



## Summary :

Flavius Valerius Aurelius Constantine, one of the most controversial personalities in history, was certainly a great founder: he founded the new capital of the Roman state, a new dynasty, as well as a new religion, which was going to monopolize the religious scene of Late Antiquity. Although in the early stages of his career he got involved in civil wars and interfamilial strifes, which ended in bloodbaths, later on he repented and was sanctified by the Christian Church, which he actively protected, bringing her out of illegality. His biographer, Eusebius bishop of Caesarea, brightened up the dark parts and stressed the glorious elements of his personality, and History, which loves the flamboyant personalities, offered him the attribute “the Great”.

## Date and Place of Birth

February 27th, 272 (?)

## Date and Place of Death

May 22nd, 337 A.D.

## Main Role

Emperor

## 1. Biographical elements and sources

Flavius Valerius Aurelius Constantine was born on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February, probably in the year 272,<sup>1</sup> in Moesian Naissus. His father, Constantius Chlorus, originated from Upper Moesia (Moesia Superior) and was an officer of the Roman army, whereas his mother, Helena, came from a humble family of [Bithynia](#), a fact which makes some doubt whether she was a lawful wife of Constantius or simply his concubine.<sup>2</sup> Constantine initially married Minervina,<sup>3</sup> for whom we have no more information, other than she gave birth to Constantine’s first-born son, [Crispus](#). Later on, however, in order to serve his political ascension, he married in 307 the daughter of Maxentius, Fausta, with whom he had five children, Helena, Constantina, Constantius, Constans and Constantine. At the peak of his power and glory he stained his hands with the murder of two members of his family: in June 326 he had Crispus executed and in the next month he killed Fausta, letting her in an over-heated bath. Constantine got seriously ill in 337 and went for a cure in Helenopolis,<sup>4</sup> renowned for its healing baths. When he realized that the end was near, he wanted to return to Constantinople. He made it only to the outskirts of [Nicomedia](#), to a suburb called Achyron. There his strength abandoned him and the emperor summoned the bishop of the city, Eusebius, to give him the baptism. He died as a Christian on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May. His corpse was returned to Constantinople, dressed with the white garment of the Christian neophyte and was buried with a prestigious ceremony in the [Church of the Holy Apostles](#). Since all four of his sons bore the title of Caesar, there followed a period of anarchy, from which [Constantius](#) emerged as the new [Augustus](#), having murdered the rest of the aspirants along with members of their families.

The information on the life of Constantine, particularly during his early years, is often controversial and of a dubious validity; yet it is true that a large number of authors dealt, either directly or indirectly, with this historical personality. The primary and most complete source is the *Vita Constantini* of Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea.<sup>5</sup> Although actively taking sides with the emperor,<sup>6</sup> [Eusebius](#) wrote down events of his own time, of which he was sometimes an eyewitness. Yet, several other Late Antique authors also give information on his life and deeds.<sup>7</sup> Among them, “Great” Athanasius,<sup>8</sup> bishop of Alexandria, also a contemporary of Constantine, Sextus Aurelius Victor,<sup>9</sup> Lactantius<sup>10</sup> and others. Information is also contained in the Ecclesiastical Histories of [Eusebius](#),<sup>11</sup> [Philostorgios](#), Sozomen<sup>12</sup> and [Theodoret of Cyrrhus](#).<sup>13</sup> An important source for the legislative work of the emperor constitutes the Theodosian Code,<sup>14</sup> as well as the Justinianic Code,<sup>15</sup> which reflects the former.

## 2. Early years



Constantine's father climbed fast the climax of military offices, particularly during the early years of the reign of [Diocletian](#) and Maximian. In 284 he was appointed military commander of Dalmatia, whereas in 288 Maximian appointed him [Praetorian Prefect](#) of Galatia and in the next year he compelled him to separate from Helena and to marry his stepdaughter Theodora.<sup>16</sup> The fact that his father abandoned his mother marked heavily the psychology of young Constantine. Yet the evolution of the political events was very quick and he soon found himself amidst their tumult: right after the establishment of the [Tetrarchic system](#) in 293, Diocletian conferred upon Constantius the title of [Caesar](#), together with [Galerius](#), originating from present-day Serbia;<sup>17</sup> in this way he secured the succession both of himself and of Maximian. Constantine was being groomed as successor of his father and for that reason he went to the court of Diocletian in Nicomedeia, in order to be trained in administrative matters as well as to gain a better education.<sup>18</sup> In fact he also served as a hostage, in case Constantius Chlorus betrayed the emperor's faith in him. From there, Constantine participated in various military expeditions, particularly in the east, from which he acquired great experience, serving usually under Diocletian or Galerius.

