Episode 04. "The Murderer."

Tuesday, January 19, 2021. 40 Minutes Long.

This episode reveals the source of today's Christian crisis. It's the story of Constantine, the murderous Fourth Century dictator who ended the miraculous original Christian lifestyle. He's the creator of the formal, ritualistic, unspiritual, worship programs that Christians have today. This episode is unique, with many new and shocking facts.

John (00:00):

John Shields opens the episode by saying:

John (00:14):

Well, hello, friends! Welcome to Episode 04 of the "Saving Christianity" podcast, brought to you by the Christian Family Online in America. If this is your first time ... or you've been listening all the time ... we are so, so appreciative and thankful that you are taking the time to be with us here! I'm your host, John Shields. And we're going to continue today exploring the book, *Saving Christianity* – the book on how to have more peace, healing, and hope, in our lives. Now, the title of this episode is, "The Murderer." Yeah, you heard me right! "The Murderer." And you're about to hear some shocking facts about Christianity that very few people know. But at the same time, these facts are going to help you – and it helps us – grow Spiritually the same way the Early Christians grew Spiritually. But before we go any further, let me introduce you to my best friend, and the co-host of the "Saving Christianity" podcast, Owen Allen. Owen, say a few words to our friends!

Owen (01:24):

Well, thank you, John! Obviously, it's a pleasure, an honor, and a joy, to be here. And to be honest, as we've said before, I'm humbled by the reception that the book *Saving Christianity* is receiving, and that this podcast ... I guess because it's based on the book ... is receiving. But John, more than that, this episode now, Episode 04, is going to be even more surprising, I think, than our first three episodes. Because this time, we've promised that we're going to reveal *when*, *where*, and *why* the Unspiritual Design of Christian congregations originated in history. *Where* did it come from? And tragically, it's a (chuckles) very, very unpleasant story.

John (02:16):

Yeah, I agree, Owen. And since this episode is so important, let's just jump right in and let's get started. And let's start by telling our friends the story of the *murderer* who changed the Organizational Design of Christian congregations.

Owen (02:35):

Okay, John. Let's put on our slogging boots, and get started. And let's remind our friends, though – maybe some of whom are just joining us – if they want to hear the previous episodes, all they need to do is go out on the Internet to www.CFOPODs.com. C-F-O-P-O-D-S .com. And they can find a previous episode there, both the scripts and the recordings. But now: In our last episode, we promised that we were going to tell *when*, *where*, and *why*, the Unspiritual Design for Christian congregations originated. Or to put it in more scary terms, we're going to talk about *when*, *where*, and *why*, the Followers of The Way stopped being the Followers of The Way.

John (03:25):

Yes, and what we're really telling is when, where, and why Christians as a worldwide movement stopped being Christians – stopped being Spiritual, and started being unspiritual, right?

Owen (03:40):

Yeah, sad but true! We want to know what it *was* in history, that *caused* Christians to stop living the supernatural lifestyle that they had been living for 300 years. What *was* it, that made them stop living the way they had been living for eight generations?

John (04:01):

Yeah, right! We already know that – whatever it was – it happened at the beginning of the Fourth Century.

Owen (04:08):

Right ... right. We've said that many times. The Early Christian Lifestyle of power, and miracles, and healings, and angelic visitations, and the wonderful things that all Christians are supposed to experience, stopped dead in the water in the Fourth Century. And we've never said yet why it stopped. Now remember, Christianity was a worldwide movement at the time. In other words, there were Christians in every town, and city, and country of the ancient world. So think about this. How could that all be reversed overnight? How could the habits that Christians had been growing for eight generations suddenly stop overnight? A big flood couldn't do that. A big earthquake couldn't do that. Even a war couldn't do that. Who could do that? What could do that? Only a human being with the worldwide authority and the worldwide plan could do that.

John (05:21):

We know it was a *human* being who did it. And this was during the days of the Roman empire, when the city of Rome was at the center of the world.

Owen (05:33):

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Well, that's right. In other words John, put it this way: Whatever happened in Rome happened in the rest of the world! (Chuckles.) Or to put it more precisely, whatever the *emperor* in Rome commanded ... that happened in the rest of the world!

