

TRANSCRIPT

TAPE – KANYE WEST

I know that God's been calling me for a long time and the devil's been distracting me for a long time.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

That's Kanye West. One of most ground-breaking musicians of all time according to Rolling Stone. He's speaking at a mega church back in 2019.

TAPE – KANYE WEST

And when I was in my lowest points, God was there with me and sending me visions and inspiring me. All of that arrogance and confidence and cockiness that you all see me use before, God is now using for him.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Kanye West's journey to Christianity is one of the most high-profile conversion stories at least so far in the 21st century. It was big news. It was also pretty controversial news. Kanye's confession of faith has been debated and analysed and questioned with every step he takes. Kanye might be one of the most influential musicians in the world, but this episode, we're talking about the conversion of the most powerful man in the world.

Xi Jinping, president of China, who recently topped the Forbes list of most powerful people on the planet, imagine him announcing his conversion to Christianity. That gives you a sense of what it must have felt like in the fourth century when the Roman emperor Constantine said that he now believed as Kanye would say, Jesus is Lord. It was big news for sure. Controversial news certainly. And historians have debated the events for centuries. But was it good news? I mean, wasn't his conversion terrible for traditional Romans and their ancient culture being forced to adopt a new religion?

And wasn't it bad even for the church itself, which was now co-opted into Roman politics, power, and even warfare? These are not easy questions. So, we're not going to be giving you any easy answers.

I'm John Dickson with Season Six of Undeceptions.

Undeceptions is brought to you by Zondervan's new book, *Rembrandt Is in the Wind* by Russ Ramsey.

Each episode, we explore some aspect of life, faith, history, science, culture, or ethics that's either much misunderstood or mostly forgotten. With the help of people who know what they're talking about, we're trying to undeceive ourselves and let the truth out.

ACTOR READS

It was the 19th year of Diocletian's reign AD 303 and the month distress called March by the Romans and the festival of the Saviour's Passion was approaching, when an Imperial decree was published everywhere, ordering the churches to be razed to the ground and the scriptures destroyed by fire and giving notice that those in places of honour would lose their places and domestic staff,

if they continued to profess Christianity, would be deprived of their liberty. Such was the first edict against us. Soon afterwards, other decrees arrived in rapid succession, ordering that the presidents of the churches in every place should all first be committed to prison and then coerced by every possible means into offering sacrifice. -- Eusebius, History of the Church.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

This is 10 years before Constantine's conversion. Emperor Diocletian announces what historians today still call the Great Persecution against the Christians. It's the immediate backstory of the momentous change that would soon take place under Constantine. The church under Roman rule from Emperor Nero back in the first century, right up to Diocletian in the fourth was forced to specialize in what you might call the art of losing well.

We have many documented examples of Christians responding with good cheer to persecution. For example, we have a letter from a leading Christian intellectual of the third century. His name is Tertullian and he's writing to the local Roman governor named Scapula. Tertullian refers to the torture and execution of ordinary believers. And he boldly says to the governor.

ACTOR READS

We are not in any great perturbation or alarm about the persecutions we suffer from the ignorance of men for we have attached ourselves to this sect, fully accepting the terms of its covenant. For our religion commands us to love even our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us. It is peculiar to Christians alone to love those that hate them.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Tertullian goes on to mention what might be the first reference to mass Christian nonviolent action. He threatens a mass turnout of Christians in Carthage before the governor and makes clear that Scapula will have to kill thousands of citizens if he really wants to put Christianity down. This was the year 215, but it's nothing compared to the great persecution under Emperor Diocletian nearly a century later. This persecution from 303 to 312 was unlike anything that had come before in intensity, duration and geographical spread.

We just heard actor and friend of the pod, Yannick Lawry read Bishop Eusebius' account of Diocletian's first of three edicts against the Christians in the year 303 on the 23rd of February to be precise, my wedding anniversary. Why this new campaign against Christians? Well, Christianity had been growing dramatically in the previous two centuries, and the Romans had worked out that targeted campaigns of violence like the one under Scapula in Carthage. Didn't really stop people turning to Christianity. It just continued to grow.

So, a new approach was required. Intellectual power for this new approach came from the celebrated Greek philosopher, Porphyry. He was one of the outstanding intellects of the era and the most powerful critic Christians faced in ancient times. He was Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris rolled into one. One of Porphyry's works is called Philosophy from Oracles. And it's a full-scale defence of traditional pagan religion with a scary plan to deal with the Christians. Here's Yannick again, putting on his best Porphyry.

ACTOR READS

How can these people, Christians, be thought worthy of forbearance? They have turned away from those who from earliest times are referred to as divine among all Greeks and Barbarians. And to what sort of penalties might they not justly be subjected? These are people who have abandoned the things of their fathers.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

The argument was clear. The gods had protected Rome since ancient times. Anyone who abandons the gods, forfeits any right to Imperial protection. This was just what Emperor Diocletian need. A philosophical rationale for reviving the ancient traditions and crushing Christianity.

INTERVIEW BEGINS

John Dickson:

What was Diocletian's problem with the Christians? I mean, were they just... Had their little lovely churches on the corner, helping little old ladies and so on?

Doug Lee:

Diocletian was a great religious conservative. And he was very concerned to ensure that the traditional gods were honoured.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

That's Doug Lee, Emeritus professor in Ancient History in the Department of Classics and Archaeology at the University of Nottingham in the UK. He's a world authority on Roman politics and warfare in late antiquity.

INTERVIEW CONTINUES

Doug Lee:

I think he saw that as part of the way to guarantee that all the reforms he introduced to re-establish, to restabilize the empire were effective and Christians were a problem because they refused to honour those traditional gods. They were prepared to pray for emperors, but they weren't prepared to engage in traditional civic ceremonies involving blood sacrifice and that sort of thing.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

It's in this climate that Constantine appears on the scene. It's not just a tumultuous time for Christians, the empire itself was going through enormous changes and the emperors themselves weren't having an easy job of it.

INTERVIEW CONTINUES

Alanna Nobbs:

And the period from 234 to 284 is often referred to as the third century crisis. It was a time of great political instability and economic depression. Emperor after emperor was either assassinated by their troops or died in some way or died in battle.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

And that's Alanna Nobbs, professor of Ancient History at Macquarie University in my hometown, Sydney. Our period is her specialty. She's taught the life of Constantine for decades.