### 3. Constantine's rise to the throne

In 305 Constantine had reached the office of *tribunus primi ordinis*. After the abdication of Diocletian, though, and despite the fact that his father was proclaimed Augustus, Constantine saw himself undermined by the protégés of Galerius, Severus and Maximinus, whereas he felt that his life was also at stake. In order to take him away from this gloomy environment, his father asked Galerius to send him to the west to lend him a hand in the expeditions in Britain. Galerius gave his permission when heavily drunken and Constantine fled with a horse in the middle of the night, before Galerius had the chance to change his mind. He met his father in Galatian Vonia, and they marched together towards Britain; there they settled in Eboracum<sup>19</sup> from where they started campaigns against the [Picts](#).

Yet, in the summer of 306 Constantius fell ill and died, and the troops proclaimed Constantine Augustus in Eboracum. The territory of his jurisdiction comprised Britain, Spain and Gaul. Wisely, Constantine decided to remain in the West for a while, in order to strengthen his power. He settled in Trier and enlarged the city, increasing its splendour with imperial buildings, such as the huge Bath complex. At the same time he fought successful wars against the invasions of the Franks, who considered the dynastic change as a chance to penetrate the borders of the Empire. As far as his policies in domestic affairs are concerned, he found the religious affairs at a critical stage right, due to the ongoing great [persecution of the Christians](#) in the east, which had started under Diocletian and was intensified under Galerius. Constantine was tolerant towards the new religion from the beginning. He promulgated an edict which put an end to the persecutions in the territory of his jurisdiction and returned to the Church its formerly confiscated property.<sup>20</sup>

### 4. The civil wars

#### 4.1 The war against Maximian

Constantine's accession was acknowledged by Galerius, but not by Maximian's son, Maxentius, who refused to acknowledge him and proclaimed himself emperor in the same year. Galerius, in his turn, considered Maxentius as an usurper and he sent against him a considerable military contingent under the leadership of Severus. Although he had retired, Maximian made a comeback and took sides with Constantine, offering him his daughter, Fausta, as wife, asking him though in return to support Maxentius against Galerius. This triggered a series of civil wars, which troubled the empire for a long time.

Despite the promises he had given to Maximian, Constantine kept a neutral position during the war between Galerius and Maxentius. He seemed to care more for the defense of the state against the barbarian tribes, the Alamanni in particular, and less for the military support of Maxentius. As the situation was getting out of control, Galerius decided to put an end to the civil strife and convoked the adversaries to a meeting, which took place on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 308, at Carnuntum, a military camp in present-day Austria. Maximian was compelled once more to abdicate, and Constantine was once more downgraded to the status of Caesar, whereas as Augustus in the West was proclaimed [Licinius](#), one of the companions and confidants of Galerius. Constantine, however, refused to accept his demotion and continued to behave as Augustus. Maximian turned against him, but the war ended on behalf of Constantine, who in 310 captured Marseilles, stronghold of his enemy, and forced the latter to commit suicide. He then had the rumour spread that



Maximian had attempted to murder him, thus smearing his memory, whereas he soon imposed a proper “**damnatio memoriae**”, effacing the name of the deceased from all inscriptions in public spaces.

Aiming at strengthening the pro-Constantinian propaganda, he linked his name not to Zeus or Hercules, like the Tetrarchs did, but to Apollo, god of light and salvation. The coins which he started issuing in that period depicted him as Sol Invictus and Apollo, thus gaining the love of the inhabitants of Gaul, who considered Apollo as their protector, as well as of the Christians, who considered the worship of Sol Invictus as a covered form of monotheism, conforming more to their own perceptions than polytheistic paganism.

#### 4.2. The war against Maxentius

After the death of Maximian, Maxentius seemed decided to continue the strife and avenge his father. In 311 Galerius died, right after putting an end to the persecutions with an edict. In the east Maximinus revolted against Licinius, taking hold of Asia Minor. In the west Maxentius rallied his troops in order to attack Constantine, starting from Italy. He tried to take the Christians on his side, by appointing Eusebius as bishop of Rome. Constantine made an alliance with Licinius against Maxentius. Maximinus, though, who had meanwhile signed a treaty with Licinius, became suspicious of this alliance and decided to support Maxentius, who was less popular by now due to the imposition of heavy taxation in the territories of his jurisdiction.

