***Unit 1--Medieval Rome***

***Introduction and the Constantinian legacy.***

****

**“The Dark Ages” is the pejorative name that Renaissance humanists gave to the period that started with the “fall” of Rome and ended with their own arrival.**

**A. Introduction**

**Dark Ages or Darkened ages**

**In general, "Darkness" was pejoratively applied by snooty Renaissance folks much like "pre-Raphaelites" -- not liking what came in between.**

**This was particularly true of Italians who thought that what came**

**In between was German and thus Barbarian.**

**"Medieval" really just means "middle period"**

**Early and late Medieval**

**Different dates in different place -- like all historical period labels.**

**In "Western Civ", "medieval" is usually applied only to Europe,**

**but historians of other areas also use the term.**

**Even in Europe, period names don't always mean the same thing.**

**Historians usually pick their own parameters**

**For our purposes, we will try to drop the term "dark ages" but no penalty for forgetting.**

**We will, however, use Medieval, early and late, for Rome.**

**We'll use Early Medieval to mean the time between Gregory the Great**

**(born about 540, Pope from 590 until 604) and ca. 1000.**

**Late Medieval will mean 1000 through the debatable beginning**

**of the Renaissance -- we'll decide later when that is.**

**Although the course is about Rome, we will talk about other places if needed.**

**Milan, Ravenna, Constantinople, Avignon, etc.**

**Before starting on the Medieval period, we'll go into some background:**

**Constantine's legacy -- for better or worse**

**Barbarians -- anyone non-Roman -- "your barbarian is my cousin"**

**Benedict and early monasticism**

**Gregory was a monk and maybe a Benedictine**

**He wrote a biography of Benedict**

**Byzantines and their Representatives.**

**Despite what it sounds like, this isn't a linear history course**

**There are timelines and an abbreviated history, but we will concentrate on**

**trends and controlling factors (some of which are people) rather than**

**on events**

**We won't always go in chronological order**

**Benedict, for example, is in the century before Gregory**

**but will come after him in the course.**

**And the founders of the other Medieval monastic orders,**

**Francis and Dominic, will be discussed with Benedict even though**

**they're late Medieval. Even Ignatius, who was counter-Reformation, will rate a mention.**

**Krautheimer's Medieval Rome**

[**http://www.mmdtkw.org/VKrautheimerRome.html**](http://www.mmdtkw.org/VKrautheimerRome.html)

# B. Constantine's legacy

**The "Donation of Constantine"**

**Constantine gives Rome and the Empire to Pope Sylvester 1 -- impious fraud**

[**http://www.newad****vent.org/cathen/05118a.htm**](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05118a.htm)

**Extent of the Empire -- map exercise: from Augustus until 1500**

**Orphan maps? (Periodical Historical Atlas of Europe)**

[**http://www.euratlas.com/time1.htm**](http://www.euratlas.com/time1.htm)

**Structures: Church basilicas and rounds**

**Tituli -- home churches to which someone held title**

**Ancient Roman Basilicas**

**Basilica of Maxentius/Constantine**

**Largest built, curile basilica**

**Tomb dinners -- an ancient Mediterranean tradition:**

**Dining/assembly area in front of tombs**

**Grand *triclinia*: banquet halls for large numbers of guests**

**Exposing tombs -- *ambulatoria* around tombs**

**Basilicas:**

**Old St. Peter's**

**<http://www.mmdtkw.org/VOldStPeters.html>**

[**http://roma.katolsk.no/pietrovaticano.htm**](http://roma.katolsk.no/pietrovaticano.htm)

**Not oldest, but eventually assumed greatest importance.**

**Funerary chapel (martyrion) expanded into huge basilica**

**Good example of a semi-round ambulatory cut around a tomb**

**Perhaps built by Constantine (or Constantius)**

**Eventually demolished because it would have fallen --**

**but lasted more than 1000 yrs.**

**St. John Lateran**

[**htt****p://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09014b.htm**](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09014b.htm)

[**http****://www.canticanova.com/articles/misc/art7f1.htm**](http://www.canticanova.com/articles/misc/art7f1.htm)

