

Augustus. To assist them in looking after the frontiers, the two Augusti created two Caesars : Galerius in the East and Constantius Chlorus in the West. In 303 Galerius forced an edict from Diocletian against the Christians. This was the last and most bloody of the persecutions.

II. Constantine.—59. In 306, Constantine began to rule over Gaul, Spain and the Isle of Britain; however, it was only after a civil war of seventeen years that he gained the supremacy of the Empire.

Many competitors aspired to the throne, but at the battle of Milvian Bridge, in 312 Constantine defeated Maxentius and became master of Rome.

The reign of Constantine was signalized by two great facts: the triumph of Christianity and the foundation of Constantinople.

Triumph of Christianity. — 60. While master in Gaul, Constantine had shown considerable toleration towards the Christians and had many adherents among them. In 312, the Cross had become his imperial standard or Labarum, and the following year 313 he proclaimed the liberty of Christian worship by the famous Edict of Milan which granted liberty to the Christians in the West and religious toleration in the East. This act, inspired perhaps as much by politics as by religion, was welcomed with unbounded enthusiasm by the Christians.

The Emperor confirmed the triumphs of Christianity by the most significant acts. In 321, he made the Sunday rest obligatory; in 325 he called the first great Council of Nicaea in which three hundred and eighteen bishops condemned the heresy of Arius and constituted the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. At the same Council the Bishops of Rome, of Antioch, and of Alexandria received the title of «Patriarch».

Foundation of Constantinople. — (326-330). — 61. Rome being still the seat of paganism and filled with republican ideas, Constantine would not fix his seat