In spite of the advice of his leading officers and the admonitions of the haruspices to avoid war, Constantine with his army crossed over the Alps and started a series of victorious battles against the troops of Maxentius, thus conquering North Italy. In the fall of 312 Constantine had started approaching Rome and Maxentius had to march against him. The decisive battle was fought close to the Milvian Bridge on the river Tiber. This was a historical event which was later on vested with heavy propaganda. The soldiers of Constantine made their appearance in battle with a new symbol on their shields, looking like an X. The Christian authors considered this as a clear mark of Christianity. According to Lactantius,<sup>21</sup> the emperor saw a dream the night before the battle, in which he was admonished to use the Cross as his symbol, whereas according to Eusebius<sup>22</sup> Constantine saw a vision in the sky, where a cross appeared and he heard the voice “In this you win”. Victory was indeed on the side of the troops of Constantine, who entered triumphantly Rome on the 29<sup>th</sup> of October.<sup>23</sup> The emperor made sure that the traces of his predecessor in the Eternal city disappeared: he restored the public buildings and erected a triumph arch which would commemorate his clear victory down the centuries.<sup>24</sup>

#### 4.3. The war against Licinius

In the next year (313) Constantine met with Licinius in Milan, so that they could take decisions related to the fate of the empire. Taking advantage of this meeting, they also issued an edict which put a final end to the persecutions of the Christians and which acknowledged Christianity as one of the legal religions of the empire. The relations between the two men, however, did not remain friendly for a long period. Soon military action started, which reached its peak in 324 and ended with the final defeat of Licinius.

#### 5. The foundation of Constantinople

In 312 Constantine founded an apse in order to commemorate his victory against Maxentius. In 324, in order to celebrate his definitive proclamation as sole emperor, he founded a new city, New Rome. Having discerned the strategic importance of Byzantium, he chose this city as his new capital. He took care, though, to give the new city a completely new character, conforming to his new religious policy and his ideology in general. He ordered that many works of art as well as Christian relics would be transferred to the city from all over the empire. He personally placed the stepping stone of the Christian temple of the Holy Apostles on the remains of the temple of Aphrodite, thus symbolizing the victory of the new religion on the older cults. This “transformation process” lasted for six years and on May 11<sup>th</sup>, 330 the inhabitants celebrated the [inauguration](#) of the new imperial capital with particular splendour.

#### 6. External affairs

Although a large part of the military activities of Constantine aimed at the imposition of his supremacy in the empire itself, the emperor



did not overlook the dangers coming from abroad, in spite the historian Zosimus' accusations of the contrary.<sup>25</sup> Between 318 and 320 he managed to push away the Franks and Alamanni who threatened the north borders, particularly of Gaul. In 322, as attested by the minting of that year, he attained an important victory against the Sarmatians.<sup>26</sup> Towards the end of his reign he had started planning an expedition against Sassanian Persia, which he did not manage to carry through, because the Danube frontier required the constant presence of strong troops there.

## 7. Internal affairs

### 7.1. Administrative changes

Although Constantine appears to have demolished the Tetrarchic system of Diocletian, by establishing again a powerful autocracy, in the field of administration he actually followed and completed the policy of his predecessor. He maintained the administrative partition of the state, and appointed ahead of the large administrative entities members of his family. On the other hand, he debilitated the office of the so far omnipotent Praetorian Prefects, by taking away the role of military commander and by rendering them into simple assistants of the Caesars. Since 312 he had also replaced the praetorian guard with a contingent of specially trained troops, most of them of German origin, the "scholae palatinae".<sup>27</sup>

According to the majority of the modern historians specializing in late antiquity, a constant aspiration of Constantine throughout his career was the weakening of the Senatorial aristocracy of Rome.<sup>28</sup> For this reason he enlarged the senatorial order, by offering the senatorial office as an honorary title to people who served him well, without the obligation to attend the assemblies of the Senate in Rome. After the foundation of Constantinople, he established a second Senate.<sup>29</sup> The total number of the senators throughout the empire reached 2500 men, but with a respective shrinking of the equestrian order, which practically disappeared. A certain fact was the deterioration of the position of the curiales all over the empire. Constantine issued edicts according to which upon the decurions were imposed heavy financial burdens, which increased due to the fact that the emperor waived off the Christian clerics the obligation to undertake the office of a decurion. A second social order which became a target of the imperial legislation was that of the "coloni", the serfs or cultivators. In an effort to save the rural areas from depopulation, Constantine legally forbade these labourers to move away from the land that they cultivated.<sup>30</sup>

### 7.2. Economy

The main problem that Constantine, like his predecessors, had to face was the inflation tendencies of the Roman economy. One of the measures he took which seems to have been effective was the issuing of a new golden coin, the "solidus", which proved both stable and long-lasting. In order to acquire the necessary amounts of precious metals, Constantine resorted to a series of unpopular measures: he ordered the confiscation of the precious objects kept in the treasuries of pagan temples, whereas the new taxes he imposed both on the senatorial ranks ("phollis") and on the merchants and artisans ("chrysargyron")<sup>31</sup> had to be paid in gold and silver.<sup>32</sup>

