

A nine days' conflagration destroyed the greater part of Rome. History does not furnish any proof that Nero was the author of this fire, but it tells us that while the City was burning, the emperor, harp in hand, on the summit of a tower, was heard singing verses describing the burning of Troy. This aroused suspicion and in order to avert from himself the blame of the public, the emperor accused the Christians and condemned them to horrible torments.

Church History. — Incredible cruelties were invented to be wrought upon the Christians : They were wrapped in skins of beasts and thrown to mad dogs to be devoured ; they were steeped in pitch, tied to crosses placed at certain distances, and set on fire to light the Emperor's gardens by night.

St. Peter and St. Paul suffered martyrdom under this tyrant.

Revolts broke out in Gaul and in Spain ; the Spanish legions acknowledged Galba as emperor ; the Senate and Praetorians followed their example. Nero cowardly caused himself to be killed by a slave.

The adoptive family of Augustus whose rule was based on might not right was forced to rely exclusively on material strength ; hence the military power was ever supreme, for the will of the army was always the law which created the Roman Emperors.

Galba. — Otho. — Vitellius. — (68-69). — 55. The army usurped the right of electing the emperor without consulting the Senate or the people. This encroachment brought on new calamities. Within a year the different legions elected three emperors — Galba, Otho, Vitellius — who soon perished in the civil wars. The legions in the East declared Vespasian emperor, and thus the Roman Empire had a few years respite.

Vespasian (69-79). — 56. The accession of Flavius Vespasian marks the beginning of the Flavian dynasty which gave Rome three emperors. Vespasian was wise, economical, brave and magnanimous ; he became master