John (05:50):

So, we're saying it was one of the Roman *emperors* who caused the Early Christians to stop living the Early Christian Lifestyle.

Owen (06:00):

In a nutshell, that's right. It was a Fourth Century Roman *emperor* who did it. But look ... we're getting ahead of the story a little bit. We need to slow down a moment. Because this emperor that we're talking about – check this out now – had a greater negative impact on the entire world than all of the other 69 Roman emperors in history combined! And the worst part is that he had more negative impact on *Christianity* than any other person in history after it was founded.

John (06:40):

That's incredible. I know our friends are on the edge of their seats by now. So who *was* this emperor, Owen, who had such a negative impact on Christianity?

Owen (06:51):

Well, in Chapter 3 of the book *Saving Christianity*, we have a section there with the title, "The Greatest Whitewash." (Repeats.) So, to get us started on this emperor's bloody, horrible story, let's read a few lines from that section of the book, and let's quote them now. And I quote:

Owen (07:16):

"You probably don't remember from high school or college classes, a Roman army general named, *Flavius Valerius Constantinus*. But it's important to remember him, because he's the person who founded the Christian denominations that we have today. In English, his name is "Constantine." (Repeats.) And he was a cruel and vicious battlefield commander in the Four Century who single-handedly founded what today we know as Institutional Christianity. He didn't do it – this is important – he did *not* do it to teach the Early Christian Lifestyle that Christians were living at the time. He did it to *suppress* that lifestyle. And now he's suppressed it for 1,700 years."

John (08:21):

Wow. I think, Owen, most people have heard the name "Constantine." But in actuality, I don't think most people realize that he did all that. And why do you think that we don't know that?

Owen (08:35):

Well, that's a great question! And one of the most important questions in history! You know, in this section that we're talking about, "The Greatest Whitewash," the word "whitewash" – if people haven't heard it – it's an old-time word. It means *to conceal someone's faults*. In other words, you paint over with *white paint* somebody's faults. And listen, that's what historians have done with Constantine. Historians who are sympathetic to Institutional Christianity – they want to prop it up ... they want to support it. They have simply left Constantine's faults *out* of the history books. And that's why many school books today say Constantine was a wise and noble leader who did wonderful things for Christianity. But it's *not* true.

John (09:36):

I agree. It's a tragedy that most Christians don't know who Constantine really *was*, and don't know what he really *did* to the Fourth Century Christians.

Owen (09:46):

Yeah, I think it's one of the biggest tragedies in recorded history. But it's one of the least *known* tragedies in recorded history. So, but John, you just pointed out something very important. This tragedy of Constantine comes in two parts. The first part is: Many Christians don't know *who* he was. And the second part is: Many Christians don't know *what* he did.

John (10:17):

Well, that being the case, let's give our friends a thumbnail sketch of each of the two parts of this tragedy.

Owen (10:24):

Yeah, because this is something we could talk about, John, for several episodes. Maybe we should. But let's see what we can do here. In this one episode, Episode 04, let's talk about who Constantine really *was*. And I quote:

Owen (10:41):

"Constantine was *not* a Christian. He was a priest in the sun god religion. He kept mistresses, and he was a murderer. He murdered his own wife. He drowned her in her bathtub. He murdered his son. He murdered his son-in-law. He murdered his best friend. He murdered every politician or military officer who got in his way. And like most Roman emperors over the centuries, he was cruel, and bloodthirsty, and he was a dictator. The purpose of his life was *not* to be a wise and noble leader. The purpose of his life was to unite the Roman empire by military and political force, and to make himself the Supreme Emperor of the world."

Owen (11:36):

And, he succeeded in those purposes! So that's who Constantine really was. But John, let's tell our friends now – you called it a thumbnail sketch – what did he actually do? What did Constantine do? In the previous episode, we had a Problem-Solving Exercise to find out when, where, and why, Christians stopped teaching the Early Christian Lifestyle. We wanted to know in that last episode when, where, and why the Unspiritual Model of Institutional Christianity originated. And now we know the answer! The Roman emperor Constantine developed Institutional Christianity. And he developed it to suppress the Spirituality of Christians. Why? (He did it) to help him create a submissive worldwide empire.

John (12:42):

Now we know why Constantine is so important in world history. But his story is a horror story, isn't it? Because he changed Christianity from a Spiritual Organization to an unspiritual one.