[**ht****tp://members.tripod.com/romeartlover/Vasi46.html**](http://members.tripod.com/romeartlover/Vasi46.html)

**"Mother of all churches"**

**Converted grand tricliniun**

**Not a tomb church**

**(Lateran Continued)**

**Medieval Baptistery still standing**

**"Constantine's bathtub" (Rienzo connection)**

**Medieval cloister**

**Scala Sancta**

**Leo 3's Triclinium Mosaic from Palace**

**Disastrous Palace fires**

**Renaissance/baroque redecoration of the church**

**Quattro Coronati**

[**http://www.santiqua****ttrocoronati.org/index\_enn.htm**](http://www.santiquattrocoronati.org/index_enn.htm)

[**htt****p://www2.siba.fi/~kkoskim/rooma/pages/SQUATTRO.HTM**](http://www2.siba.fi/~kkoskim/rooma/pages/SQUATTRO.HTM)

**4th Century Titulus Aemilianae built by Pope Miltiades (311-14)**

**Restored by Pope Honorius 625-638) and by Pope Hadrian 772-95**

**Basilica built by Pope Leo 4 (847-55).**

**Sacked by the Norman, Robert Guiscard, in 1048.**

**Rebuilt on a smaller scale by Pope Paschal 2 (1099-1118).**

**Monastery and cloister added in the 12th and 13th centuries,**

**held by Benedictines until the 16th.**

**Fortress guarding the Lateran (1246, Innocent 4)**

**and haven for Popes during conflict with the Hohehstaufen**

**Camaldolese monks got it in 1521 and 40 years later the Augustinians got it.**

**Now Augustinian nuns.**

**Fresco finds in late 1990's**

**St. Sabina**

[**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa\_Sabina**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Sabina)

[**http://www.sacred-destinations.com/italy/rome-santa-sabina**](http://www.sacred-destinations.com/italy/rome-santa-sabina)

**5th century (422-23), built on the site of Titulus Sabinae by Peter the Illyrian.**

## Became the Dominican HQ in 1218

**(overtaken by S. Maria Sopra Minerva in 1370.)**

**Last home of Dominic, later was home of Thomas Aquinas.**

**Wooden doors are pre-450, perhaps the first doors of the church.**

**Windows are translucent selenite.**

**Restored in first half of 20th century**

**-- renaissance and baroque additions removed.**

**Medieval cloister is attached.**

**Additional courtyard with "Dominic's" orange tree.**

**Rare Round Churches**

**Round Roman Temple**

**Funerary rotundae without fronting basilicae?**

**S. Costanza**

[**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa\_Costanza**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Costanza)

[**http://www.sacred-destinations.com/italy/rome-santa-costanza**](http://www.sacred-destinations.com/italy/rome-santa-costanza)

[**http://www.bluffton.edu/~sullivanm/italy/rome/costanza/costanza.html**](http://www.bluffton.edu/~sullivanm/italy/rome/costanza/costanza.html) **and linked pages**

**Originally a Mausoleum located outside the Aurelian walls on Via Nomentana**

**Not a church until 1254 -- Pope Alexander 4**

**Vault mosaic, with portrait of Costanza, is 4th century**

**Costanza's porphyry sarcophagus -- original in the Vatican**

**S. Maria ad Martyres -- Pantheon**

[**http://www2.siba.fi/~kkoskim/rooma/pages/PANTHEON.HTM**](http://www2.siba.fi/~kkoskim/rooma/pages/PANTHEON.HTM)

## <http://www.romanconcrete.com/>

## Built by Hadrian as a massive rebuilding of

**Marcus Agrippa's homage to the Julio-Claudian patron gods.**

**Temple closed in 5th century and given by Emperor Phocas to Pope Boniface 4.**

**Boniface consecrated it as S. Maria ad Martyres before 609**

**(in that year he proclaimed "All Saints Day" in the church.)**

**In 663, Eastern Emperor Constans 2 stole the bronze roof tiles.**

**Gregory 3 reclad the roof with lead in 735.**

### Used as a fortress and later as a poultry market

**during Avignon Captivity (1309-77)**

**Restored to use as a church after the Captivity -- in use since then.**

**Renaisance redecorations.**

**S. Stefano Rotondo al Celio**

[**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santo\_Stefano\_Rotondo**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santo_Stefano_Rotondo)

