

CLAH4006

**From Village to Empire: An
Introduction to the History of Rome**

The Tetrarchy and Constantine

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- Accession of Diocletian often hailed as transition from “military anarchy” (AD 235-284/5) to the “Dominate”.
- Absolutist monarchy, expanded army and bureaucracy, and more oppressive tax regime.
- *Dominus* – lord/master – *Principatus* – pre-eminence/first-place.

“Capitoline Zeus took pity at last on the human race and gave lordship of all the earth and the sea to godlike Diocletian. He extinguished the memory of former griefs for any still suffering in grim bonds in a lightless place.” – ***P. Oxy. LXIII. 4352***. (performed at Capitoline games at Oxyrhynchus – summer AD 285).

“Diocletian was of a crafty disposition, with much sagacity, and keen penetration. He was willing to gratify his own disposition to cruelty in such a way as to throw the odium upon others; he was however a very active and able prince. **He was the first that introduced into the Roman empire a ceremony suited rather to royal usages than to Roman liberty**, giving orders that he should be **adored**, whereas all emperors before him were only **saluted**. He put ornaments of precious stones on his dress and shoes, when the imperial distinction had previously been only in the purple robe, the rest of the habit being the same as that of other men.”
Eutropius 9.26.

- More of “orientalising” despotism? – Persian influence?

Sources

- Eusebius of Caesarea (AD 263-339) – *Life of Constantine* and *Church Histories* (among others).
- Lactantius (c. AD 240-320) – *Divine Institutes* and *On the Manner in which the Persecutors Died* (among others) – tutor to Crispus.
- Flavius Eutropius (latter half of fourth century AD) - *Breviarium historiae Romanae* (*Abridgement of Roman History*).
- Zosimus (c. late fifth – early sixth centuries AD) – *New History*, utilises earlier sources, Dexippus, Eunapius, Olympiodorus.
- Latin Panegyrics – most of 12 speeches in collection date from late third century to AD 389 – survive in a medieval manuscript from Mainz.

Diocletian

- C. Valerius Diocles – proclaimed Augustus after murder of Numerianus.
- M. Aurelius C. Valerius Diocletianus.
- Kills Aper with this bear hands.
- Battles Carinus near river Margus (Moesia).
- Reign 20th November AD 284 – retires 1st of May 305, dies 310.



Creation of the Tetrarchy

- Aurelius Maximianus appointed Caesar in July AD 285, becomes Augustus in April/May 286.
- Spring AD 293 – Constantius Chlorus and Galerius as Caesars.
- Iovius and Herculus – Jupiter and Hercules.
- Master plan or reaction to situations?
- Transfer of power not based purely on dynastic principle.