Owen (13:01):

Well, it almost takes your breath away, John. It is a horror story. It puts "Frankenstein" in the shade. (Chuckles.) It's a terrible thing to say, John. But listen to this now. And I've read this in a number of history books: Constantine is probably the most *influential* person in Christian history after Jesus and the original 12 apostles. Why? *Because he founded Institutional Christianity*. And in doing that, he put an end to the Spiritual Design of Christian meetings that had originally come straight from the Throne Room of Heaven in the First Century.

John (13:48):

That is an overwhelming thought. And it's actually a lot for us to take in.

Owen (13:55):

Well, it is! (Chuckles.) It is a lot to take in. I mean ... it's taken me years to – as you call it – "put it on soak cycle" and to understand it for myself. But let's slow down again. Why don't we just ... let's don't take this as an *opinion*. Let's look at Constantine's life and behavior. Some of our listeners will remember that we've said in earlier episodes that watching a person's behavior is the true test of how Spiritual (he or she is). So let's look at his behavior. And let's look at the laws that he passed – which was part of his behavior. And here's the first fact. Most people don't know this: The emperor Constantine was illegitimate. He was also an orphan. His father was a Roman army officer. And his mother – his biological mother – owned a tavern in town where Constantine's father used to carouse with the other soldiers.

Owen (15:02):

So Constantine was illegitimate from his mother in the tavern. And he was never adopted, or never made legitimate. Now, point (fact) two: Since he had no legal parents, he was raised in the homes of army officers who did that as a favor to his father. So what happened? Constantine grew up acting like the cruel army officers in whose homes he was raised – there were several of

them. And point (fact) three: We said this, but people don't understand it. He's called a "great Christian" (and) the "first Christian emperor" in the school books. He was *not*. He was *not* a Christian. He never *became* one. He never *said* he was one. Like most Romans, he worshiped the sun god. And later, when he became emperor, he was high priest of the sun god religion. And he held that position until the day that he died.

John (16:09):

And the fact that he was the high priest of the sun god religion explains why it's *wrong* for school books to say he was a kind and noble "Christian."

Owen (16:20):

Of course! Because he *wasn't*. That's a "whitewash." But here's something interesting, John. Constantine did *meet* Christians when he was growing up. He was not one, but he did *meet* them. And how did that happen? That's very important. The first Christians that Constantine ever saw were Christians who were being *tortured* in the dungeons of the emperor's palace. You remember (that) in the Roman empire, there were periodic persecutions of Christians. That wasn't consistent. But it happened every decade or so. And it happened that, during one of these persecutions, Constantine was growing up as a teenager in the emperor's palace. And so that's where he saw and met the first Christians. And interestingly – and this is important – this is where Constantine first heard the word *Christus*. (Repeats.) That's Latin for "Christ." And that's important, because this is where Constantine first heard the idea that "Christ" – *Christus* – is the God of Christians.

Owen (17:38):

And that's going to become important in just a moment. But let's continue: When Constantine was old enough to fight, his foster parents sent him to join army in Europe, where his father was actually the commanding general. That was interesting. Well, when he got there, Constantine proved to the other soldiers that he was one of the most ferocious, bitter, fighters on the battlefield. That's important. He had grown up in such a way that he was absolutely fearless. He was indifferent to pain. And he was ferocious. And then the next point, John ... this is where fate stepped in ... suddenly, right there in the army, Constantine's father fell ill and died. And the other soldiers elected Constantine – a young man in his twenties, who'd just arrived on the battlefield (but he was so ferocious) – they elected him to replace his father and to become the general of the army.

Owen (18:51):

Imagine that! So Constantine, in his twenties, found himself the battlefield commander of a Roman field army. And he led that army for seven long and bloody years in hand-to-hand combat. Think about it. Can you imagine what a tough character he would be, after seven years of fighting with sword and spear? And then ... and this is our point, John ... an event occurred – or at least it's supposed to have occurred – that made Constantine the emperor of Rome at still a young age. What happened was, his army was camped on the Tiber River near the city of Rome, at a place called the *Milvian Bridge*. The Milvian Bridge is very famous. It's still there. I've

walked on the Milvian Bridge. So his army was waiting for the enemy to come out of the city and fight them for control of the empire.