INTERVIEW CONTINUES

Alanna Nobbs:

And in fact, in the next 50 years, 26, who claimed the title of emperor, ended up having very short reigns. So, by the late third century, the emperor Carinus, the one before Diocletian had died fighting the Persians and one of his, one of his soldiers, a man named Diocles who took the name Diocletian came to power. Now his idea was to try and solve this continuing instability. Diocletian, the emperor before Constantine, as it were, divided the empire of four parts.

Alanna Nobbs:

And he and his colleague Maximian ruled as the senior emperors, they were called *Augusti*, and Diocletian was more senior than Maximian. And he chose two junior ones, whom he called *Caesars*, Galerius and Constantius. And their names are clues... this is Constantine's father. So, the idea was that the senior emperors would hand over to the junior emperors. Well, that would've worked except that, Maximian son, Maxentius and Constantius' son, Constantine didn't like that one bit. So, they objected to the choice of juniors and eventually came to blows themselves at the very famous Battle of the Milvian Bridge. So, it was a time of instability, upheaval, economic problems.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Adding to the general chaos is the fact that six years before Constantine's famous battle with Maxentius near Rome in the year 312, his soldiers actually proclaimed him to be emperor in faraway York. Yes, York in England. And a few weeks ago, I got to visit the very spot while collecting interviews for upcoming episodes. Well, I'm here outside the lovely York Minster and over here is a statue of Constantine, the Great. He's here made of bronze sitting down in a relaxed pose with his sword in hand. And the reason he's here is because long before he went into Rome and had his famous vision of the cross, he was here as a general, various mopping up operations here in Britain. When his father died, his troops declared him successor, emperor, right here in York, in faraway York. That's where it began.

Doug Lee:

Well, I think if a Roman citizen from the first century had been somehow miraculously transported through time to the fourth century, he or she would've noticed a number of striking changes to the

Empire's political life. First of all, instead of there being just one emperor, there were now four. And this is an arrangement which modern scholars refer to as the Tetrarchy. Secondly, instead of those emperors being drawn from the senatorial elite, they were men from humbler backgrounds whose crucial qualification was military experience. And then thirdly, these emperors rarely spent time in the City of Rome. Instead, they spent their time in urban centres, far removed from Italy, much closer to the Eastern and Northern frontiers of the empire.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

So, four emperors and plenty of egos and chaos. Christianity as we've already heard, was also experiencing trouble. The thing is, from what we can tell, the church's troubles were not reducing the number of Christians. What is the standing of the Christian Church around the same time?

Doug Lee:

For most of the second half of the third century, the Imperial government explicitly allowed Christians to practice their religion and churches to own buildings and cemeteries. That was after some years of persecution in the 250s. But that policy of toleration all changed in the year 303, when Diocletian began issuing a series of edicts specifically targeting the church. And those edicts ordered the destruction of church buildings, the confiscation of scriptures and the imprisonment of clergy.

And that's what's generally referred to as the Great Persecution. So those actions of Diocletian's imply that the church was a significant feature of the ridges landscape in the Roman world by the early fourth century. And it's generally accepted that Christian numbers had grown significantly during those decades of toleration in the later third century. But it's also generally accepted that Christianity was still only one religion among many in the empire and unlikely to have comprised more than about 10% of the population.

John Dickson:

That's still a lot of people though.

Doug Lee:

Oh yeah. If you're talking about a population for the empire of between 50, 60 million people, then if it was up to 10%, then that's five, six million people, which is no small number.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

This is an important detail because there are exaggerations about the size of the church in this period. I've read some scholars say that about half the empire was Christian by this time. That'd be 20 to 30 million. Actually, I think I repeated that claim in one of my early books. Sorry about that. But there's a pretty strong consensus in the last decade or so amongst Roman historians that only about 10% of the empire was Christian by the time of Constantine. This makes it very unlikely that Constantine turned to Christianity for political reasons as if he was trying to ride the wave of some new popular movement. The fact is his conversion put him at odds with 90% of the population. Still as Alanna points out 10% isn't nothing.

Alanna Nobbs:

There's quite a lot of evidence that the Christians were not negligible even if they were 10%. I mean, for one thing, you have the Christian apologists and the polemic going on in the third century like Celsus and Porphyry's. Now they wouldn't have bothered if the Christians were negligible, would they? So that's an indication that they-

John Dickson:

Yeah, the fact that someone as great as Porphyry-

Alanna Nobbs:

Yes.

John Dickson:

... would write whole books against the Christians is tremendous.

Alanna Nobbs:

That's right. It just shows you in some hint that he may even have been quite exposed to it actually and didn't like it. The fact that you've got all these polemics now also, something we've been doing for many years at Macquarie is looking at the papyri from this time. These are pieces of sort of, not quite paper, but writing material made from Papyrus plant that had survived quite incidentally from ancient times. They weren't meant to survive. There were things written on scraps of paper or bigger bits of paper and have now been because the dry sands of Egypt have preserved them.

John Dickson:

Yeah. The random leases and-

Alanna Nobbs:

Yeah. Exactly.

John Dickson:

... payment receipts for musicians. And also the writing.

Alanna Nobbs:

Yeah. That's right. So exciting. And I think in a way, one might say that these two confirm the fact that Christianity had certainly permeated well into Egypt. From 256, that's the middle of the third century, we've got an official order to arrest a man called Peta Ceraphus in a very small village. Now, normally when you want to arrest somebody you say, so and so Baker or so and so Stone Mason. This says Ceraphus Christian, which strongly suggests that he's a church office holder.

Alanna Nobbs:

That's his job. That's not proved, but that's very strongly suggesting. So, in other words, a small village. And another one here that I absolutely love. This is one of my favorited papyri. I must admit John. In February 304, there's papyrus from a small village. It says in the former church, in the village of Chysis C-H-Y-S-I-S, which is a tiny village outside Oxyrhynchus. Now it's pretty negligible. But why is it called a former church? Well, that's because Diocletian instituted a great persecution and-

John Dickson:

The year before.