### 7.3. Religious policy

The political and military achievements of Constantine may have not been within the focus of historical research, had they not been connected, directly or indirectly, with his internal affairs' policy and his obvious support of the new religion, namely Christianity. The reasons for this preference of his vary and scholars still analyze them. It is certain that Constantine had been raised in a pro-Christian environment. His mother, Helena, of whom he was particularly fond, was a pious Christian. His father, too, was surrounded by Christians and tolerant. Finally, his teacher, Lactantius, had obviously influenced young Constantine on behalf of Christianity. From a political point of view, Constantine had probably discerned the dynamic of the new religion. His desire to cut bonds with the past and to build a new dynastic profile in order to solidify his power must have also played some part in his choice. The tight bonds of the Christian communities offered an advantage as far as the dissemination of the pro-Constantinian propaganda was concerned. Although in his youth he had remained indifferent, when Diocletian gave an order for extensive persecutions in Nicomedeia, as well as



in the rest of the empire, he later on attempted to wipe out this dark spot, by persuading Licinius to issue in common the edict of Tolerance in Milan. After his final victory in 324 not only did he show his full support to Christianity, but he also returned to the Christian clergy the property which had been confiscated from it, and particularly to convey special privileges, of which they were so far deprived. Constantine's legislation is particularly revealing: the Christian clerics, bishops in particular, could travel freely within the empire, by making use of the public system of transportation and communication. Divinations were forbidden, unless use of them was made in order to provide explanation for natural disasters which had befallen imperial buildings.<sup>33</sup> However, in spite of what Christian authors told, Constantine did not reign as a Christian emperor. In an era of fragile balances, he made sure that he maintained the profile of the "Augustus Romanorum" the emperor of the Romans, showing respect for traditions. He continued to bear the title of "pontifex maximus", the supreme priest, even if he did not haste to sacrifice on the altar of Jupiter Capitolinus, as he should have done, upon entering Rome in 312. He related his name to the cult of Sol Invictus, the invincible sun, possibly in an attempt to give a monotheistic nuance to the existing pagan substratum. Constantine started showing more active support towards Christianity after 324, when his supremacy was undisputable. Then he went on to found churches, such as the Holy Apostles in the new capital, St. Peter in Rome<sup>34</sup> and two temples connected to the Life of Christ, that of the Nativity in Bethlehem and that of the Resurrection on the Calvary in Jerusalem. The temple of the Resurrection was erected in 325 or 326, after the destruction of the temple of Aphrodite, which had been built by order of the emperor Hadrian during the re-foundation of Jerusalem as Aelia Capitolina. The foundation of the church followed the excavations of Helena, mother of the emperor, who had traveled to the Holy Land in order to erect churches on spots following the steps of Christ. These excavations revealed the Holy Cross.<sup>35</sup> The church of the Nativity was somewhat later and was completed in 333.

An event of particular interest was that Constantine presided over the [First Ecumenical Council](#) which took place in [Nicaea](#) in 325. He thus undertook the role of arbiter in the first large-scale intra-Christian strife which had occurred by the teaching of [Arius](#). The council ended with the latter's conviction and the characterization of his doctrine as "heresy".<sup>36</sup> Yet the role of Constantine as "president" of the council showed right away that religion had henceforth political implications. The convocation of an ecumenical council reveals the need for the formulation of a "correct" doctrine, which would be sanctioned by the political authorities. In this way texts with a plausible "heretic" context were left out of the canon of the church, whereas some views which reflected cultural particularities or social demands were condemned as heretical.<sup>37</sup>

Despite the fact that Constantine showed religious tolerance and on the one hand enhanced Christianity, but without active persecution of the pagans, he took measures against the Jews: he forbade them to have Christian slaves and put some limitations on the free exercise of the Jewish religion, whereas he also did not allow the conversion of Christians to Judaism.