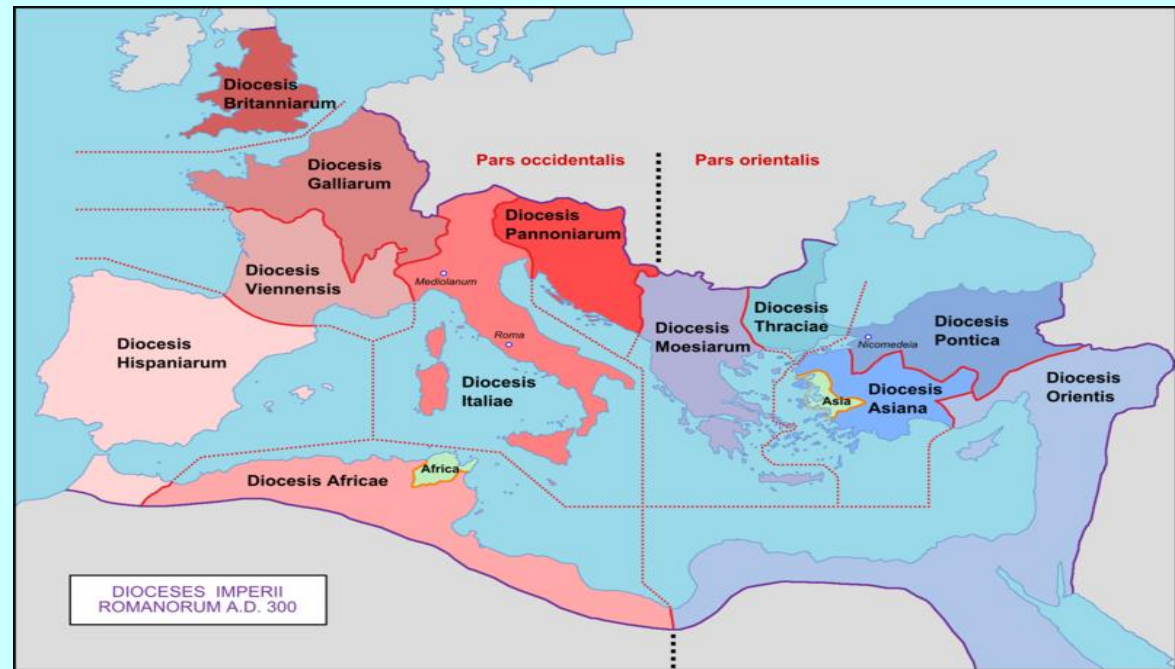


- Fourth century porphyry sculpture – now at St Mark's, Venice.

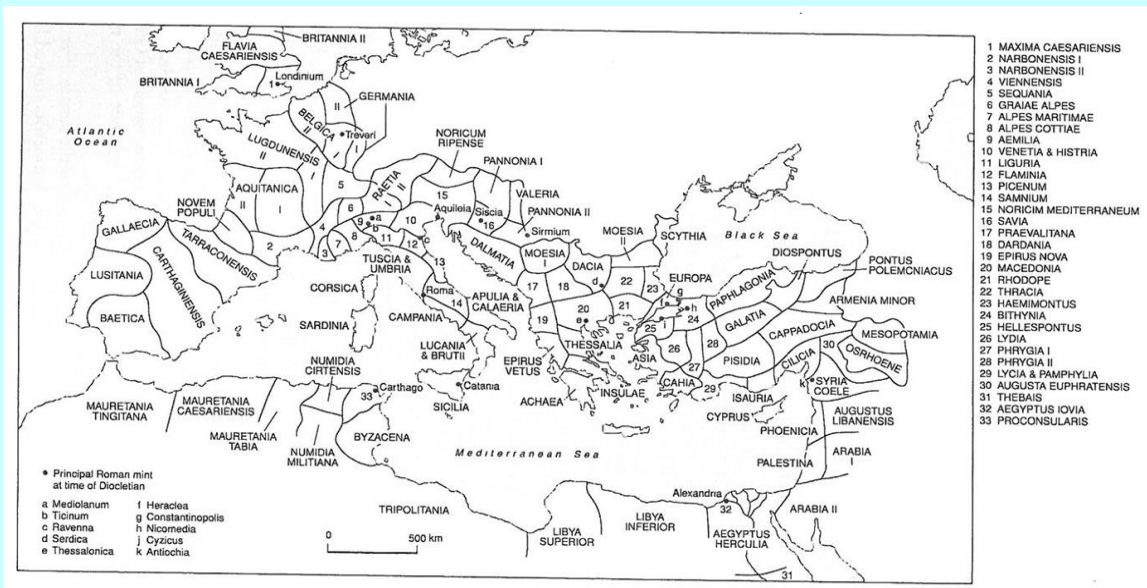


Repairing and Reforming the Empire

- Grouping the provinces into 12 *dioceses* – subdivision within these *dioceses* – administered by *vicarii*.



“...the provinces were divided into tiny portions, and many presidents and a multitude of inferior officers lay heavy on each territory, and almost on each city. There were also many stewards of different degrees, and deputies of presidents.” - **Lactantius** *On the Death of the Persecutors* 7



Break-Away Britain

- Carausius – rules in Britain and parts of Gaul from AD 286-293.
- Murdered by Allectus – rules in Britain until AD 296.
- Two pronged invasion by Constantius and Asclepiodorus (praetorian prefect).



Carausius Aureus - Obv. VIRTVS
CARAVSI - Rev. PAX AVG -
Fretwell_London1.

“And so by this victory of yours not only has Britain been liberated, but security has been restored...” –
Pan. Lat. VIII.18.4.