Alanna Nobbs:

Yeah, exactly. And churches were razed to the ground. So, this one clearly has been razed to the ground. It's a very interesting Papyrus with a number of fascinating features.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

After the interview, I asked Alanna for the details of this papyrus. I didn't know about it before she mentioned it. It's catalogued as P.Oxy 33.2673 in case you are looking for it. It's a formal legal declaration made by some lowly Christian minister that his church has very few valuables to handover to the Romans during the Great Persecution. I, Aurelius son of Kopreus, the papyrus begins. A reader of the former church of the village of Chysis declare that the church had no gold, no silver, nor coined silver, nor clothing, nor animals, nor real estate, except only the bronze items, now handed over to officials. The document is a poignant firsthand reminder of just how tough things were for Christians in the years immediately before Constantine's conversion. Who knows what happened to Aurelius himself?

Alanna Nobbs:

That shows that there's a very small church in a very small village that had pretty well nothing, but it's still being chased up. Now, what I'm saying is that proves not only the long arm of the law for Rome, but it also proves that little villages had Christian churches at this time.

John Dickson:

I want to turn to talk about Constantine, but before we talk about his life and achievements and so on, what are our historical sources for his life and reign?

Doug Lee:

Well, I think the first thing to emphasize is that somewhat surprisingly given how important he is in the history of the empire, his life and reign are not as well documented as the reigns of other important emperors. For example, we don't know for sure in which year he was born. We can narrow it down to a number of options, but the state of the sources leaves room for debate about that. We do know that detailed historical accounts of the period were written in antiquity, but very frustratingly, these have not survived or only in fragmentary form. And what we do have tends to be quite polarized. Either Christian writers, who are very pro Constantine or pagan authors who are hostile.

Doug Lee:

So, from the Christian perspective, you've got figures like Lactantius and Eusebius. Lactantius teacher of rhetoric from North Africa, working at the court of Constantine until the persecution began in 303. And he subsequently wrote a book called *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* showing how all the emperors over previous centuries who'd persecuted the church had met a bad end, while those who helped the church like Constantine, prospered. But it's a very polemical work, but does include some valuable detail about the Tetrarchy and the events of the early fourth century.

And then Eusebius, he's a Bishop from Caesarea in Palestine. He wrote the first church history. And part of its value is that it quotes many documents, including Imperial edicts and quotes some verbatim. He also wrote a biography of Constantine. It's highly panegyric in nature and notable for its omission of details, which would otherwise show Constantine in a bad light. For example, it makes no reference to Constantine's eldest son, Crispus, who at one time was being groomed as his successor, but then was executed in mysterious circumstances. But again, it includes verbatim quotation of a number of important documents.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Panegyric by the way, just comes from the Greek word for an ancient Athenian festival, *a paneguris*. Orators often made speeches at these festivals in praise of local officials in attendance. The speeches themselves then were called Panagyricals, hence the modern panegyric, meaning formal or elaborate praise in public. But we digress.

Doug Lee:

Then at the other, the spectrum, we've got the pagan history of Zosimus. He's an Imperial official writing much later at the end of the fifth century, but he drew heavily on an earlier historian named Eunapius whose work survives only in accepted form. And Zosimus leave his readers in no doubt that he regarded Constantine as a very bad thing for the empire because of his abandonment of the traditional gods. A final important historical account is a short work known as the *Origin of Constantine*. We don't know who the author was, but it was probably written in the later fourth century.

It focuses is on political and military events down to the years in the mid 320s with very little comment about religious matters. So that might imply that it was written by a pagan author. But if so, then he was a pagan who was broadly sympathetic to Constantine. So, we've got those historical accounts and then alongside them, we have a number of panegyrics delivered before Constantine. They're full of effusive language, but one can sometimes make deductions from that, which are valuable.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Sorry, I can't resist chiming in with one of the panegyrics we know about, which was delivered before Constantine himself. A Christian priest was carried away a Constantine's conversion and declared in public that Constantine was quote, destined to share the empire of the son of God in the world to come. Yes, apparently Constantine was going to help Jesus rule heaven forever. Constantine told him to shut up and get back to praying. True story.

Doug Lee:

We have the text of many of his laws preserved in later codifications. And very importantly, we have documentary sources, inscriptions, and papyri as well as coinage. And these documentary sources can be particularly important controls when navigating the biases of the historical accounts.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Okay. So, we have decreased law, a few complimentary accounts by people like Eusebius and Lactantius and semi-critical accounts like the one from Zosimus. What can we cobble together from all of these about how Constantine the Great became the great? How did he rise to absolute Roman power?

Doug Lee:

I suppose it's important to emphasize that Constantine didn't come to power in one sort of big bang. It actually involved three stages spread out over nearly two decades and in widely separated locations. So, the first stage took place in 306 in Northern Britain, specifically in York. Constantine's father was one of the original Tetrarchs. And when his father suddenly died in 306 in York, the troops stationed there acclaimed Constantine as emperor. So, at that stage, he just controls the Western most provinces of the empire.

Stage two takes place in 312 in Italy, and specifically in the City of Rome. This is probably the best-known stage. And the background to that is at the same time as Constantine has himself declared emperor in 306, the son of the other retiring Tetrarch Maximian has himself proclaimed emperor in Rome. He's a guy called Maxentius and a number of the other Tetrarchs for East in the empire try to dislodge him from Italy and fail.

And Constantine eventually in 312 takes on that task, marches his forces across the Alps down into Italy and defeating various of Maxentius generals on the way. And then finally confronts Maxentius himself, North of the City of Rome near the Milvian Bridge. And in the ensuing battle, as we know, Constantine defeats Maxentius who drowns in the river Tiber trying to escape back to the city. So now Constantine controls the Western half of the empire.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

The victory at Milvian Bridge on 28th of October, the year 312, would be just another battle among thousands in Roman history were it not for Constantine's startling announcement that he had won the encounter with the assistance of Jesus Christ. This is the moment of his conversion. According to Constantine's own account, given directly to Eusebius in the days before the confrontation with Maxentius, Constantine had been reflecting sort of philosophically on the inadequacies of the Greek and Roman gods and he was pondering monotheism the belief in one God.

Constantine says that shortly before the battle with Maxentius around midday, he saw a sign of pure light in the sky in the shape of a cross. The cross was apparently inscribed with the words *in hoc signo vinces* - in this sign conquer. Constantine went to bed later that evening confused and disturbed by what he had seen and he was visited in a dream. Eusebius reports in his sleep, the Christ of God appeared to him with the same sign, which he had seen in the heavens and commanded him to make a likeness of that sign,

which he had seen in the heavens and to use it as a safeguard in all engagements with his enemies. So that's what Constantine did.