[**http://****www2.siba.fi/~kkoskim/rooma/pages/SSTEFROT.HTM**](http://www2.siba.fi/~kkoskim/rooma/pages/SSTEFROT.HTM)

[**http://www.sacred-destinations.com/italy/rome-santo-stefano-rotondo**](http://www.sacred-destinations.com/italy/rome-santo-stefano-rotondo)

**A purpose built round church -- probably modeled directly**

**after the Byzantine church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.**

**Same size as Jerusalem rotunda**

**First church consecrated by Pope Simplicius (468-83), perhaps in 460.**

**Perhaps financed by the Verlarian family who had Jerusalem connections**

**-- not a titulus.**

**Built on the site of a Mithraeum within the Castra Peregrinorum**

**(a military barracks for foreign troops -- training for foreign officers).**

**Decorated by Pope John 1 (523-26) and Pope Felix 4 (526-30).**

**Colonnades altered and transverse arches added by Innocent 2 (1130-1143).**

**Renaissance restorations**

**Martyr frescoes**

**Other Roman Medieval Churches**

**S. Sebastiano -- 3rd century catacomb church, 4th basilica, 9th rededication**

**Ss. Giovanno e Paulo -- 2-3 century titulus, 4th century church,**

**restored mid-5th, restored early 12th after Norman sacking**

**S. Pudenza (Pudenziana) 390 -- original but badly restored apse mosaic is**

**Earliest of its type in Rome**

**S. Maria Maggiore**

**Basilica Liberiana 352-66, Damasus Basilica 366-84, Sixtus3432-40**

**S. Maria della Neve -- Aug 4-5 358**

**Ss. Cosmas and Damian in Foro 527**

**S. Marco in Piazza Venezia -- ca 800**

**S. Cecilia in Trastevere -- early titulus Ceacilia, 5th century church replaced in 9th**

**S. Prassede (Praxedes, sister of Pudenza) 5th century church replaced in 822**

**Zeno chapel 817**

**S. Maria in Trastevere -- Supposedly Peter's parish, 4th Century church rebuilt in**

**12th**

**S. Clemente 1100s (Earlier church destroyed by Guiscard)**

**S. Maria del Popolo 1227**

**S. Lorenzo fuori le Mure**

**Search for their names on the Internet**

**Dark Ages/Medieval Times -- In One Page**

**Constantine moved his capital to Constantinople in the third decade of the fourth century.**

**During the 400's AD, the western part of the Roman Empire collapsed into several smaller states. In Spain and Portugal there were the Visigoths, in North Africa the Vandals, in Italy the Ostrogoths, in the Balkans the Avars, and in France the Merovingians. In England, this is the time of (legendary) King Arthur.**

**About 550, Justinian, the emperor of the surviving eastern part of the Roman Empire, tried to recapture the West, and succeeded in retaking Italy, North Africa, and part of Spain. But these successes were only temporary.**

**In the 600's AD, Arab armies fired by their new religion, Islam, swept from Arabia Felix (modern Saudi Arabia) into the Roman Empire and the Parthian Empire, and succeeded in taking over major parts of both. They establishing a huge empire running from Pakistan in the east to Spain in the West, including North Africa (with Egypt).**

**By the late 700's, Europe also was united under the emperor Charlemagne, although more weakly than the Arab Empire.**

**When Charlemagne died in the 800's, his European empire was split among his sons, and soon fell apart, roughly into the modern states of France and Germany. Italy was ruled by the Lombards, and eastern Europe by the Slavs.**

**Throughout this period Europe was plagued by invasions of Vikings from Scandinavia. Some of these settled in northern France about 1000 AD, and from there invaded England in 1066 and Sicily a little later.**

**In the southern Mediterranean and West Asia, the Arab empire also collapsed into smaller kingdoms ruled by different dynasties. The Turks took over Baghdad, the old capital, and the Fatimid dynasty took over Egypt. There were small Islamic kingdoms in West Africa, and along the East African coast Indian and Arab traders brought the Islamic faith.**

