witnessing the event, said, “*Andrew Neil.*” Later on, Heather would tell people, “*Andrew means strong man and his middle name Neil is after my own late father who died just days after our wedding.*”

As it turned out, God had heard Heather’s prayer and as the years rolled by it was obvious that God had indeed laid His hand on Andrew. At a young age he had a dramatic encounter with the Holy Spirit and soon afterward was walking the streets of Geelong at night sharing the gospel and handing out gospel tracts with whosoever he came across.

He began his theological studies when he was 19-years old and and shortly after this he drove across Australia’s *Nullarbor Plain* visiting Adelaide along the way and arriving in Perth visiting different outreach events and then a couple of years later he also drove around Australia doing something similar and occasionally street preaching as well. He then completed his evangelistic tour of Australia by visiting Tasmania in 1985 and drove around the entire island, with little idea that this would one day be his beloved home.

In 1986 when Andrew was part of the Deakin University Overseas Christian Fellowship (OCF), he had a series of vivid dreams about a young blonde-haired lady who was deeply troubled. Then, at one of the regular Friday night OCF meetings where Andrew was usually the only Australian present among the mostly Malaysian students, there was another Australian there, and this visitor



was a young lady. At the end of the evening as he was packing up his guitar, the Malaysian OCF leader asked him if he would greet the other Australian before he left. As he did so, he looked at the young lady and realised that she was the one in his recent series of vivid dreams! That was the night he met *Kim* for the first time. As he talked with her, he said, “*I don’t know if this means*

anything to you, but have you recently been kicked out of your home by your parents?” And at that question, Kim dropped to the floor and slumped up against the wall and began to cry. The more he revealed what he had seen in the dreams, the more she cried.

Three months after this first meeting, on New Year’s day 1987, Kim surrendered her life to Christ. Then halfway through her final year at Deakin, on June 18, 1988, Andrew and Kim were married in Ferny Creek. As Andrew continued his theological training with Global University, he served as a youth group leader at Werribee AOG, Shepparton AOG, then as a pastor at Werribee, and Williamstown, Victoria. In 1995, God



spoke to Andrew directing him, Kim, and their two young children to move to Tasmania where He was going to “*do a significant thing in an insignificant place!*” And on Sunday September 24th, 2023, after: 4 building programs, a dynamic youth group, Kids Church, Young Adults Group, Home Bible Study groups scattered around the greater city of

Launceston, and their 28th pastoral anniversary, they reflected that God had indeed done a significant thing!

Andrew had an unusual entrance into this world. Perhaps, if it wasn’t for his mother prayerfully committing him to God’s service even before he was born, his life may never had survived his mother’s pregnancy. **What difference do you think a mother’s prayers make for her child/ren?**

If you also feel as if you are losing your mooring because of deep hurt, doubt, or a progressive-sounding arguments, please hear me: There. Are. Answers. I began uncovering them by listening to the daily radio broadcast of a gifted apologist...Slowly and steadily, God began to to rebuild my faith. The questions that had knocked the foundation out from under my beliefs—the ones I had never thought to ask, the ones I didn't know existed—were not simply being answered. They were being dwarfed by substantial evidence and impenetrable logic so robust that I felt like a kid in a candy store—who had just found out that candy exists.

ALISA CHILDERS

Another Gospel, p. 226-27 2020. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Momentum.

Emperor Constantine reigned from 306 to 337 and is somewhat famous for removing the ban on Christianity, and calling for a Church Council of bishops at Nicaea to settle some foundational doctrinal issues once and for all. But is he the one who actually "invented Christianity"?



In AD 305 Emperor Diocletian abdicated his throne and asked his 'vice emperor', Maximian, in the western half of the empire, to also abdicate. This led to a battle between two contenders for the throne: Maxentius and Constantine. Maxentius had already taken control of Rome even though Constantine had officially been appointed to rule. In 312 Constantine decided to finally deal with his usurper. He mustered his troops to march on Rome to at last do battle with Maxentius. In preparation for this looming conflict, Maxentius decided to burn all of the bridges over the Tiber around Rome to prevent Constantine's forces from entering. But then Maxentius realised he and his troops needed at least *one*

bridge to go out and meet Constantine's forces. Maxentius then had a temporary pontoon bridge constructed next to the Milvian Bridge they had just destroyed. Prior to the upcoming battle, Constantine became troubled by the bad omens his pagan priests were giving him. That night however, October 28th A.D. 312, he had a dream where he claimed that the Christian God revealed to him that he was put "the sign of the cross" on his soldiers' shields and that "under this sign he would march and have victory". This cross is known as the "Chi-Ro" (*Key row*) cross.

Ironically, Maxentius and many of his troops drowned when the pontoon bridge they had hastily constructed gave way and collapsed as they retreated from the rightful emperor's forces. Constantine and his troops then marched safely into Rome where he was now the undisputed emperor of then Roman Empire. Constantine then decreed that Christianity would no longer be illegal. By AD 320 it had become apparent to Constantine that there was a major disagreement brewing among the Christian bishops regarding the identity of Christ. Was He the eternal God the Son, or was he a created heavenly being who became a man? In AD 325, 318 bishops from around the Empire gathered in Nicaea in northern Turkey to discuss this agenda which Constantine had approved and included the following:

- The [Arian](#) question - was the pre-incarnate Jesus created or eternal?
- The celebration of [Passover](#) in determining the date of Easter;
- The Father and Son one in purpose or in person - the Trinity?

What it did **not** include was:

- Which books should be included in the Canon of Scripture?
- How do we create the Christian Church?;
- Making Sunday the new Sabbath;
- Inventing the story that Jesus was resurrected.

The early church adopted a form of baptism from their Jewish upbringing, called proselyte baptism. When Gentiles wanted to take upon themselves the laws of Moses, the Jews would baptize those Gentiles in the authority of the God of Israel. But in the New Testament, people were baptized in the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—which meant they had elevated Jesus to the full status of God.

LEE STROBEL'S INTERVIEW WITH DR. J.P. MORELAND

The Case For Christ, 1998, pg.342

From the Bible

The New Testament provides ample evidence that the foundational facts of Christianity were already established nearly 300 years before Emperor Constantine was even born!

1. Note how the Apostle Peter described the Apostle Paul's epistles in Second Peter 3:15-16 —
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2. What does the apostle Thomas's reaction to his contact with the resurrected Jesus in John 20:26-29 tell us about how early Christians began to worship Jesus as the eternal God?
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3. Was the Christian Church an invention of Constantine? Note carefully what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians, around twenty years after the resurrection of Christ (3 centuries before Constantine), in Eph. 3:7-12. How does this passage correct the idea that the Christian gospel, the Church, and the Christian concept of salvation were all originated with Constantine in the fourth century?
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4. What does Colossian 1:15-17 tell us about what the early Christians believed about the identity of Jesus Christ?
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Additional References

Childers, Alisa. 2020. *Another Gospel*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Momentum.

Strobel, Lee. 1998. *The Case For Christ. A journalist's personal investigation of the evidence for Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

For more information about the evidence for the God of the Bible and the truthfulness of Christianity visit-