Alanna Nobbs:

He put it very quickly. It must have been on the shields of all his soldiers. It's what we call the Chi Rho, Chi and Rho are the first two letters of Christos in Greek. And while he didn't invent the symbol, quite important, actually, that Christian symbol, it had a pre-existing Egyptian history and others. He certainly made it his own so that from then on, it becomes identified with Christianity.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

The Chi Rho is formed by super imposing the Greek letters, Chi or K and Rho or R, which looked like a capital X and a capital P. We'll pop an image of it in the show notes or you can just Google Chi Rho symbol. Anyway, within a few days, Constantine defeated the larger army of Maxentius. The Western region of the Roman empire from Italy to Britain was now Constantine's. What do we make of all of this? It's pretty clear to me reading the sources that Eusebius is at least honestly relating what Constantine told him.

Eusebius admits that he only feels comfortable recording the incident because the emperor quote confirmed his statement by an oath. Whatever explains these strange happenings in October AD 312. This was a genuine and totally unexpected turning point in world history. Within a few years, about 10 actually, Constantine gained the Eastern part of the empire as well. The entire Roman world would be governed by someone who declared Jesus is Lord.

TAPE: The Da Vinci Code film 2006

1. *The Bible as we know, it was finally presided over by one man, a pagan Emperor Constantine.*
2. I thought Constantine was a Christian?
3. *Oh, hardly, no. He was a lifelong pagan who was baptized on his death bed.*

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

That's a clip from the 2006 film, *The Da Vinci Code* based on Dan Brown's bestselling novel of the same name. It makes quite a few claims about Emperor Constantine actually, almost all of which are myth. But the phenomenal success of the book, which has sold over 80 million copies has blurred fact and fiction. Yeah. So, I want to drill down on his conversion because this is where there's a lot of Dan Brown conspiracy that he wasn't even converted, it was all just a political ploy. So, what do you make of his conversion? Was it a sincere conversion? Did he think he really had become a Christian?

Alanna Nobbs:

We've got the evidence, we've got a number of edicts over the time of his reign. And in my opinion and I have thought about this a lot over the years, if you look at them chronologically, you will see a definite development in his ideas. So, in other words, well, like most of us what we thought at 17 we don't think now, well, in many ways. So, this is what we see. We see a gradual continual development, both in his style. His own style has been detected in these letters or many of them in edicts plus the fact that his

understanding grew. So, while it is debated whether he had an actual conversion on the night when he saw the sign and what was the sign anyway, and what difference did it make, you suddenly expect his whole life to change.

It's not like that. But what you do see, I think is a gradual recognition of what he let himself in for, if you like. He kept bishops, particularly Hosius in his entourage. He kept advisors. I mean, he asked some things, as an emperor he doesn't have to consult bishops. So, I think you see a development over his lifetime that I personally find quite convincing and he does have some good phrase. I was going to find, I think the end of his, or towards the end of his life, I've got some good ones here. In a letter to the Persian King Sapu, I'll tell you the date of that later, he writes about this God eye reverence. He also talks about himself as a bishop of those outside the church. He has definite phraseology, which I think shows that his mindset was changing.

Doug Lee:

That idea that it was just political expediency, I think goes back probably to the 19th century Swiss historian, Jacob Burckhardt who argued that Constantine was just an ambitious, a moral politician, prepared to do anything to gain power. And he argued that Constantine began showing favour to Christians to win their support for his political ambitions, not because of any genuine interest in their religion. And the main weakness I think with Burckhardt's argument, which has been pointed out by many scholars is that it presupposes that Christians made up a very significant proportion of the empire's population by the fourth century.

But as we've already mentioned, the general consensus is that Christians are unlikely to have been more than 10% of the population by that stage. So, this sort of idea of political expedience it doesn't really ring true against that background. In antiquity, Constantine pagan critics claim that he only converted to Christianity to escape the guilt of having executed his eldest son, Crispus and having murdered his wife Fausta. But, again, the problem with that thesis was that those events happened in 326, whereas there's good independent evidence for Constantine favouring the church from very soon after his victory at the Milvian Bridge in 312.

So that brings us back to the events leading up to that victory and the various account of the vision or dream, which as you've said those accounts are a bit muddled with regard to the various details. But the idea of a commander using the report of a divine inspired dream or vision promising victory to instil morale in his troops has a very long pedigree in Roman history. And I can well imagine Constantine using something like this on the eve of a battle in which the odds were by no means in his favour for pragmatic reasons. And then when he achieved success, it was natural for him to think that it would be sensible to honour the deity in question.

So, the missing piece in this is why he presented his dream or vision as referring to the God of the Christians. And I think part of the answer for that is that we know there were Christian priests in his entourage by this time, and we can easily imagine them encouraging his thinking in this direction. So, I think of Constantine conversion in terms of his approaching the battle with a very traditional religious mindset, except that the God, on whom he pins his hopes is the Christian God. His victory then validates that trust and he begins honouring the Christian God in various ways. But as all of that implies his understanding of what Christianity entails is at this stage quite limited. And he then spends as it were the

rest of his reign and life, working through the wider implications of that commitment that he's made at that point.

John Dickson:

Yes. He's not exactly a first-class theologian at any point in his reign, is he?

Doug Lee:

No.

John Dickson:

But some of the proclamations you see in speeches that he allegedly made, do they convince you that he was in the end a man of to the degree we can tell at this remove, sincere Christian conviction?

Doug Lee:

Yeah, I think so. I think the sorts of things that he says in some of these documents preserved, particularly in Eusebius, do suggest a degree of passion really sometimes. I think his Christianity was genuine. It's just in 312, I think his understanding was very limited and he gradually worked his way through the wider implications of that decision as he went along.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Many today have trouble understanding why if Constantine really was a Christian, he was only baptized on his deathbed instead of at the moment of his conversion back in 312. The simple answer is that's just how lots of people did it in this period. Many saw baptism not as your entry into the faith, but as the seal of your journey of faith. As a catechumen or student of Christianity, Constantine was still considered a Christian throughout his reign. Okay. So, the consensus amongst historians is that Constantine really did think of himself as a believing Christian.

I think I can go along with that. But what did this mean for everyone else if Constantine was now a man of faith? Did he think it was necessary for everyone to be a Christian? Did the first Christian emperor impose Christianity on the empire? We're going to get to that after the break.