John (19:59):

So is this where Constantine supposedly had his big *dream*? And isn't that dream just a legend?

Owen (20:08):

Well, yeah. That's exactly the point we're coming to, John. The big *dream*! Most researchers think that Constantine's so-called dream is only a legend. But the legend says that one night he was asleep in his army tent by the Milvian Bridge on the Tiber River, when suddenly he had a weird, strange dream. And in this dream, a *person* appeared to him. And he thought this person must be the God, *Christus* – the God, "Christ." This person is supposed to have appeared. Now, let's remember John, that years earlier, Constantine had seen Christians, and has heard about the Christian God, "Christ," in the dungeons of the emperor's palace.

Owen (21:01):

So, the source of his dream – if it even happened – probably may have been his *unconscious* memories of those experiences in the palace dungeons. But whatever the source of the dream, the legend says that this mysterious person showed Constantine a strange *symbol*. Now this symbol looked like a "plus sign" that we all see in arithmetic. Except that it had a loop on top. And then this person in the dream supposedly told Constantine in Latin that if he would use this "plus sign" in the coming battle, he would win, and he would become emperor. So, the legend says that he rushed out of his tent all excited, got his soldiers up, and he told them to get some red paint, and to paint this weird "plus sign" on their helmets and on their shields with bright red paint.

John (22:05):

Ha! Did the strange "plus sign" and the red paint work? I mean, did Constantine win the battle?

Owen (22:15):

Well, here's the thing. First, nobody knows if Constantine really had the dream. There are several versions of the legend. Some books say it never happened. Some say it happened, but it wasn't a dream, it was actually a vision. Nobody knows if the soldiers really painted the "plus sign" on their helmets and shields. There's no proof of that. So the whole story is a legend. But here's what *really* happened: The enemy army marched out of Rome, came to the Milvian Bridge, and confronted Constantine. And that's true. And a huge *battle* took place at the Milvian Bridge. That's true too. And for whatever reason, Constantine's army won. They actually defeated the other army that marched out of the city of Rome. And listen to this, now. He *captured* the enemy general alive. That general's name was Maxentius. (Repeats.) But he beheaded him. And he threw his body in the river. He hung his head on his saddle. And he rode into Rome as the new emperor.

John (23:33):

Wow! What a story! Huh, the plot thickens! But our friends need to know what happened next. For example, was Constantine a kind and noble emperor after that? Huh, you know, like the school books told us?

Owen (23:51):

(Chuckles.) We could probably answer that just from common sense. But you could answer that two ways, John. It all depends on your viewpoint: If you're sympathetic to Institutional Christianity and you want to prop it up ... you're going to hold the fact that all of this is true and that Constantine was kind and noble. But if you're skeptical about Institutional Christianity and you're trying to stick to the documented facts that we know ... you'd have to say that Constantine was a horrible emperor. But whatever your viewpoint is, he was emperor – this is documented – for 25 years. And his goal was to be the Grand Emperor, as we said earlier, of a worldwide empire. So the first thing he did was to set about establishing his personal authority and control over every Roman person in the empire!

John (24:55):

And how did he do that?

Owen (24:58):

Well, first he built a giant statue of himself – four stories high – and he put it on the city square. And in this statue, he's sitting on a throne and he's got one upraised hand. And in this upraised hand, he's holding the strange "plus sign" symbol that he claimed to have seen in the dream. And you know what, John? Pieces of that stature still exist today. I've looked at them, and handled them, and taken pictures of them. The second thing he did was to build a giant "triumphal arch" – they're called – to himself on the city square, seven stories high. An amazing, beautiful structure. And it still stands in Rome today. In fact, John, until the 1960s, cars actually drove under it. Today, they've closed it off. But that's what used to happen.

John (26:08):

So Constantine built the statue, and the arch, to establish his personal authority and control. And ultimately to make the population fear him. Is that right?

Owen (26:22):

It's actually right, yeah! You know, clearly most people would agree that Constantine was a megalomaniac. Uh, and let's think about it ... give him a break, in one sense. He was illegitimate. He was an orphan. He was raised in foster homes. He fought bloody battles for seven long years in hand-to-hand combat. So maybe his personality is to be expected. You know, as the old saying goes, "There was no excuse for what he did, but there were some reasons."

