

It is easy to be critical but the empire continued to weaken through the days of Constantine's sons and really only held up because its enemies were busy fighting one another as well as the empire.

Julian the Apostate

Julian was a resurgent pagan and attempted to overthrow the church in favor of the older paganism! He launched a vigorous personal attack on Christianity and even used the press with his work TREATISE AGAINST THE CHRISTIANS. He seems to have attempted to frustrate biblical prophecy and sought other ways to show inconsistency in Christianity. He lacked broadly based public support, however, and the church was really too well established to be uprooted at this juncture. In addition, Julian was busy with warfare both offensively and defensively. He died fighting the Persians and it is said that in his dying moments he looked heavenward and said, "Galilean, thou hast conquered." (Nice that he spoke in old English!) But be careful about attributing too much credence to these reports of what people say when they are dying...unless you have a friend with a cassette nearby[.

A lengthy interregnum followed Julian. Jovian held the post in 364 and tried to reunite the empire but barely made it through the rest of the year. The dual emperors, Valentinus and Valens succeeded him with the former in the west while the latter ruled in the east. Valens died in 378 while trying to hold off the Goths and was succeeded by Gratian who moved to the west in 379 and appointed Theodosius I to rule in the east.

Theodosius

The scion of a very successful military family, Theodosius served mostly in the east although the family prowess was well known in the west. His military star brightened at 374 and in 379 he was appointed co-emperor by Gratian. He professed Christianity by baptism in 380 and sometime thereafter removed the title "pontifex maximus" from his standard. He was committed to the Nicene faith and was responsible for convening the council of Constantinople..the body that served to ratify the old creed and promulgate another to clarify issues regarding the person of the Lord. In many ways he was the most Christian of the emperors of this century but turned his military forces loose on the citizens of Thessalonica, after a riot there, and a few thousand were killed to bring about peace. Ambrose of Milan refused the emperor communion until he would make