**The First Crusade was launched in 1096, where the French, English, and Germans united to try to capture Jerusalem and the Mediterranean coast from the weaker Arabs. This first Crusade was a great success, and the Crusaders established a kingdom along the coast.**

**Further Crusades after the first were much less successful, because the Arabs had gotten themselves together to fight back. By 1200 AD the Europeans had lost most of their territory along the Mediterranean coast (this is the time of Robin Hood).**

**At the same time, the Europeans were busy fighting wars at home against each other. England and France fought throughout the 1100's, 1200's and 1300's over which would control western France. The city-states in Italy fought with each other and with Germany. During the 1300's, several waves of bubonic plague swept through Europe, carrying off 30 to 50 percent of regional populations.**

**By the 1400's, however, Europe was recovering from the wars and from the plague. There was a civil war in England, but elsewhere the Renaissance was beginning. ----------------**

**From** [**http://www.factmonster.com/ce6/world/A0860804.html**](http://www.factmonster.com/ce6/world/A0860804.html)

**The history of Rome in the Middle Ages, bewildering in its detail, is essentially that of two institutions, the papacy and the commune of Rome. In the 5th century the Goths ruled Italy from Ravenna, their capital. Odoacer and Theodoric the Great kept the old administration of Rome under Roman law, with Roman officials. The city, whose population was to remain less than 50,000 throughout the Middle Ages, suffered severely from the wars between the Goths and Byzantines. In 552, Narses conquered Rome for Byzantium and became the first of the exarchs (viceroys) who ruled Italy from Ravenna. Under Byzantine rule commerce declined, and the senate and consuls disappeared.**

**Pope Gregory I (590–604), one of the greatest Roman leaders of all time, began to emancipate Rome from the exarchs. Sustained by the people, the popes soon exercised greater power in Rome than did the imperial governors, and many secular buildings were converted into churches. The papal elections were, for the next 12 centuries, the main events in Roman history. Two other far-reaching developments (7th–8th century) were the division of the people into four classes (clergy, nobility, soldiers, and the lowest class) and the emergence of the Papal States.**

**The coronation (800) at Rome of Charlemagne as emperor of the West ended all question of Byzantine suzerainty over Rome, but it also inaugurated an era characterized by the ambiguous relationship between the emperors and the popes. That era was punctuated by visits to the city by the German kings, to be crowned emperor or to secure the election of a pope to their liking or to impose their will on the pope. In 846, Rome was sacked by the Arabs; the Leonine walls were built to protect the city, but they did not prevent the frequent occupations and plunderings of the city by Christian powers.**