War Against Persia

- Carus and Numerian had launched invasion and sacked (?) Ctesiphon in AD 283 (former dies of “lightening strike”).
- Initial invasion by Galerius in AD 296, second invasion in AD 297/8 (reinforcements brought by Diocletian) – royal harem and also Ctesiphon captured.
- Peace treaty in AD 299 – some territory on Tigris ceded, Nisibis only place commercial activity may take place.

“Galerius Maximian, in acting against Narseus, fought, on the first occasion, a battle far from successful, meeting him between Callinicus and Carrae, and engaging in the combat rather with rashness than want of courage; for he contended with a small army against a very numerous enemy. Being in consequence defeated, and going to join Diocletian, he was received by him, when he met him on the road, with such extreme haughtiness, that he is said to have run by his chariot for several miles in his scarlet robes.” – **Eutropius 9.24.**

Coinage

- Rampant price inflation after Aurelian's (AD 270-275) introduction of new coinage.
- Diocletian retariffs coinage to double its face value – edict September AD 301 prior to prices edict – solidus introduced by Constantine.

	Solidus	Argenteus	Nummus	Radiate	Laureate	Denarius
Solidus	1	10	40	200	500	1000
Argenteus	1/10	1	4	20	50	100
Nummus	1/40	1/4	1	5	12 1/2	25
Radiate	1/200	1/20	1/5	1	2 1/2	5
Laureate	1/500	1/50	2/25	2/5	1	2
Denarius	1/1000	1/100	1/25	1/5	1/2	1

Edict of Maximum Prices – AD 301

“... we, who by the gracious favour of the gods previously stemmed the tide of the ravages of barbarian nations by destroying them, must surround the peace which we established for eternity with the necessary defences of justice... **Among the unscrupulous, the immoderate, and the avaricious it is considered almost a creed to desist from plundering the wealth of all only when necessity compels them...** We hasten, therefore, to apply the remedies long demanded by the situation, satisfied that **no one can complain that our intervention with regulations is untimely or unnecessary, trivial or unimportant.** These measures are directed against the unscrupulous... **It is our pleasure, therefore, that the prices listed in the subjoined schedule be held in observance in the whole of our Empire...** anyone who resists the measures of this statute shall be subject to a capital penalty for daring to do so...”

Religious Persecution

- Edict of persecution against the Manichees in AD 297 or 302? – Manichaeism spread by Persian prophet Mani.
- Three edicts persecuting the Christians issued in AD 303 and a fourth in 304.
- Implementation varies across Empire – supposedly little active persecution in the West – **Eusebius *Vit. Const.* 1.13.**