## 8. Assessment and evaluation

From a young age Constantine found himself in the middle of important events which shaped the political scene of the later Roman empire: he experienced the failure of the Tetrarchic system, stepping-stone of the policy of Diocletian, and for this reason he realized that only the return to an autocracy led by a powerful and unchallenged emperor could save the state from fragmentation and dissolution. In order to remain unscathed from internal friction he often turned against external enemies, such as the Picts in Britain and the Alamanni and Franks on the Danube frontier. In this way he wanted on the one hand to prove that he was the only one placing the security of the state above political ambition and on the other hand to solidify the troops' faith in him. With these two goals achieved, he then turned in the political arena of internal affairs and got involved in a series of civil wars, from which he emerged triumphant. His biographers, Christians in their majority, stressed that his main concern – and point of differentiation from his adversaries – was the consolidation of Christianity as the new state religion. Whether the emperor's intentions on this issue were purely idealistic or not remains an open subject in modern historical research. It is certain, however, that in matters of religious policy he was influenced by his mother Helena, a pious Christian since her youth. The foundation of churches by the latter in the Holy Land took place under the auspices of the emperor and was probably a clear effort to impose Christianity atop the local Judaism, of which Constantine was not particularly fond, as attested by his legislation. Yet Constantine made sure that he reigned as emperor of the Romans, he never abdicated from the office of pontifex maximus and he received the Christian baptism only just before he passed away.

The murder of his first-born son, Crispus, and his wife, Fausta, was always a dark spot, for which his contemporary Christian authors





provided explanation which morally explained his deeds. Eusebius spread the rumour that Crispus and Fausta had an intimate love affair and thus Constantine acted in order to reconstitute the moral order. These rumours were believed by their contemporaries. Later on, however, another view was supported, according to which Fausta has persuaded Constantine to kill his son, in order to open the way to the throne for her own children. When Helena realized what had happened, he pointed out to her son the cunning stratagem of his wife, and he consequently punished her. It is possible that Helena's travel in the Holy Land, between 326 and 328, was an attempt to atone herself and her son from the burden of these murders. In spite of his radical religious policy and the abolition of the Tetrarchy, Constantine was conservative in his administrative measures and respected the tradition which he inherited by Diocletian. The only change worth noting was the debasement of the praetorian prefects, who henceforth became assistants of the Augusti and the Caesars. Furthermore, in return for the privileges he accorded to the Christian clergy he asked for their active support towards his policy and their interference in political issues, particularly as informants. The Christian Church respected this informal pact, and it proclaimed both Constantine and Helena as saints, commemorating them on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May.

1. The years 271 and 273 have also been proposed as alternatives. Earlier scholars, starting from J. Vogt, placed the birth of Constantine in 285, yet Barnes, T.D. *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge MA 1981) proved this theory wrong with very persuasive arguments.
2. Helena is mentioned in the sources as "stables' girl". Working at the stables was particularly humble, whereas, if the stables were part of an inn, it is possible that Helena served there as a slave and that she had to offer also intimate services to the clients. See in detail Drijvers, J.W., *Helena Augusta: the Mother of Constantine the Great and the Legend of Her Finding of the True Cross* (Leiden 1992), pp. 17-19. The author accepts the view that she was never married to Constantius. Barnes, T.D., *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA 1981), on the contrary, supports that Helena was a lawful wife.
3. It is also uncertain whether Minervina was a lawful wife or a concubine.
4. Modern Altınova close to İzmit (Nicomedeia).
5. On the more recent editions of "Vita Constantini" see Dräger, P. (ed.), *Über das Leben des glückseligen Kaisers Konstantin (De Vita Constantini)*, (Oberhaid 2007<sup>2</sup>); Bleckmann, B., Schneider, H., *De Vita Constantini=Das Leben des Konstantin* (Turnhout 2007). The most recent edition with an English translation is by Cameron, Av. – Hall, S.G., *Life of Constantine* (Oxford 1999), with a particularly good historical commentary.
6. The support and propaganda of Eusebius on behalf of Constantine is revealed in the panegyric *Oratio de Laudibus Constantini*, also known as *Tricennalia*. For the relation between the two men see the classical study by Barnes, T.D., *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA 1981).
7. For an overall presentation of the sources see Bleckmann, B., "Sources for the History of Constantine", in Lenski, N. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine* (Cambridge 2006).
8. The most important texts where the deeds of Constantine are attested are the "Apologetic against the Arians" and the "Apologetic to the emperor Constantine".
9. Pichlmayer, Fr., *Sexti Aurelii Victoris Liber de Caesaribus* (Lipsiae 1961).
10. Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum*, see Creed, J.L. (ed.), *Lactantius, De mortibus persecutorum* (Oxford 1984).
11. Eusebii Pamphili, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, particularly book I, see also its electronic edition in [http://www.phys.uoa.gr/~nektar/orthodoxy/history/eusebios\\_ecclesia\\_historia.htm#%CE%99](http://www.phys.uoa.gr/~nektar/orthodoxy/history/eusebios_ecclesia_historia.htm#%CE%99). For the most accurate editions see Lake, K., *Eusebius: Historia Ecclesiastica* v. 1. (Cambridge, MA 1926); Oulton, J.L., *Eusebius: Historia Ecclesiastica* v. 2 (Cambridge, MA 1932); Bardy, G., *Eusèbe: Histoire Ecclésiastique, Sources Chrétiennes* 31 (Paris 1952), 41 (Paris 1955), 55 (Paris 1958), 73 (Paris 1960).
12. Hansen, G.C. (ed.), *Sozomenos: Historia Ecclesiastica (Kirchengeschichte)* (Brepols 2004).
13. Parmentier, L., Hansen G.C., Bouffartigue, J., Martin, A. (eds.), Canivet, P. (trans.), *Théodore de Cyr : Histoire Ecclésiastique* (Paris 2006).