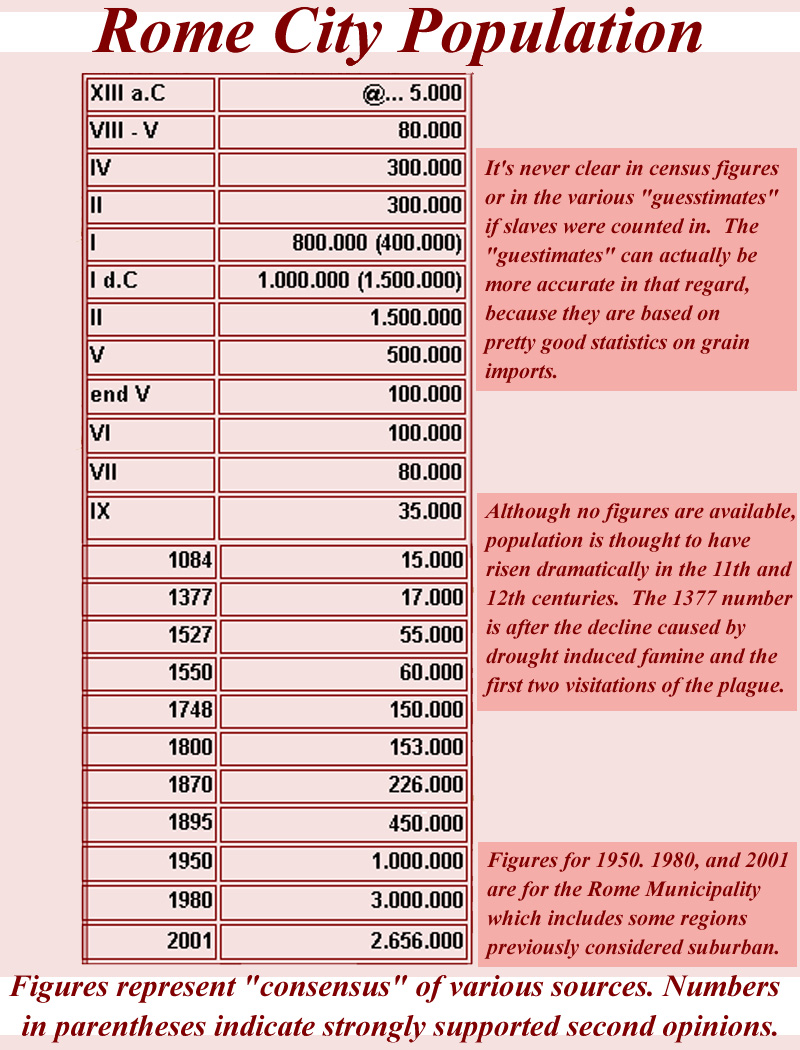
**By the 10th century, Rome and the papacy had reached their lowest point. Papal elections, originally exercised by the citizens of Rome, had come under the control of the great noble families, among whom the Frangipani and Pierleone families and later the Orsini and the Colonna were the most powerful. Each of these would rather have torn Rome apart than allowed the other families to gain undue influence. They built fortresses in the city (often improvised transformations of the ancient palaces and theaters) and ruled Rome from them.**

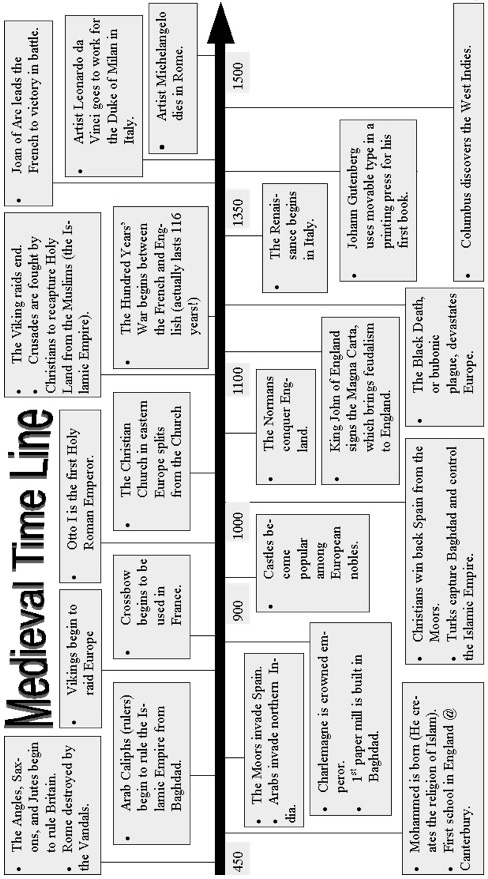
**From 932 to 954, Alberic, a very able man, governed Rome firmly and restored its self-respect, but after his death and after the proceedings that accompanied the coronation of Otto I as emperor, Rome relapsed into chaos. The papal dignity once more became the pawn of the emperors and of local feudatories. Contending factions often elected several popes at once. Gregory VII reformed these abuses and strongly claimed the supremacy of the church over the municipality, but he himself ended as an exile, Emperor Henry IV having taken Rome in 1084. The Normans under Robert Guiscard came to rescue Gregory and thoroughly sacked the city on the same occasion (1084).**