John (27:00):

Yeah, it all makes sense when you stop and think about it. It actually helps us explain what Constantine did to the Early Christians as well.

Owen (27:11):

Yeah, it does. I mean ... his megalomania does help explain what he did to the Early Christians. And it ... but listen ... it also proves something else. It proves (that) the "whitewash" of him by historians is a *cover-up*. Because look: Anybody who takes even a casual glance (repeats) at Constantine's life, can clearly see that he was *not* a wise and noble "Christian emperor."

John (27:44):

No, he *wasn't*. So Owen, let's tell our friends the truth about what Constantine did to the Early Christians.

Owen (27:53):

Well ... let's do that. And you know, John. I apologize, but we can only "start" the story here, because Constantine did so many things to the Early Christians that we can't tell them all in one episode.

John (28:09):

Yeah, he did a lot, for sure. But let's just tell as much as we can in this episode.

Owen (28:15):

Okay. Well, the most important thing to remember about Constantine is that historians and researchers call him "The Great Lawgiver." (Repeats.) In fact, we have a section in Chapter 3 of the book that has that title. And let me read a few sentences from that. And I quote:

Owen (28:38):

"Constantine immediately began issuing a flood of new laws. Indeed, he became one of the most prolific law givers of all the Roman emperors: issuing over 300 new laws during his 25-year reign. Now, the purpose of this torrent of laws was to tighten his control over the Roman people. But the most important thing about Constantine's new laws was that they *suppressed* the vibrant Early Christian Lifestyle of the Fourth Century Christians."

John (29:23):

So, we know that the Early Christians were still living as *Followers of The Way* when Constantine came to power. But what effect did his flood of new laws have to shut down their Spiritual behavior?

Owen (29:40):

Well, you know, John. That's a whole subject of discussion that you could write a full book on. Very important to understand. Let's just look at his very first law. The first law that he passed as he became emperor: It did not deal with *taxes*. It did not deal with the *army*. It did not deal with *public safety*. It dealt with *religion*! Isn't that interesting? So the first law – that first law – was the beginning of Constantine's gradual shutting down of the Early Christian Lifestyle.

John (30:20):

Yeah, and continue on, Owen. And tell us exactly how that first law started suppressing the Early Christians.

Owen (30:29):

Well ... what's so strange is that, on the surface, Constantine's first law didn't actually seem *bad*. In fact, school books often say it was *good* for Christians. But it was *not* good for them. And here's why. The purpose of Constantine's very first law when he took power was to legally *recognize* all of the religions in the empire. The law said that all the religions – and there were about 400 of them – were now to be treated as equals; and were to be equally protected under Roman law. And see, that's why school books think that sounds *good*. That seems like a good thing for Christians. But it *wasn't*.

John (31:24):

Yeah, I see the problem emerging here. That first law wasn't good because Christians weren't a formal religion at that time. And they didn't want to be a formal religion.

Owen (31:37):

That's exactly the point! That's something we're going to talk about over, and over, and over, in these episodes. The Christian lifestyle – the "Early Christian Lifestyle" that we're talking about – was an *informal* lifestyle. It was a relaxed, free, lifestyle. So, for the first 300 years ... or (as) we often say, the first eight generations ... Christians worshiped informally in private homes. A lot of people don't know that. Two or three families would meet in one of the family's homes, and the Holy spirit would guide their worship. There was no *human* agenda.

Owen (32:20):

And because of that informal Organizational Design ... there we go again ... we're talking about Organizational Design ... Christianity had never been recognized as a formal *religion* anywhere in the world. And Constantine changed that. Suddenly for the first time in history, Christians could be identified, counted, categorized, and cataloged by government bureaucrats.

For the first time, they were subject to census-taking, taxation, regulation, drafting in the army, and every other kind of red tape. So the truth is that Constantine's first law was actually the first "brick" in what eventually became Institutional Christianity.

John (33:18):

Wow! So it actually all depends on your viewpoint – as you mentioned earlier. Because most school books say Constantine's first law "saved" the Early Christians, and that it actually "rescued" them from persecution.