14. Mommsen, Th., Meyer, P. (eds.), *Codex Theodosianus* (Berolini 1954) and, for an English translation, Pharr, C., *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmundian Constitution* (Princeton 1952).
15. Krueger, P. (ed.), *Corpus Iuris Civilis* (Berolini 1877). For a selection of the laws pertaining to the religious policy of Constantine see Καμάρα, Α. Η *αντιπαγανιστική νομοθεσία της Υστερης Ρωμαϊκής Αυτοκρατορίας μέσα από τους κώδικες* (Αθήνα 2000).
16. Some authors support the view that the marriage between Constantius and Theodora took place in 293, and was thus simultaneous with his accession to the office of Caesar. Yet, a careful reading of the sources suggests that a more accurate dating would be in 288-289.
17. In fact Galerius originated from Felix Romuliana, modern Gamzigrad.
18. In Nicomedia Constantine studied under the Christian orator Lactantius.
19. Modern York.
20. This is at least the view of Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 24.9.
21. Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 44.4-6.
22. Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* I.28.
23. Maxentius had been trampled by his troops and drowned in the Tiber. His corpse was washed out of the river and then mutilated as a sign of disrespect.
24. The Arch of Constantine is one of the landmarks for the sightseeing of Rome and its relief depictions have been studied extensively by archaeologists and historians of Late Antiquity for their symbolic representations.
25. Zosimus, *Historia Nova* 2.34.
26. See the relevant numismatic analysis in <http://www.constantinethegreatcoins.com/barb/>
27. It seems that the dismantling of the praetorian guard was a constant aspiration both of Diocletian and of Galerius. Yet, Constantine was the only one who achieved it, partly because of the mistake the praetorians committed by supporting Maxentius. See also Gregory, T., *A History of Byzantium* (Malden - Oxford - Victoria 2005) p. 55.
28. Averil Cameron, though, seems to disagree with this view. See Cameron, Av., *The Later Roman Empire, AD 284-430* (London 1993), pp. 54-55.
29. Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 4.1.
30. Cod. Th. 5.17.1. See also Cameron, Av., *The Later Roman Empire, AD 284-430* (London 1993), p. 57.
31. It has been suggested that the chrysargyron was the same as the collation lustralis, an tax which had been imposed in earlier times, at least in the eastern part of the empire, which actually burdened all social strata. See Zosimus, *Nova Historia* 2.38.
32. See Cameron, Av., *The Later Roman Empire: AD 284-430* (London 1993), p. 53.
33. *Cod. Th.* 16.10.1.
34. It was an early building on the spot where today is built the basilica of St. Peter at the Vatican.
35. At least this is what the imperial environment claimed and was accepted by the clerical authorities which sanctified the mother of the emperor.



Modern historical research has re-evaluated and doubted several of these elements. See Klein, H.A. "Constantin, Helena, and the Cult of the True Cross in Constantinople", in Durand, J., Flusin, B., (eds.), *Byzance et les reliques du Christ* (Paris 2004) pp. 31-59.

36. As time went by, however, Constantine showed to be influenced by Arius' s doctrines, whereas his children, Constantius in particular, revealed from the beginning an inclination towards Arianism. See also Cameron, Av., *The Later Roman Empire: AD 284-430* (London 1993) pp. 60-61.

37. Apart from Arianism the ecclesiastical councils of the time dealt with Donatism, Montanism, Marcionism and other "heretical" doctrines, against which state legislation was promulgated.