**Papal authority was challenged in the 12th century by the communal movement. A commune was set up (1144–55), led by Arnold of Brescia, but it was subdued by the intervention of Emperor Frederick I. Finally, a republic under papal patronage was established, headed by an elected senator. However, civil strife continued between popular and aristocratic factions and between Guelphs and Ghibellines. The commune made war to subdue neighboring cities, for it pretended to rule over the Papal States, particularly the duchy of Rome, which included Latium and parts of Tuscany. Innocent III controlled the government of the city, but it regained its autonomy after the accession of Emperor Frederick II. Later in the 13th century, foreign senators began to be chosen; among them were Brancaleone degli Andalò (1252–58) and Charles I of Naples.**

**During the “Babylonian captivity” of the popes at Avignon (1309–78) Rome was desolate, economically ruined, and in constant turmoil. Cola di Rienzi became the champion of the people and tried to revive the ancient Roman institutions, as envisaged also by Petrarch and Dante; in 1347 he was made tribune, but his dreams were doomed. Cardinal Albornoz temporarily restored the papal authority over Rome, but the Great Schism (1378–1417) intervened. Once more a republic was set up. In 1420, Martin V returned to Rome, and with him began the true and effective dominion of the popes in Rome.**

***From The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia***

****

****

**Rome Chron , derived from** [**http://roma.katolsk.n****o/chr****onology.ht****m**](http://roma.katolsk.no/chronology.htm)

**Octavian through the medieval period -- 31 BC to 1500 AD**

**31 BC**

Octavian (from 27 BC known as Augustus) defeated Marc Anthony at Actium, and gained control of the Roman empire.

**AD 61**

Sts. Peter and Paul worked in Rome.

**AD 64**

Nero ruling. Rome burnt. Christians were blamed, leading to persecutions.

**AD 64 or 67**

St Peter the Apostle martyred. Paul martyred about the same time.

**AD 95**

Member of the imperial family and Manius Acilius Glabrio, consul in AD 91, were tried and sentenced for the Christian faith. This is the first recorded example of converts among persons in prominent positions in Roman society.

**AD 97-105**

During the pontificate of St Evaristus, priests were assigned to the *tituli*, effectively making them the first parish churches of Rome.

**c. AD 100**

During the reign of Emperor Trajan (98-117). Rome had 1.000.000 inhabitants.

**AD 253**

Rome first divided in an Eastern and a Western empire.

**AD 258**

The first celebration of the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul on 29 June is recorded in this year.

**AD 273**

The Aurelian Wall built.

**AD 293**

Diocletian introduced tetrarchy, a system were four emperors ruled together. The division between the East and West was formalized.

**AD 303**

The Diocletian persecution of Christians started.

**AD 305**

The Baths of Diocletian completed. Many of the workers were Christian slaves. Parts of the baths are now the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli.

**AD 308-309**

Pope St Marcellus defined the liturgical functions of the *tituli*. They had already functioned as parish churches for two centuries (see 97-105); with St Marcellus' decision this status was formalized.

**AD 312**

Constantine won the Battle at the Milvian Bridge in Rome, and became sole ruler of the Roman Empire. He most likely converted to Christianity at this time, although due to a common baptismal practice in his time he held off baptism until he was on his deathbed.

**AD 313**

The Decree of Tolerance issued by Constantine and Licinius, granting Christians the right to practice their religion. Pagan rituals were not yet banned in the Empire.

**AD 326**

The first San Pietro in Vaticano consecrated.

**AD 330**

Emperor Constantine moved the capitol of the Roman empire to Constantinople. The division of the empire was now beyond repair. Building projects were carried out under Constantine, among them the first Christian basilicas. After the death of Constantine, a long time passed before major public buildings were erected in the city, and it gradually fell into decay.

**AD 356**

Santa Maria Maggiore founded according to legend. It may have been built somewhat later.

**AD 361-363**

The reign of Emperor Julian the Apostate. Julian was the last Roman emperor who instigated persecutions of Christians.

**AD 391/2**

Emperor Theodosius banned all pagan cults and closed the temples.

**AD 402**

The seat of the Western Emperor moved to Ravenna by Emperor Honorius.

**AD 408**

Visigoths led by Alaric reached the gates of Rome. Pope Innocent I acted as the city's representative in the negotiations.