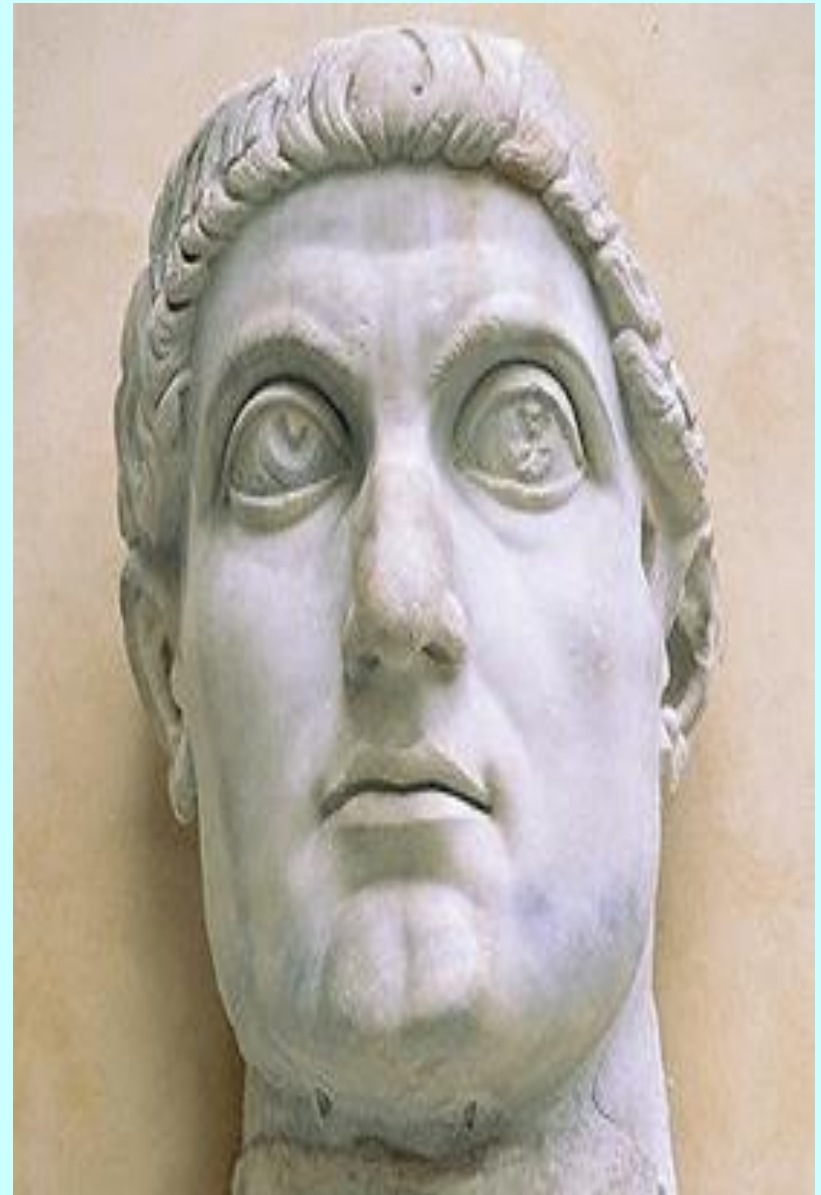
Retirement of Diocletian and Maximian

- May AD 305 an ill Diocletian abdicates along with Maximian – Caesars Constantius and Galerius made Augusti.
- Constantine (son of Constantius) and Maxentius (son of Maximian) not made Caesars – instead Maximinus (nephew of Galerius) and Severus made Caesars.

“Within a few days Galerius Caesar arrived, not to congratulate his father-in-law on the re-establishment of his health, but to force him to resign the empire. Already he had urged Maximian Herculus to the like purpose, and by the alarm of civil wars terrified the old man into compliance; and he now assailed Diocletian.” – **Lactanius *DMP* 17.**

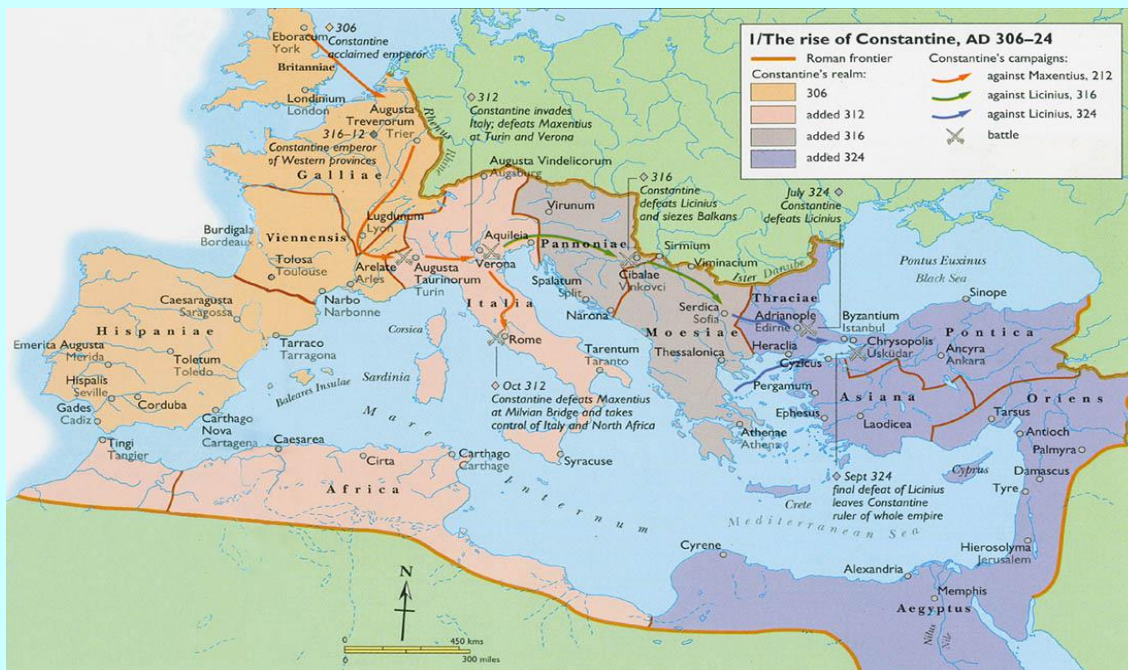
Constantine

- Hailed as Augustus by Constantius' troops at Eboricum (York) on 25th of July AD 306 – takes title of Caesar.
- Defeats Maxentius at battle of Milvian Bridge in autumn AD 312.
- Defeats Licinius at Cibalae (AD 316) and later at Chrysopolis (AD 324).
- Sole ruler of Roman Empire until May AD 337.