SPONSOR BREAK: ZONDERVAN

This episode is sponsored by Zondervan's new book, *Rembrandt Is in the Wind* by Russ Ramsey. If you've ever stood in front of a painting in a museum and thought, man, I wish someone who knows what they're talking about would explain this to me, I've done this many times, then this is the book for you.

Russ Ramsey is an American pastor, but in high school he had this Art teacher who he says, taught him how to see art. From then on, he's had this deep love of art. And in his new book Russ provides new paths to the gospel showing how art illuminates God, humanity, and the meaning of everything. Through the art and the lives of nine primary artists, people like Michelangelo to Vincent van Gogh to Liliias Trotter

and so on, what Russ basically does is helps us see these high art forms as accessible so that we are able to examine the beauty of the artist's work, but also their brokenness. Quite often their brokenness.

And Russ weaves these stories of the artist and what they're trying to do into a discussion of the art itself. What is beauty? Why does beauty matter? And all of that deep stuff. The book is part art history, part Bible study, part philosophy, and part analysis of just the human experience. It sounds so much like what we love to do here at Undeceptions that we're actually doing a whole episode with Russ later in the season. In the mean time you can order *Rembrandt Is in the Wind* by Russ Ramsey. Go to Amazon or to zondervan.com for more info.

SPONSOR BREAK: ANGLICAN AID

John Dickson:

In Tanzania, people living with a disability, suffer discrimination and social isolation. They also have trouble finding employment and education opportunities. Nearly half of people living with a disability in Tanzania can't read or write. In some cases, they're even denied medical care or access to services that offer food and shelter. Anglican Aid is changing this by supporting the Karagwe Disability Program in the Kagera Region of Tanzania. The program offers dedicated medical care and rehabilitation to people living with disabilities, as well as giving them access to education and a pathway to employment. It's fantastic. You can help Anglican Aid support the life changing work of the Karagwe Disability Program by visiting anglicanaid.org.au. That's anglicanaid.O-R-G.au. Thanks so much.

EPISODE CONTINUES

Alannah Nobbs speaks in Latin...

ACTOR READS

We think the opportunity should be denied to no one whatsoever who has given his attention to the observance of the Christians or to that religion which he feels to be most suited to himself. So that the highest deity whose religion we foster with free minds may be able to show to us in all affairs his customary favour and benevolence. All who have the wish to observe the religion of the Christians may hasten to do so without any worry or molestation. Since you see that this has been granted by us to these same Christians, your devotedness understands also that to others as well the freedom and full liberty has been granted in accordance with the peace of our times, to exercise free choice in worshipping as each one has seen fit.

This has been done by us so that nothing may seem to be to taking away from anyone's honour or from any religion whatsoever.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

It kind of sounds like a modern document. Doesn't it? It's the sort of thing you could imagine Thomas Jefferson writing in that enlightenment spirit of toleration. But it's the Edict of Milan from February 313. It's a proclamation establishing toleration for both Christianity and pagan religion in the Roman empire. It

was the outcome of a political agreement reached at Milan between Constantine and his Eastern co-emperor Licinius.

John Dickson:

I want to ask you about whether he forced everyone to be a Christian because that's what you often hear.

Doug Lee:

I don't think there's any evidence for Constantine forcing people to become Christian or not. Wouldn't really have been in his political interests to do so in 312 while the overwhelming of the majority of the Empire's population remained pagan and especially while he still only controlled half of the empire. The so-called Edict of Milan, which he and Licinius agreed the text of early in 313, the year after the battle of the Milvian Bridge, was explicit that the two emperors wish to guarantee the freedom of individuals to follow whatever religion they wished. One of the interesting features is it still uses that sort of ambiguous language when it talks about whatever divinity there is in the heavens. But at the same time, it's noteworthy that Christians are the one religious group who are explicitly mentioned and that must surely reflect constant times influence in the formula of the text.

John Dickson:

And of course, they'd been persecuted for a number of years immediately before.

Doug Lee:

Yeah. So, it's not surprising that they are singled out for specific mention in that way. I mean, once Constantine has control of the whole empire after 324, it would've been less surprising I think if there'd been a hardening of his attitude towards pagan practices, and there is some evidence for that. We know that a small number of pagan temples in the Eastern provinces were destroyed. But there appear to have been specific reasons for each of those cases for example, various temples of Aphrodite, which were especially associated with ritual prostitution. Some sources suggest that Constantine might have banned pagan blood sacrifice in his later years. But again, there's a lot of debate because the evidence is not absolutely clear on this.

It certainly does look like Constantine raided the treasuries of temples to fund his building projects. But in none of that, is there any sense of forcing people to become Christians? And in fact, we find him extending favour to pagans in various contexts. And it's also interesting that Constantine never relinquished the title of pontifex maximus, chief priest, which emperors had always held and which was associated with Rome's traditional pagan cults, but he retains that office right to his dying day. But I don't think there's any sense in which Christianity was the empire's official religion by the end of Constantine's reign. Certainly, it was a favored religion, but not official.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Actually, there's a lovely line in one of Constantine's later letters where he says the reason he doesn't want to impose Christianity on the empire is that he doesn't want to turn people off the faith. More about that one in a moment. The insight is a good one, but sadly it's one that was forgotten two generations after Constantine. Emperor Theodosius in the 390s did impose the Christian faith. To be precise in a law of Theodosius stated 16th of June 391, the Emperor decreed quote,

“No person shall be granted the right to perform sacrifices.

No person shall go around the temples. No person shall Revere the shrines.”

He adds that any officials found engaging in such pagan activities will be fined 15 pounds or seven kilograms of gold. That's a ridiculous sum. So, 54 years after the death of Constantine and 360 or so years after Jesus himself, the old Greco-Roman religions were declared illegal. So, Constantine did not impose Christianity on the empire, but he did promulgate laws that benefited Christians starting with some pretty cool tax breaks.

Alannah Nobbs: Quotes in Latin.

ACTOR READS

Every person shall have the Liberty to leave at his death, any property that he wishes to the most holy and venerable council of the Catholic Church -- Theodosian Code, 1624.

