

Following the Edict of Milan (313), Constantine convened the synod of Arles (314) largely at the insistence of the Donatists, et al, to deal with that problem. He would soon learn that all of the stubbornness inherent in Christianity did not disappear with state acceptance.

Abandoning Rome, Constantine established his new capitol at the old city of Byzantium--following Diocletian in the move--and renamed it Constantinople. After 330 this was the technical headquarters of the Empire although Rome, the city, retained its ideology in the minds of most people. When he died in 337 he left the empire in disarray...his last few years were those of confusion and oppression by barbarian forces. He had retreated from orthodoxy in his Christian commitment and had allowed a resurgence of the Arian error. He had redivided the empire among his sons and heirs and the next few years would be times of nearly continuous fightings as these persons sought to gain greater portions of mastery for themselves. While he had unified the empire and restored some of its political solidarity and beaten some of its foes, he had also left it vulnerable in matters of succession and division. His overall influence was surely on the positive side and while we wish the history of the church showed a greater consistency in testimony, we are still caught with the picture of considerable growth in the Constantine era. Final evaluation is just about as foolish as is the attempt to make it.

Constantine's Sons (337-361)

The Empire division was in this way:

--Constantine II ruled the part of the Empire including Britain, France, and much of Spain.

--Constans ruled the rest of the west.

--Constantius was to rule the east.

Following the official division matters developed on this line: Constantine II died in 340 and much of the territory for which he was responsible was lost to the Gauls, Saxons, etc. Constans was able to annex some of his territory to the portion he held originally. But Constans was murdered in 350 and succeeded by Magnentius, a Gaul. Constantius brought an army to avenge the death of his brother and overcame Magnentius in 353. He then ruled the empire by himself until his death in 361. He enjoyed some success in warfare with the barbarians but near chaos occurred with his death.