- Constantine.
- Galerius.
- Maximinus Daia (Maximin).
- Valerius Severus.
- Maxentius.
- Maximian.
- Licinius.



End of the Great Persecution AD 311

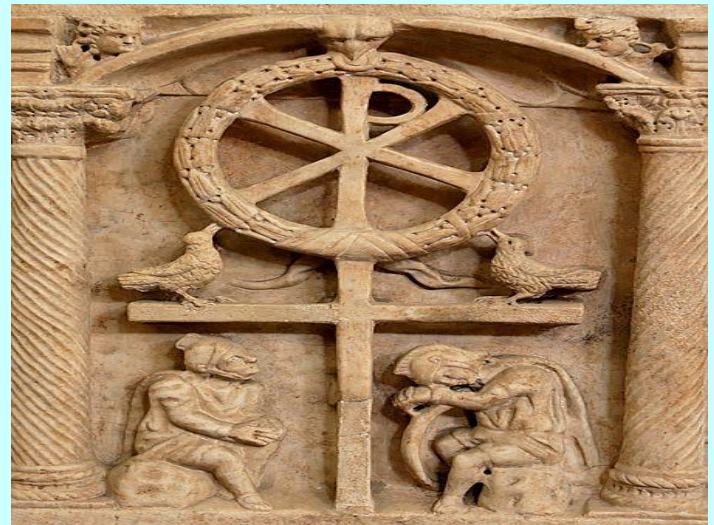
“Wrestling with so many evils, he [Galerius] thought of the cruelties which he had committed against the pious. Turning, therefore, his thoughts toward himself, he first openly confessed to the God of the universe, and then summoning his attendants, he commanded that without delay they should stop the persecution of the Christians...” – **Eusebius *Hist. Eccl.* 8.17.1.**

“Galerius, however, did not, by publication of this edict, obtain the divine forgiveness. In a few days after he was consumed by the horrible disease that had brought on an universal putrefaction.” – **Lactantius *DMP* 35.**

Battle of Milvian Bridge – AD 312

“...while he was thus praying with fervent entreaty, a most marvellous sign appeared to him from heaven, the account of which it might have been hard to believe had it been related by any other person. But since the victorious emperor himself long afterwards declared it to the writer of this history, when he was honoured with his acquaintance and society, and confirmed his statement by an oath, who could hesitate to accredit the relation, especially since the testimony of after-time has established its truth? He said that about noon, when the day was already beginning to decline, he saw with his own eyes the trophy of a cross of light in the heavens, above the sun, and bearing the inscription, Conquer by this.” – **Eusebius *Vit. Const.* 1.28.**

“...Constantine was directed in a dream to cause the heavenly sign to be delineated on the shields of his soldiers, and so to proceed to battle. He did as he had been commanded, and he marked on their shields the letter X, with a perpendicular line drawn through it and turned round thus at the top, being the cipher of CHRIST.” – **Lactantius 44.**



Roman sarcophagus – c. AD 350 – labarum.

How Christian was Constantine?

- Sacred day of the Sun free of public business (AD 324).