Doug Lee:

He made provision for exempt, made it much easier to leave bequests to the church which was very important change. And he also initially exempted clergy from having to perform local public duties in their community. I mean, he was later forced to rescind that, but that was an initial sort of attempt to aid the church in a very obvious and helpful way. So, there are there are undoubtedly some measures where the Christian impulse is more obvious.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Exempting clergy from public offices was an important financial benefit. Many middle- and lower-class citizens of the empire were required to perform government services of various kinds. You could think of it as a form of taxation. It could involve giving lodging to visiting soldiers and officials, providing supplies to the city or even sitting on municipal councils. And these public offices were often onerous, particularly the ones that involved you having to take time out of your regular work. I suppose modern equivalence might be compulsory jury duty in Australia or National Service in Israel.

In any case in the spring of 313, just six months after his victory at Milvian Bridge, Constantine wrote to the Proconsuls of Africa, Analinus, ordering that the clergy of the province should quote, be kept absolutely free from all the public offices. For when they render supreme service to the deity it seems that they confer incalculable benefit on the affairs of the state. To be clear, Christian clergy were by no means the only people in Roman society to be released from these civic duties. Pagan priests had the same thing. Professors in the academies, physicians, leaders of Jewish synagogues, they all enjoyed the same privilege.

Constantine's logic in connection with the churches was that the activities of the clergy, which included visiting the sick, distributing charitable gifts and preaching about these things were themselves a valuable public office. There was by the way, a brilliant catch in these laws that benefited the clergy. Wealthy people were not allowed to become clergy. Constantine didn't want the rich entering church ministry as a kind of loophole to get out of public service. One of his laws from June 329 basically says, the wealthy have to contribute to secular affairs. The church has the business of looking after the poor. Okay, what else?

Doug Lee:

Yeah. Well, as I said earlier, we have quite a few of his laws surviving and they cover a vast range of areas really. One can see possible Christian influence in some of them but I think the evidence is ambiguous as to whether this was Constantine's primary motivation. And part of that ambiguity arises from the way in which the laws have been preserved. They've come down to us usually in an edited form and that means that they usually lack the preface in which the rationale of the law was explained. So that's an unfortunate loss. But to give a couple of examples, one of the disliked pieces of legislation of the Emperor Augustus many centuries earlier was his imposition of penalties on those who didn't marry or who married but were childless.

And those penalties related primarily to restrictions on what you could inherit and that implies that he was particularly targeting the wealthier members of Roman society. But despite their unpopularity, they remained in force until Constantine's day when he repealed them in 320. And because this benefited the unmarried and the childless, this has sometimes been seen as a decision inspired by Constantine's Christianity. Why? Because by the early fourth century, Christian aesthetic practices were becoming increasingly widespread in the empire, whether in the form of individual hermits or monastic communities. So that might have been his motivation for repealing that legislation.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

The other possibility of course, is that Constantine knew Jesus himself never married and was certainly childless. And he could hardly maintain a law that penalized people in the same domestic situation as his Lord. The fact is as Doug points out, it's sometimes difficult to know exactly what lies behind Constantine's legislative changes. Obviously not everything he did reflected his newfound faith, but there are some other innovations that clearly do come from his Christianity. He gave certain judicial powers to bishops. That is to the church leaders who oversee the priests and churches of a region.

Even if Christianity made up only about 10% of the Roman population, that still means bishops had spiritual and moral authority over about five million people that really freed up the secular courts. Thanks to Constantine, bishops could settle civil cases among believers, things like loan disputes, property claims, family feuds, and so on. Weirdly, people were even allowed to appeal from the secular courts to these church courts and the church judgment would be final. It was all a bit of an experiment. And of course, it was open to abuse, but there was some good in it, especially because one of the legal powers given to bishops was the authority to free slaves in certain situations. And in this period, bishops freed a lot of slaves often at the church's cost.

Alanna Nobbs:

In 321, he recognized Sunday as the day of rest for the first time. He built a lot of churches. I'd say did pretty well really. I think overall given he did outlaw crucifixion and branding criminals on the faith. He said because they're in the image of God. Now that's his words, which is interesting.

John Dickson:

Interesting. So that's probably the first reference to this Imago Dei in Western history, in terms of a legal reference.

Alanna Nobbs:

Yes.

John Dickson:

Becomes very common in the 12th, 13th, 14th centuries but yeah.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Alanna's passing remark about Constantine building churches is actually pretty significant. The new emperor ordered the rebuilding of churches that had been destroyed during the Great Persecution. It was a kind of compensation scheme and it involved a lot of churches and Constantine made sure all of this was done at Imperial expense. Even if a Christian building had just been confiscated and then sold on to some pagan family or organization, the government reimbursed the owners when they had to give the building back to the church. Constantine seems to have been doing everything he could to support the church without totally annoying the majority of the pagan population.

He also built brand new Christian buildings and big ones. In the year 326, he allowed his mom, Helena, a keen supporter of Christianity to visit Jerusalem and surrounds, and then recommend the construction of new monuments to Jesus Christ. The two most spectacular buildings in the holy land still standing, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem that obviously commemorates the birthplace of Jesus and the Church of the Anastasis or resurrection better known today as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. This Church of the Holy Sepulchre is pretty special, actually. It was built directly on top of a first century tomb that local Jerusalem Christians insisted was the very Sepulchre or tomb of Jesus.

Modern archaeological research at the site has indeed confirmed the presence of a tomb from the first century cut into an ancient quarry beside garden, just like the gospel say. And it is, just like the gospel say, only 100 feet or so outside the ancient wall of Jesus Day. I take regular history tours there and it's really difficult to help people see past the gaudy hyper religiosity of the grand labyrinth of buildings, which is now run by five different denominations. But I ask people to try to picture a quiet garden tomb just beyond the hustle and bustle of the ancient city and let their imagination run wild. Admittedly, not many end up feeling the presence of Jesus in the spot, but everyone sees the lasting impact of Constantine, the Great.

TAPE: THE DA VINCI CODE MOVIE, 2006

Jesus was viewed by many of his followers as a mighty prophet, as a great and powerful man, but a man, nothing else. A mortal man.

Not the son of God?

Not even his nephew twice removed.

Constantine did not create Jesus' divinity. He simply sanctioned an already widely held idea.

Semantics.

No, it's not semantics. You're interpreting facts to support your own conclusions.

Facts for many Christians, Jesus was awful one day and divine the next.

For some Christians, His divinity was enhanced.

Absurd. There wasn't even a formal announcement of his promotion.

They couldn't even agree on a ...

Excuse me, who is God, who is man? How many have been murdered over this question?