Ravenna became the capital of the Western empire.

**AD 419**

The first imperial intervention in a papal election occurred when Emperor Honorius supported Pope St Boniface against the Antipope Eulalius.

**AD 451**

Attila the Hun reached Rome. Pope Leo I struck a deal with him and saved the city.

**AD 455**

Rome attacked by Vandals under Geiseric.

**AD 472**

Ricimer of the Suevi captured Rome.

**AD 476**

The fall of the Western Empire. The last emperor in Rome, Romulus Augustulus, was forced to abdicate and was exiled. Odoacer became the first Barbarian king of Italy.

**AD 483**

To prevent disputed arising from papal elections, Pope Simplicius was aided by Odoacer, the Herulian King of Italy, in establishing a law regulating the elections.

**AD 493**

Acting on orders from the Byzantine Emperor Zeno, Theodoric overthrew Odoacer and ruled as King of Italy and from 493 as King of the Romans.

**AD 499**

A synod was held in Rome. Among the preserved documents is a list of churches.

**AD 536**

The Byzantine General Belisarius, sent by Emperor Justinian, saved Rome from the Goths.

**AD 537**

Vitigis the Goth cut the aqueducts during a siege of Rome. They reached the Castel St'Angelo, but was repelled by the Romans under Belisarius' leadership.

**AD 540**

Emperor Justinian initiated the last building program before the Middle Ages.

**AD 547**

Totila the Goth took Rome while Belisarius was in Constantinople. Belisarius was sent back to Rome, and recaptured the city.

The population of Rome had fallen to about 30.000.

**AD 550**

Totila the Goth took Rome for the second time.

**AD 552**

The Byzantine General Narses re-captured Rome from Totila.

**AD 589**

Severe flooding of the Tiber destroyed houses, churches and granaries. The flood was followed by plague, which killed Pope Pelagius II in 590.

**AD 590**

St Gregory the Great elected as Pope. By 593, he had established peace with the Lombards and appointed his own governors in several Italian provincial cities. This was the basis of the temporal power of the Popes in the Middle Ages.

**AD 607**

The Byzantine Emperor Phocas recognized the Roman pontiff's primacy over all Churches.

**AD 663**

The Byzantine Emperor Constans II spent 12 days in Rome, during which he stripped a number of public buildings and churches of bronze and other metals which he shipped to Constantinople.

**AD 725**

Rome's first hostel for pilgrims founded by King Ine of Wessex.

Emperor Leo III instigated iconoclasm in the East. Refugees from the iconoclast persecutions in the East had already been coming to Rome for some time, and now their number increased. Many of them settled in the area around Santa Maria in Cosmedin, also known as Santa Maria in Schola Graeca.

**AD 729**

Rome besieged by Lieutprand, who had entered a temporary alliance with the Exarch of Ravenna. The siege was broken by Pope Gregory II, and Lieutprand was forced to offer his arms and armour at the Tomb of the Apostle.

**AD 754**

King Pippin the Short defeated the Lombards and bequeathed territories in Ravenna and Rome to the Church.

**AD 800**

Charlemagne crowned at San Pietro in Vaticano.

**AD 846**

The suburbs of Rome attacked by Saracen raiders. San Pietro in Vaticano was desecrated. To protect it from further attacks, Pope St Leo IV built walls around the Vatican, which came to be known as 'the Leonine City'.

**AD 849**

A papal fleet defeated the Saracens off Ostia.

**AD 852**

The Leonine Walls completed.

**AD 975**

Pope Benedict VII assigned SS Quattro Coronati as a titular church to Dietrich of Trier; this is the first time a non-Italian became a titular priest.

**1054**

Schism between the Eastern Churches and the Roman Church.

**1073**

Gregory VII elected Pope. Emperor Henry IV contested the election, and the Pope excommunicated the Emperor who was forced to humble himself at Canossa in January 1077. The Investiture Contest continued to cause problems for a while longer.

**1083**

Emperor Henry IV occupied Rome.

**1084**

Rome attacked by Normans. Emperor Henry IV was imprisoned at the Castel Sant'Angelo.