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## Glossary :

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | Augustus   |
|  | A title initially given to Octavian in 27 BC, a few years after his victory over Mark Anthony in Actium. In Greek the epithet means "Honoured". Eventually, the title was used to complement the names of the Roman emperors.  |
|  | caesar   |
|  | In the Roman Empire the title of Caesar was given to the Emperor. From the reign of Diocletian (284-305) on this title was conferred on the young co-emperor. This was also the highest title on the hierarchy of the Byzantine court. In the 8th c. the title of Caesar was usually given to the successor of the throne. In the late 11th c. this office was downgraded and from the 14th c. on it was mainly conferred on foreign princes.  |
|  | curiales   |
|  | Curiales were the members of the city councils (gr.: <i>boule</i> ) in the late Roman Empire. They belonged to the local aristocracy and were officials of the municipal administration, responsible for the normal functioning of the city's institutions as well as for local tax-collecting. A city's <i>boule</i> could count from 100 to 200 curiales, depending on the city's population.  |
|  | damnatio memoriae  |
|  | The official condemnation of the memory of a Roman emperor. They had their names erased from the public buildings, monuments and inscriptions and their statues reworked.  |
|  | equestrians, the (equites)   |
|  | The lowest class of Roman aristocracy, whose economic wealth derived mainly from civil professions (bankers, publicans, merchants), yet without political privileges. The Roman Republican period was marked by their strifes against the senators. The equestrians were won over mainly by leaders who desired to promote a monarchic type of government pushing aside the Senate.  |
|  | Picts  |
|  | A loose confederation of tribes dwelling in modern Scotland.   |
|  | praetorian   |
|  | Member of the imperial guard.  |
|  | praetorian prefect (praefectus praetorio)  |
|  | Commander of the emperor's bodyguard under the principate. During the reign of Constantine I the praetorian prefect becomes a dignitary responsible for the administrative unit called the prefecture, which was subdivided into dioceses. In 400 A.D. there were four such praetorian prefectures, of Oriens, of Illyricum, of Italia and Africa and of Gallia. The praetorian prefects were second only to the emperor. The praetorian prefect of Oriens was the mightiest among prefects. His office is for the last time mentioned in 680. |
|  | scholae palatinae  |
|  | Scholae palatinae were created by Diocletian (284-305). They were corps of the imperial guard, and to be more precise they formed the personal army of the emperor. They served under the <i>magistri officiorum</i> and later on under the <i>Domestici</i> of the Scholae. Seven regiments were stationed in the East and five in the West. Justinian I (527-565) introduced four more short-lived regiments.  |
|  | senate, the  |
|  | The top political body of the Roman state. During the early Republic, it was represented by the council of the consuls, the top archons of the roman   |



state. Later on, its power and responsibilities increased. As a result, it became the main governmental body of Rome. However, during the Imperial period, the responsibilities of the senate were restricted.

#### senator, the (1. Roman, 2. Byzantine)

1. A Roman body of men that originally advised the king and then the consuls; Heredity was not the only means of joining the senate and "new men" or *novi homines* could become part of it; Augustus revised the senate and left the body with less power and bolstered hereditary claims as a means to enter the senate; it continued to make laws and conferred powers on new emperors.

2. Member of the senate. The senate, a roman institution transferred from Rome to Constantinople by Constantine I during the Byzantine period was an advisory body whose rights and responsibilities were not clearly defined. It was consisted of imperial officers coming from the upper and were ranked according to hierarchical levels: *virii illustri* (perfectus praetoriae and the magister), *virii spectabiles* (proconsul, vicarius and the comes), *virii clarissimi* (consul praetoriae) and *virii perfectissimi* (praeses and duces). Since the 6th c. AD a new title was established for the upper officers (*virii gloriosi*). The years that followed officials were entitled to officers regardless their position as senators or if they were about to be admitted to this body.

#### Tetrarchs, the

The superior archons of the Roman state after its division in four parts by Diocletianus. The first group of Tetrarchs consisted of Diocletianus, Maximianus (Augusti), o Galerius and Constantinus Chlorus (Caesars).

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## Quotations

The vision Constantine saw in the sky, according to Eusebios of Caesarea:

«Ἀνεκαλείτο δῆτα ἐν εὐχαῖς τοῦτον, ἀντιβολῶν καὶ ποτνιώμενος φῆναι αὐτῷ ἑαυτὸν ὅστις εἶη καὶ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ δεξιὰν χεῖρα τοῖς προκειμένοις ἐπορεύσει. εὐχομένῳ δὲ ταῦτα καὶ λιπαρῶς ἰκετεύοντι τῷ βασιλεῖ θεοσημεῖα τις ἐπιφαίνεται παραδοξοτάτη, ἣν τάχα μὲν ἄλλου λέγοντος οὐ ῥάδιον ἦν ἀποδέξασθαι, αὐτοῦ δὲ τοῦ νικητοῦ βασιλέως τοῖς τὴν γραφὴν διηγουμένοις ἡμῖν μακροῖς ὕστερον χρόνοις, ὅτε ἠξιώθημεν τῆς αὐτοῦ γνώσεώς τε καὶ ὁμιλίας, ἐξαγγείλαντος ὄρκους τε πιστωσαμένου τὸν λόγον, τίς ἂν ἀμφιβάλοι μὴ οὐχὶ πιστεῦσαι τῷ διηγήματι; μάλισθ' ὅτε καὶ ὁ μετὰ ταῦτα