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

That's another clip from *The Da Vinci Code* movie, keeping alive one of the myths about Constantine. From the year 312 to 324, Constantine rules only the Western part of the empire remember, but in 324, he defeats his Eastern counterpart Licinius and he becomes the sole emperor of East and West. You might have thought he would then start to impose his Christianity, but he, in fact, reiterates, the earlier Edict of Milan. We have a public letter from Constantine written in the wake of his victory against Licinius.

And in it, he explains that he's not going to remove the traditional Roman practices. His reasoning is intriguing. He admits he would love to see the end of pagan rights, but he then says, he knows that that would harden people against Christianity and quite discourage the hope of any general restoration of mankind to the way of truth. He means the way of Christ. In other words, banning paganism would backfire and work against his hope that everyone would choose Christianity. For it may be, he muses that this restoration of equal religious privileges to all will prevail to lead them, the pagans into the straight path.

Let no one harass another, but let everyone do as his soul desires. There is general agreement among scholars, if not Dan Brown fans, that Constantine's main concern throughout his 25-year reign was civic harmony. Following the awful atrocities and civil unrest of his recent predecessors, he wanted his empire to enjoy what he described as a life of peace and undisturbed concord for Christian and pagan alike. Sadly though, there was a dispute within the church itself that was reaching boiling point at just this moment.

John Dickson:

I want to ask you about Constantine's support for the church as an institution and for Christianity as his favored religion, but let me roll it into the question of the Council of Nicaea. I mean, one often hears that Nicene Council in 325 was a big theological agenda. Constantine wanted to elevate the teacher Jesus

to divine status so that you could have a controlling God over the Roman world. What really went on with Nicaea and Constantine's support?

Doug Lee:

Well, I think the Council of Nicaea was Constantine's attempt to solve a problem, which he inherited when he acquired control of the Eastern half of the empire in 324. And the source of the problem was this theological disagreement, which emerged in the church in Alexandria in the early 320s. So, we've got a local clergyman named Arius who had been wrestling with the conundrum of the Trinity and more specifically the relationship of the Father to the Son. And at the risk of oversimplifying Arius' problem was this.

Doug Lee:

In his view, the Father must have created the Son, but if so then the Son in some sense must have been inferior to the Father. Now the bishop of Alexandria at that time was not happy about this, particularly when Arius started preaching along these lines to his congregation. As far as the bishop in question a man, his name was Alexander was concerned, Arius views, cast serious doubt on the Son's ability to save humans. And so, there are a number of attempts to resolve the issue locally, those failed. And soon after Constantine's defeat of Licinius, he was made aware of the issue and the way it was divided in the church.

And initially he tries to persuade Arius and Alexander that they were quibbling over trivial matters. Whether that reflects Constantine, theological ignorance, or just part of a deliberate strategy is unclear. What is clear from the letter they wrote to them and from other evidence is that Constantine, prized divine blessing on his rule above everything else. And he was worried that any divisions in the church would earn God's disfavour. So, his eventual attempt to resolve the situation was to gather as many bishops as possible in one place to agree a statement of belief.

And in the end, more than 300 bishops came together in Nicaea in Northwest Turkey and nearly all were persuaded or cajoled into agreeing to that statement, which we know as the Nicene Creed. And the crucial phrasing in the creed as far as the dispute with Arius was concerned, was that the Son was of the same substance as the Father. In the end, Arius decided he couldn't accept this wording and so was exiled. And the issue was to rumble on throughout the rest of the fourth century and even beyond. But the idea that Constantine was trying to use the council in the sort of way that your question was describing, I think is really quite fanciful.

Alannah Nobbs speaking Latin, the Actor reads:

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made of one being with the Father.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

That's the Nicene Creed as agreed upon at the Council of Nicaea 1697 years ago. I wish I could say that peace and unity broke out after the Council of Nicaea and everyone lived happily ever after. The fact is

some churches resented the Nicene resolution. Constantine himself was not entirely sure about it. Arius was banished, but then later recalled with the blessing of Constantine.

To make matters worse, the next emperor Constantius ruling in the East accepted Arianism and soon launched minor persecution of Orthodox Christians, as they were called. For a time, the whole world grown and marvelled to find itself Arian, wrote the biblical scholar, Saint Jerome just 50 years later. But with the death of Constantius in 361, Arianism lost its chief supporter and people began to move back to the orthodoxy of the Nicene resolution. All churches have remained Nicene ever since. Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches all agree with the Nicene Creed. Constantine, the Great was not a theologian by any means.

In calling the Council of Nicaea, he just wanted agreement, not any predetermined outcome. He convened the council, but he didn't participate in the debates themselves, he left that to the bishops. Throughout his reign, we see Constantine wrestle with Christianity and with what it means to live a Christian life as the emperor of Rome. In some areas, he does well, championing the cause of the poor, for example. In other areas, not so much.

John Dickson:

Constantine was of course a flawed human being. So, and by our standards, a despot. Without breaking the golden rule of being a historian and being anachronistic, what aspects of Constantine's rule might we condemn?

Alanna Nobbs:

The issue that you're probably referring to John is the double murder, both of his son and of his second wife. Now it's not clear whether they were connected or not. There are various theories. Now since the ship sort of cracked in, I mean, nobody tells the emperor, actually admits what he's done and so on. So-

John Dickson:

The rumour was an incestuous relationship. Is that right?

Alanna Nobbs:

Yeah, the rumour. That's one rumour. Another rumour which possibly again, viscerally has some credibility. That's one rumour. It's an old story, the younger virile, handsome, stepson being far more gorgeous than the older man she'd married. There's that as a possibility. The other possibility is that it was the sort of jealousy thing that his second wife had wanted to get rid of Crispus in order for her three sons to have a clear run and somehow Constantine had become implicated or let her do. And then he got really mad with her for making him do it and drowned her in the bath.

There's possibilities. We don't know, which of those, but anyway, the fact is we know that he did it. The Christian sources don't say very much about it. But interestingly, of course, the hostile pagan sources really take that one up. And not unreasonably, it obviously caused a lot of attention at the time. And the later pagan sources say that Constantine needed forgiveness for these horrendous crimes against his family. I won't use the term religion, exactly, but none of the other systems that he could think of would

give him forgiveness, whereas the Christians would because then he could be baptized and then he could be forgiven.

John Dickson:

So they psychologized his conversion as desperately trying to assuage his guilt.

