

St. Ambrose appeared in the Catholic history, after Constantine the Great liberalized the State policies towards the Christians. It was this Emperor who convened the first Ecumenical councils to codify the Christian laws, and the Elders set the beliefs in a formula known as the Apostles Creed. Later in another Ecumenical Council, at Nicaea, the Nicene Creed was promulgated, which is still used at solemn masses. It contained more detailed statements of belief of Christianity.

Ever since the heroic Bishop Dionysius, in the year 355, had been dragged in chains to his place of exile in the distant East, the ancient chair of St. Barnabas had been occupied by the intruded Cappadocian, Auxentius, an [Arian](#) filled with bitter hatred of the Catholic Faith, ignorant of the Latin language, a wily and violent persecutor of his orthodox subjects. To the great relief of the [Catholics](#), the death of the petty tyrant in 374 ended a bondage which had lasted nearly twenty years. The

[bishops](#) of the province, dreading the inevitable tumults of a popular election, begged the Emperor Valentinian to appoint a successor by imperial edict; he, however, decided that the election must take place in the usual way. It devolved upon Ambrose, therefore, to maintain order in the city at this perilous juncture. Proceeding to the basilica in which the disunited clergy and people were assembled, he began a conciliatory discourse in the interest of peace and moderation, but was interrupted by a voice (according to Paulinus, the voice of an infant) crying, "Ambrose, Bishop". The cry was instantly repeated by the entire assembly, and Ambrose, to his surprise and dismay, was unanimously pronounced elected. Quite apart from any supernatural intervention, he was the only logical candidate, known to the Catholics as a firm believer in the

[Nicene Creed](#), unobnoxious to the [Arians](#)

, as one who had kept aloof from all theological controversies. The only difficulty was that of forcing the bewildered consular to accept an office for which his previous training nowise fitted him. Strange to say, like so many other believers of that age, from a misguided reverence for the sanctity of baptism, he was still only a catechumen, and by a wise provision of the canons ineligible to the episcopate. That he was sincere in his repugnance to accepting the responsibilities of the sacred office, those only have doubted who have judged a great man by the standard of their own pettiness. Were Ambrose the worldly-minded, ambitious, and scheming individual they choose to paint him, he would have surely sought advancement in the career that lay wide open before him as a man of acknowledged ability and noble blood. It is difficult to believe that he resorted to the questionable expedients mentioned by his biographer as practised by him with a view to undermining his reputation with the populace. At any rate his efforts were unsuccessful. Valentinian, who was proud that his favourable opinion of Ambrose had been so fully ratified by the voice of

[clergy](#) and people, confirmed the election and pronounced severe penalties against all who should

abet him in his attempt to conceal himself. The Saint finally acquiesced, received [baptism](#) at the hands of a [Catholic](#)

[bishop](#), and eight day later, 7 December 374, the day on which East and West annually honour his memory, after the necessary preliminary degrees was consecrated bishop.

It was but natural that a prelate so high-minded, so affable, so kind to the poor, so completely devoting his great gifts to the service of [Christ](#) and of humanity, should soon win the enthusiastic love of his people. Rarely, if ever, has a Christian bishop been so universally popular, in the best sense of that much abused term, as Ambrose of Milan. This popularity, conjoined with his intrepidity, was the secret of his success in routing enthroned iniquity. The [heretical](#)

Empress Justina and her barbarian advisers would many a time fain have silenced him by exile or assassination, but, like

[Herod](#)

in the case of the

[Baptist](#)

, they "feared the multitude". His heroic struggles against the aggressions of the [secular power](#)

have immortalized him as the model and forerunner of future

[Hildebrands](#)

,

[Beckets](#)

, and other champions of religious liberty. The elder Valentinian died suddenly in 375, the year following the

[consecration](#)

of Ambrose, leaving his

[Arian](#)

brother

[Valens](#)

to scourge the East, and his oldest son, Gratian, to rule the provinces formerly presided over by Ambrosius, with no provision for the government of

[Italy](#)

. The army seized the reins and proclaimed emperor the son of Valentinian by his second wife, Justina, a boy four years old. Gratian good-naturally acquiesced, and assigned to his half-brother the sovereignty of

[Italy](#)

, Illyricum, and Africa. Justina had prudently concealed her

[Arian](#)

view during the lifetime of her

[orthodox](#)

husband, but now, abetted by a powerful and mainly Gothic faction at court, proclaimed her determination to rear her child in that

[heresy](#)

, and once more attempt to

[Arianize](#)

the West. This of necessity brought her into direct collision with the

[Bishop](#)

of

[Milan](#)

, who had quenched the last embers of

[Arianism](#)

in his

[diocese](#)

. That

[heresy](#)

had never been popular among the common people; it owed its artificial vitality to the intrigues of courtiers and sovereigns. As a preliminary to the impending contest, Ambrose, at the request of Gratian, who was about to lead an army to the relief of

[Valens](#)

, and wished to have at hand an antidote against Oriental sophistry, wrote his noble work, "De Fide ad Gratianum Augustum", afterwards expanded, and extant in five books. The first passage at arms between Ambrose and the Empress was on the occasion of an episcopal election at

[Sirmium](#)

, the capital of Illyricum, and at the time the residence of Justina. Notwithstanding her efforts, Ambrose was successful in securing the election of a

[Catholic](#)

[bishop](#)

. He followed up this victory by procuring, at the

[Council of Aquileia](#)

, (381), over which he presided, the deposition of the only remaining

[Arianizing](#)

[prelates](#)

of the West,

[Palladius](#)

and Secundianus, both Illyrians. The battle royal between Ambrose and the Empress, in the years 385,386, has been graphically described by

[Cardinal Newman](#)

in his "Historical Sketches". The question at issue was the surrender of one of the

[basilicas](#)

to the

[Arians](#)

for public worship. Throughout the long struggle Ambrose displayed in an eminent degree all the qualities of a great leader. His intrepidity in the moments of personal danger was equalled only by his admirable moderation; for, at certain critical stages of the drama one word from him would have hurled the Empress and her son from their throne. That word was never

spoken. An enduring result of this great struggle with despotism was the rapid development during its course of the

[ecclesiastical](#)

chant, of which Ambrose laid the foundation. Unable to overcome the

[fortitude](#)

of the Bishop and the spirit of the people, the court finally desisted from its efforts. Ere long it was forced to call upon Ambrose to exert himself to save the imperilled throne.

When Jesus promised St Peter, that the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church he was building on the Rock, called Simon bar Jona, he really meant it. He has sent defenders and intellectuals to defeat the henchmen of the Evil One. Arianism was one such scourge that was let loose on the Christians. Study the early heretics and how they were immobilized and how God worked in those days. One should not lose heart, when the same henchmen, in a new garb and through a new medium attack. The real attack is against Christ. The same old grudge which separated the Jews into those who followed Him, and those who backed Anas and Caiaphas. If you dig a little, you will discover that nothing has changed in this old animosity. There are good people even among those who belong to the race of Jesus, and who do not like what their fellowmen do. 2000 years ago, they were the silent majority. See the way Jesus behaved to those who were weak, and those who could not resist sin. He forgave them, and healed them. Today's mobs want blood. But even those with sin, can blatantly throw stones to kill.....Like those before them, they too will face the fate as those 2000 years ago.