"He that is a seducer, he that is a murderer, he that is sacrilegious and infamous, let him approach without fear! For with this water will I wash him and will straightway make him clean. And though he should be guilty of those same sins a second time, let him but smite his breast and beat his head and I will make him clean again." – **Julian *The Caesars* 336b.**



Constantine AE Follis – **AD 312.** (rev) SOLI INVICTO, Sol standing left, holding the head of Serapis & raising hand in salute. – **RIC VI 167c.**



Constantine I AE follis – **AD 317.** (rev) SOL INVICTO COMITI, Sol standing left, holding globe and raising hand. - **RIC VII London 123 var.**

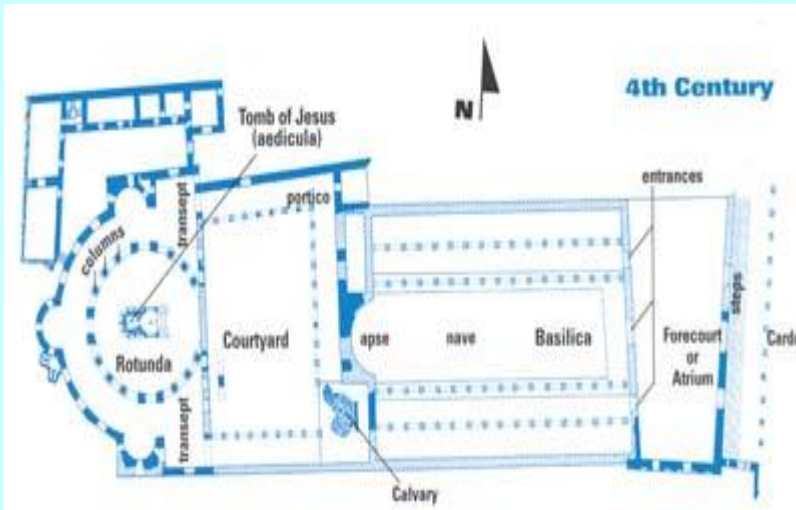
- Death-bed baptism in Nicomedia in May AD 337 – common practice to avoid staining oneself with sin before death - Absolution for the murder of Crispus and Fausta?
- Opportunity to plunder the wealth and building material of Pagan temples? – **Eusebius *Vit. Const.* 3.54.** – Attacks on pagan shrines may have been, in reality, limited – Constantine founds two new pagan temples at Constantinople - **Zosimus *New History* 2.31.**
- Bans the placing of statues of himself in temples.
- Constantine's *Oration to the Saints*.
- Cautious or pragmatic in nature? (e.g. removal of Licinius) – hedging bets?
- Anachronistic expectations of “consistency”.

Involvement in Church Affairs

- Meeting in Rome (AD 312-13) called to settle the question of the *lapsi* (compromisers) controversy in North Africa – hard-line “Donatists”.
- Council of Nicaea (AD 324) – Arian question, relation of the Father to the Son – Arian notion of Jesus as a subordinate entity to God.

Church Building

- Programme of restoring church property and building new churches – **Eusebius *Vit. Const.* 2.41, 45.**
- Jerusalem (and more broadly Palestine) subject to major church building programme.



Construction of Church of Holy Sepulchre.

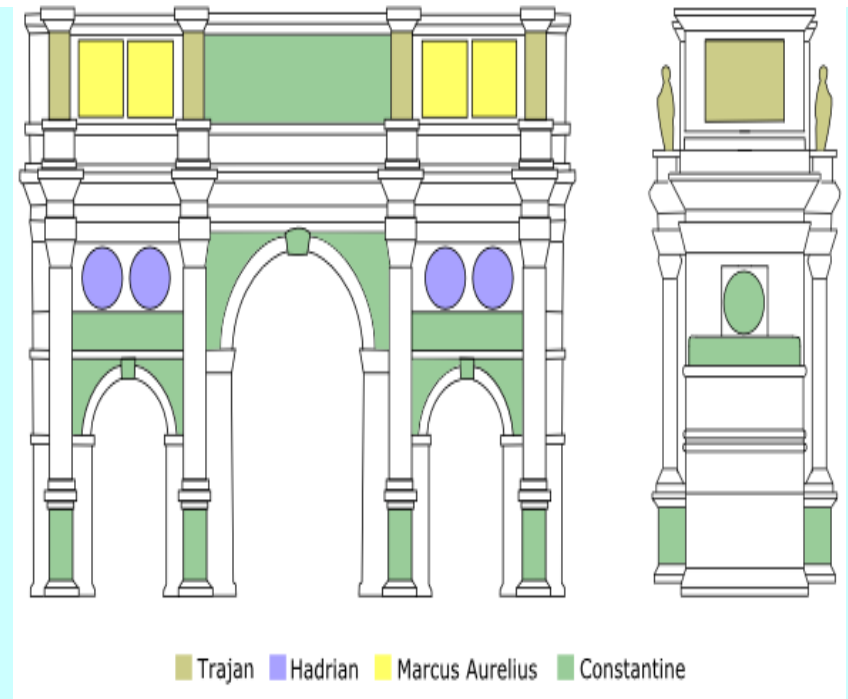
“Accordingly, on the very spot which witnessed the Saviour's sufferings, a new Jerusalem was constructed... First of all, then, he adorned the sacred cave itself, as the chief part of the whole work, and the hallowed monument... the emperor's zealous magnificence beautified with rare columns, and profusely enriched with the most splendid decorations of every kind.”
– **(3.33-34).**

