



Reading Comprehension Questions

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The Rise of Confessional States (pp. 551–556)

- What is the turning point between the ancient and medieval worlds?
- What is a confessional state?
- What was the first confessional state?
- What is the justification for a confessional state?
- What is Christendom?
- What was the model for Christian confessional states?
- What other major religion adopted the confessional state model?
- How did the Roman confessional state establish its Christian identity?
- What is a pagan?
- What revolution swept through Late Antique Rome?

Weaving the Thread

Story for the Heart: The End of Prophecy

How does one distinguish between the ancient and medieval worlds?

This question presents students with a major historiographical question as they study the “transitional period” between antiquity and the Middle Age. It is often thought that the triumph of Christianity heralded the death of the Classical world. But is this an oversimplification? The mostly eager willingness of Christians to assimilate the best of “Athens” into their doctrine and learning should cause us to second-guess this narrative (**KC 6.16, KC 6.21**). Students should note key aspects of Christian development in this chapter, such as the formation of Christendom and the rise of monastic life (**ID 6.2, ID 6.27**; see also **KC 6.18 The Rise of Self-Martyrdom**), being ready to return to these themes in the following chapters as they consider the medieval West. But what other aspects of the golden thread changed during this transition, besides just “religion”? This chapter examines the manifold consequences of the Christian revolution and what it meant for the political, social, intellectual, and moral life, laying a foundation for the study of Christendom (**ID 6.2**) in the Middle Age.

Map Study: Christendom and Dar al-Islam

Note the Eastern Roman Empire at the center of the Mediterranean world. The Eastern Romans were surrounded by Muslims to the south and barbarians to the north. This creates an opportunity to discuss how great peoples are founded. Specifically, opposition to others helps clarify what unites one's own group. Hence, the conflict between the Eastern Romans and Muslim Caliphates (**KC 8.6**) gives rise to the broader categories of Christendom and Dar al-Islam ("house of Islam"). Although this discussion is somewhat anachronistic to the material covered by this chapter, it offers a springboard for discussing the text's claim that the Christian confessional state (**ID 6.3**)—and, ultimately, Christendom itself (**ID 6.2**)—was established specifically as a distinction from other religions, and a proclamation of opposition to them.

— **p. 555:** "...[I]t was the military rivalry between Christian and Islamic states, the sword versus the scimitar, that above all came to define the political identity of Christendom. It was precisely when the Islamic threat to Europe began to fade, in the late seventeenth century, that the idea of the confessional state also lost its appeal in the West." See **Map 6.1**, *The Spread of Islam across the World at the Beginning of the Middle Age*, 622–750, p. 555.

Key Dates

- 303–313: Great Persecution
- 312: Battle of Milvian Bridge
- **313: Edict of Milan**
- 324: Founding of Constantinople
- **325: Council of Nicaea**
- 337: Death of Constantine

 See *Chronology 6.1, The Early Christian Empire*, p. 550.

Essential IDs

- 6.1 Battle of the Milvian Bridge
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- 6.2 Christendom
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- 6.3 Confessional State
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- 6.4 Constantine
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- 6.5 Constantinople
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- 6.6 Diocletian
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- 6.7 Great Persecution
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- 6.8 Edict of Milan
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- 6.9 East Rome
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- 6.10 Hippodrome
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- 6.11 Supersessionism
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Key Places/Geography

- Black Sea
- Bosphorus
- **Constantinople**
- **Milvian Bridge**
- Nicaea
- Rome

— See [Map 6.2](#), *The City of Constantinople and its Environs, sixth century, p. 560*; and [Map 6.5](#), *Christian Patriarchates of Late Antiquity, late sixth century, p. 574*.