Alanna Nobbs:

Yes. Trying to atone for what he'd done. So, in other words, there's no doubt he did it or ordered it. No doubt at all. So that's a pretty nasty one.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

There's another nasty aspect of constant times reign. He legislated against the Jewish people. There had been a long history of Roman resentment and mistreatment of the Jews. The Romans had crushed two major Jewish revolts. One in the first century and the other in the early second century. But there hadn't been any permanent attempt to legislate against the Jews. I'm sad to say Constantine did legislate against them. For example, he banned Jews from owning Christian slaves on the absurd grounds that it was improper quote, that those whom the saviour had ransomed should be subjected to the yolk of slavery by a people who had slain the prophets and the Lord Himself.

The Christian slave in that case was freed. Jews were also not allowed to circumcise their non-Christian slaves. If they were found to have done so, not only would they lose the slaves, they would be quote visited with capital punishment. Leading aside, the tragedy that Constantine didn't overturn slavery itself. The fact is this legislation is the first institutionalized Christian antisemitism. It was a dramatic shift with lasting consequences. Christianity had started as a Jewish renewal movement. All the first Christians were Jews. Now a Christian emperor with the support of Christian bishops cast the Jewish people as second-class citizens and the slayers of Christ. This first antisemitic law was ratified on the 8th of May, 336. That's almost exactly a year before Constantine's death.

The law was an ominous sign of things to come in the centuries that followed. And one day, yes, we are going to have to do a whole episode on the awful history of Christian antisemitism, Lord have mercy. The emperor fell ill shortly after Easter in the year 337. He travelled to the spa town of Helenopolis hoping to find some refreshment. But when it was obvious, he was in terminal decline, he went back to Nicomedia and asked the bishop there to baptize him. He took off his purple robes, replaced them with the simple white of a disciple and entered the waters. A few days later, he died. He was then buried in Constantinople.

John Dickson:

How would you summarize the legacy of Constantine's rather long reign? His legacy for society and the church?

Doug Lee:

Well, I think from a political point of view his reuniting of the empire under the rule of one man did end a long period of political instability and intermittent civil war. And that was important for the welfare of the empires in habits, in the more immediate term. And his policy of religious toleration also was a welcome change after the years of persecution under Diocletian. In terms of his longer-term legacy, obviously his favouring Christianity was hugely significant. You can debate whether Christianity would still have become the dominant religion in the Roman world without Constantine support, but the fact that he did give it important support in the ways that we know of really did make a huge difference to its impact.

And the very fact that an emperor endorsed it, encouraged increasing numbers of the empires inhabitants to embrace it. Now, some of that will no doubt have been a pretty nominal form of allegiance, but overall, it's, I think reasonable to see Constantine's decision to favour Christianity as playing a very significant role in the process whereby Christian practices, ideas and values became increasingly embedded in Roman society and in the societies that followed after the end of the empire in the West.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

It's difficult to know how to assess the significance of Constantine and his Christianity. One of the most distinguished Constantine scholars ever, Arnold H. M. Jones, attempted in one of his books to summarize the tone of Constantine's recorded words about Christianity. It's fascinating and a little sad. The emperor spoke of God, mainly as a God of power. His favored expressions across all of his sayings and writings and decrees are things like Mighty One, highest God, Lord of all and God Almighty. Jones says only rarely does Constantine speak of God as the saviour and never as loving or compassionate. Or just as striking twice only does Constantine refer to God as Father. Yikes!

Compared to the consistent language of love that dominates Christianly literature in the first couple of centuries, Constantine's talk of God was grand and austere. Of course, that's pretty poor Christian theology, but it was excellent Imperial religion and well suited to the aspirations of the empire. Many Romans would be attracted to this particular way of thinking and speaking about Christianity. And it seems that many Christians were happy to sing along. The benefits seemed irresistible. Constantine didn't transform the church in his lifetime. The Romanization of Christianity and the Christianisation of Rome were both very long processes, but everyone in the 330s AD knew that something dramatic had changed.

Crosses now appeared on the Roman military standards and coins in the marketplaces were stamped with the first two letters of Christ, Chi Rho meaning was impossible to ignore and the opportunities hard to turn down. Christians began to dare to believe that Christ was raining over the earth in a very earthly way. So, Constantine's record is a strange mix of peacemaking and violence of humanitarian reform and bigotry of legislated religious freedom for all and growing intolerance toward Jews and others. The conversion of Constantine to the way of Christ opened the door to the church's conversion to the ways of Rome to power, wealth and even violence in the name of Christ.

The Christendom, the kingdom of Christ that slowly emerged gave our world both unprecedented gifts and unspeakable evils. After Constantine, the cheerful losers would sometimes not always, but sometimes become very bad winners.

OUTRO

Well, it's great to be back for season six of Undeceptions, and we have a lot to look forward to in 2022. We've got some exciting new things in development, including a new podcast with Dr. Lauren Moffatt. It's called *Small Wonders*, and it's a series of short, beautiful reflections that I think you'll find restorative in the tumultuous times in which we live. We can't wait to share more about it soon.

Until then, why don't you head over to our new Undeceptions Network Facebook page to stay in touch and get the latest from Undeceptions and our new projects. Just search Undeceptions Network on Facebook and you'll find us there.

We're also running our very first listener survey. It's been two years since we started this thing and we love what we are doing, but we want to know if you do too. What do you like? What don't you like? What do you want to hear more of? Less of? Plus we just want to get to know you better so we can make sure we're doing our very best to offer you the podcast you really want and the sort of thing you can pass on to your friends.

Head to undeceptions.com/survey to help us out. [Undeceptions.com/survey](https://undeceptions.com/survey). Thanks so much.

Next episode, it's the imaginary fight that just won't go away. The conflict between science and religion has been touted by some of the greatest thinkers of our time. But our guests next week can demonstrate in painful detail that this conflict thesis is an invention. In fact, it's an invention of two very specific 19th century scholars who have had way more influence than they really should have.

My guests also explain why in professional history of science circles, this conflict thesis was given up decades ago and it's time for the public to catch up. It's going to be fun. See you.

Undeceptions is hosted by me, John Dickson, produced by Kaley Payne and directed by Mark Hadley, the Great. Editing by Richard Hamwi, social media by Sophie Hawkshaw. Special thanks to our series sponsor Zondervan for making this Undeception possible. Undeceptions is the flagship podcast of undeceptions.com, letting the truth out.

An Undeceptions podcast.