Owen (33:34):

Well, that's right. And that's why we call that section of the book "The Greatest Whitewash." Most historians think that Institutional Christianity, as we know it today — think about this now — as we know it today … **is and was** … the Organizational Design that the Early Christians used! But it *wasn't*. The Institutional Design that we have today was founded by Constantine in the fourth century — *not* the Holy spirit in the First Century.

John (34:16):

Ah, ouch. Owen, I don't know what to say! I mean, how could it get any worse?

Owen (34:21):

Well ... I hate to disabuse you of that thought. But it does get worse! Because Constantine's first law stirred up so much controversy – as you can imagine – that he had to keep issuing follow-up laws to try to clarify what the first law meant. And each follow-up law only served to make Christians more visible, more regulated, and more controversial in Roman society. And that was the beginning of Constantine's suppression of Early Christianity.

John (34:59):

But uh, what happened next?

Owen (35:05):

Hmmm, well! It got as bad as it can get. And there's a whole bunch more to talk about, John. But once again, the tyranny of the clock on the wall tells me that it's time to close Episode 04. So we're going to have to finish Constantine's horrible story in our next episode.

John (35:27):

Yeah, and I hate that! You know this story is so interesting for us (and) for our listeners, it's actually hard to stop talking about it.

Owen (35:38):

Absolutely. It's hard for me to stop. But we have a lot ahead, and our friends need to hear the rest of this story. You know, John, they need to hear that Constantine is the person in history who invented "Sundays." He's the person who invented "churches" ... he's the person who built the first "churches." He's the person who invented about everything that we call "Christianity" today. So let's close this episode – Episode 04 – by summarizing everything that we've said. And we'll do that by reading a few more sentences right from the end of Chapter 3, in the book *Saving Christianity*.

John (36:28):

I like that. That's always a good way for us to close. I like for us to stick close to our *reference book*.

Owen (36:35):

Yeah, stay close to the "operating manual." Well, look, John. Let's just read to our friends the last paragraph in that chapter. And I think it's going to show them where this story of Constantine is heading in the next episode. So I quote:

Owen (36:57):

"With each passing day, the informal, free, and loving lifestyle of the people who had once been Followers of The Way ... who had once been identified by a simple "fish" symbol ... became more regulated and controlled. And yet the worst was still to come. Constantine's next series of dramatic actions completely perverted the original Christian lifestyle. And we're going to discuss that series of actions in the next episode."

Owen (37:38):

End of quote. So, John, we'll just continue in Episode 05. We're going to explain and describe how the Structural Design of Institutional Christianity that we take for granted today, did *not* come from the Early Christians. It came from Constantine, the Roman emperor.

John (38:04):

And it's a shocking story, and it's one that everyone should know if they have even the slightest interest in Spiritual growth.

Owen (38:15):

Right, because it's the key – it's the key to it. You know, John, I'm just thinking here, as we sign off, that all of us should be asking ourselves now some serious questions like: "Which design of Christianity is my life based on? The Spiritual design of the Early Christians? Or the unspiritual design that Constantine founded?" That's a scary, scary, personal question.

John (38:47):

And Episode 05 is going to help us answer those questions, because it's going to describe these two designs clearly.

Owen (38:56):

Right. And again, John, as we sign off – let's remind our friends that this is Episode 04, and (that) a script and recording of it are on the website. And they can be accessed by simply going to www.CFOPODS.com on the Internet: C-F-O-P-O-D-S .com.

John (39:18):

And I hope that you will take the time to subscribe to this podcast, so we can get notifications for Episode 05 (to you), as well as the rest of the upcoming episodes.

Owen (39:32):

Right. And be sure and grab a copy of *Saving Christianity*, because we're just skimming, and not giving you the full meat.

John (39:40):

Yeah, that's important. Because that's adding the senses of sight and touch to our sense of hearing, (and) that will help triple the power in our learning.

Owen (39:51):

Absolutely! Old, old principles! It will indeed, John. Well, in the meantime, this is Owen Allen ...

John (39:59):

... and this is John Shields, and on behalf of our producer Shannon Wolf ...

Owen (40:04):

... we're saying: May the God of our fathers bless you, and keep you, and guide you, and protect you, until we meet again.

Owen and John (40:25):

Owen and John end the episode.