Arch of Constantine

- Last erected at Rome.
- Probably for his tenth anniversary as emperor: 25 July 315.
- Campaign against Maxentius
 - Western end: army leaving a city (Milan?)
 - Capture of Verona
 - Battle of the Milvian Bridge
 - Eastern end: Constantine enters Rome



- *Spolia* - use of scenes and figures from earlier monuments - Model emperors for Constantine?
- Head on Hadrian tondo re-cut to show Constantine and Licinius.



Hadrian tondo - Sacrifice for Apollo



Hadrian tondo - Sacrifice for Silvanus



Sol

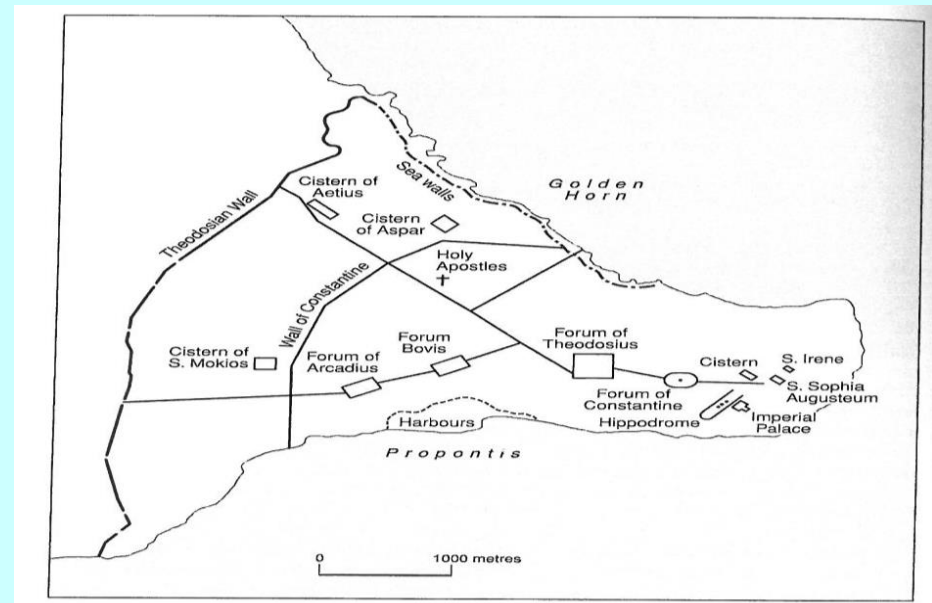
Foundation of Constantinople

- Founded on the site of the city of Byzantium a Greek colony on the Thracian Bosphorus – directed by vision from the Divine – Constantinople as a Christian capital?
- Inaugurated in 11th of May AD 330.
- Another tetrarchic capital (like Nicomedia, Serdica, Trier) – or new symbolic capitol?
- Artwork brought to Constantinople from all over the Empire, including image of wolf suckling Romulus and Remus from Rome.



Aerial image of modern Istanbul

- A senate is established in the new city.
- Inducements for settlers to move to the city including houses.
- Establishment of grain dole.
- Creation of a hippodrome (circus) and Imperial palace.
- Mausoleum of Constantine established.
- Strait colonnaded streets with *Fora*, basilicas, columns.



The Succession

- Three (surviving sons) – Constantine II, Constantius II and Constans – all made Caesars.
- Dalmatius son of Constantine's half brother Fl. Dalmatius, made Caesar.
- Constantine's half-brothers made consuls in AD 333 and 335.
- Sons of Constantine eliminate rivals relatively quickly after his death.
- Return to empire partitioned by several Augusti.

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