

The Sacrum Consistorium of the Roman Empire

The **sacrum consistorium** was the highest political council of the Roman Empire from the time of Constantine the Great on. The council's proceedings differed depending on each emperor's administrative style, but generally it served as the scene of "deliberations about political and administrative matters, court procedures, and the particularly solemn sanctioning of imperial laws." It was also an avenue for its members to raise issues of concern to them and influence the emperor. The council's powers and membership varied, being ultimately dependent on the emperor, but the following were members who represented the emperor on most councils.¹

- The **magister officiorum** (Master of Offices) was one of the most senior **administrative** officials.
- The **quaestor sacri palatii** (Quaestor of the Sacred Palace) was the senior **legal** authority in the Roman Empire.
- The **comes sacrarum largitionum** (Count of the Sacred Largesses) was one of the senior **financial** officials of the Roman Empire.
- The **comes rerum privatarum** (Count of the Private Fortune) was the official charged with **administering the estates of the emperor**.
- The **ex officio members** were other **high court officials**.
- The **invited members** were selected by the **emperor**.

Roman investigations into early Christianity found it an irreligious, novel, disobedient, even atheistic sub-sect of Judaism: it appeared to deny all forms of religion and was therefore viewed by Roman officials as a *superstitio*.

- **Superstitio** was excessive devotion and enthusiasm in religious observance, in the sense of "doing or believing more than was necessary", or "irregular" religious practice that conflicted with Roman custom. Cicero defined *superstitio* as the "empty fear of the gods."²
- **Religio** was the properly pious cultivation of the gods that constituted lawful. *Religio* meant an obligation to the gods, something expected by them from human beings or a matter of particular care or concern as related to the gods. It was the pious practice of Rome's traditional cults, and was a cornerstone of the **mos maiorum** (the traditional social norms that regulated public, private, and military life). Their **success was self-evidently due to their practice of proper, respectful religio**, which gave the gods what was owed them and which was rewarded with social harmony, peace and prosperity.³

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consistorium>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_ancient_Roman_religion#superstitio

³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religio>