χρόνος ἀληθῆ τῷ λόγῳ παρέσχε τὴν μαρτυρίαν. ἀμφὶ μεσημβρινὰς ἡλίου ὥρας, ἤδη τῆς ἡμέρας ἀποκλινούσης, αὐτοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἰδεῖν ἔφη ἐν αὐτῷ οὐρανῷ ὑπερκείμενον τοῦ ἡλίου σταυροῦ τρόπαιον ἐκ φωτὸς συνιστάμενον, γραφὴν τε αὐτῷ συνήφθαι λέγουσαν· τούτῳ νίκα. θάμβος δ' ἐπὶ τῷ θεάματι κρατῆσαι αὐτόν τε καὶ τὸ στρατιωτικὸν ἅπαν...».

Ευσέβιος Καισαρείας, *Vita Constantini* 1.28.1-2, Winkelmann, F. (ed.), *Eusebius Werke* 1.1: *Über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantin* (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller, Berlin 1975).

Constantine the Great founds the Senate of Constantinople:

«Βουλευτήριόν τε μέγα, ἦν σύγκλητον ὀνομάζουσιν, ἕτερον συνεστήσατο, τὰς αὐτὰς τάξας τιμὰς καὶ ἱερομηνίας, ἧ καὶ Ῥωμαίοις τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις ἔθος».

Σωζομενός, *Εκκλησιαστικὴ Ἱστορία* II.3.6, French transl. A.-J. Festugière with the Greek text of J. Bidez's edition, *Sozomène, Histoire ecclésiastique, livres I-II* (Sources chrétiennes 306, Paris 1983).

Constantine the Great prohibits the possession of Christian slaves by Jews:

«Ἄλλὰ καὶ Ἰουδαίους μηδένα Χριστιανὸν δουλεύειν ἐνομοθέτει· μηδὲ γὰρ θεμιτὸν εἶναι προφητοφόνταις καὶ κυριοκτόνοις τοὺς ὑπὸ τοῦ σωτήρος λελυτρωμένους ζυγῷ δουλείας ὑπάγεσθαι· εἰ δ' εὐρεθείη τις τοιοῦτος, τὸν μὲν ἀνεῖσθαι ἐλεύθερον, τὸν δὲ ζημίᾳ χρημάτων κολάζεσθαι».

Ευσέβιος Καισαρείας, *Vita Constantini* 4.27.1, Winkelmann, F. (ed.), *Eusebius Werke* 1.1: *Über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantin* (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller, Berlin 1975).

The baptism of Constantine the Great:

«Ὁ μὲν δὴ ταῦτ' ἔλεγεν, οἱ δὲ τὰ νόμιμα τελοῦντες θεσμοὺς ἀπεπλήρουν θεῖους καὶ τῶν ἀπορρήτων μετεδίδοσαν, ὅσα χρὴ προδιαστειλάμενοι· καὶ δὴ μόνος τῶν ἐξ αἰῶνος αὐτοκρατόρων Κωνσταντῖνος Χριστοῦ μυστηρίοις ἀναγεννώμενος ἐτελειούτο, θείας τε σφραγίδος ἀξιούμενος ἠγάλλετο τῷ πνεύματι ἀνεκαινούτό τε καὶ φωτὸς ἐνεπίμπλατο θείου, χαίρων μὲν τῇ ψυχῇ δι' ὑπερβολὴν πίστεως, τὸ δ' ἐναργὲς καταπεπληγῶς τῆς ἐνθέου δυνάμεως. Ὡς δ' ἐπληροῦτο τὰ δέοντα, λαμπροῖς καὶ βασιλικοῖς ἀμφιάσμασι φωτὸς ἐκλάμπουσι τρόπον περιεβάλλετο ἐπὶ λευκοτάτῃ τε στρωμνῇ διανεπαύετο, οὐκέθ' ἄλουργίδος ἐπιψαῦσαι θελήσας».

Ευσέβιος Καισαρείας, *Vita Constantini* 4.62.4-4.63.1, Winkelmann, F. (ed.), *Eusebius Werke* 1.1: *Über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantin* (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller, Berlin 1975).