**1140**

A war between Rome and Tivoli ended in Roman victory. Pope Innocent II refused to let the Romans destroy the town, and rebellion broke out in Rome. The Senate was revived (1144) under the leadership of Arnoldo da Brescia, and Rome was declared independent of the Papacy.

**1145**

Pope Lucius II led an attack on the Capitol in an attempt to end the rebellion that had started in 1140. He died of the wounds he received in the charge.

**1148**

Pope Eugenius III excommunicated the rebel leader Arnold of Brescia, who was later executed by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. The Senate now has 25 senators, which dropped to 15 in 1150-51.

**c. 1150**

The Cosmati family developed a new mosaic style, used in many of Rome's churches.

**1163**

For the first time, a cardinal was allowed to return to his diocese outside Rome when Pope Alexander III let Conrad of Wittelsbach, Archbishop of Mainz, return to his see.

**1179**

The 3rd Lateran Council held.

**1187**

The reconstructed Senate had 56 senators, 4 from each of the 14 districts of Rome.

**1198**

The Senate had only 1 senator. A few years later, a treaty declared that there were to be 56 senators. The system soon collapsed, and in 1205 there was only 1 senator left.

**1200**

Rome has a population of about 35.000.

**1215**

The 4th Lateran Council summoned by Pope Innocent III.

**1300**

The first Holy Year proclaimed by Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303). Among the approximately 200.000 pilgrims who came to Rome were Dante, Cimabue, Giotto and Charles de Valois, brother of the King of France. Dante mentions the events in Canticle XXXI of *Paradise* in his *Divine Comedy*.

**1302**

Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303) issued the bull *Unam sanctam*, proclaiming the supremacy of the papacy over secular authority.

**1303**

The University of Rome, Università della Sapienza, established by Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303).

**1309**

Pope Clement V transferred the papacy to Avignon, France. This was done mainly because of the civic unrest and national crisis in Rome at the time. It remained there until 1377.

**c. 1320**

A list from about this year says that there were 414 churches in Rome. They were all in various states of disrepair, and 43 had no clergy permanently attached to them. 261 parish churches needed 1 or 2 priests for their support.

**1341**

One of the most damaging floods of the Tiber came this year.

**1347**

Cola di Rienzo proclaimed himself Liberator of the Holy Roman Republic and Tribune of the People.

**1348**

The Black Death struck Rome. An earthquake caused severe damage; the façade of San Giovanni in Laterano collapsed and San Pietro in Vaticano was damaged.

**1350**

Celebration of Holy Year. A visit to San Giovanni in Laterano is recommended in addition to visits to San Pietro in Vaticano and San Paolo fuori le mura .

**1354**

Cola di Rienzo returned to Rome after two years in exile. In October, he was killed by a mob.

**1377**

Gregory XI returned the papacy from Avignon to Rome.

**1378**

The Great Schism begins, with one pope in Rome and one in Avignon.

**1383**

An extra ordinary Holy Year is proclaimed by Pope Urban VI.

From 1383 to 1388 a plague decimated the population of Rome.

**1390**

Celebration of Holy Year. Privileges were extended to cathedrals outside Rome, and Santa Maria Maggiore was added to the list of churches in Rome where indulgences could be obtained.

The plague returned with the pilgrims.

**1400**

Rome had a population of about 17.000, only half of what it had in 1200.

A Holy Year was celebrated. About 120.000 pilgrims came to Rome. The plague also returned, and claimed up to 800 victims each day.

**1417**

Under Pope Martin V, the Great Schism that began in 1378 ended.

**1420**

Pope Martin V reestablished Papal authority in Rome.

**1422**

New outbreak of the plague, and great flooding of the Tiber.

**1423**

Celebration of Holy Year.

**1450**

Celebration of Holy Year.

**1452**

The demolition of the old Basilica of St Peter began.

**1453**

Constantinople was lost to the Turks. This marks the end of the Byzantine Empire.

**1462**

Pope Pius II (1458-1464) issued the bull *Cim almam nostram urbem*, promoting the protection of ancient buildings.

**1470**

Pope Paul II changed the frequency of Holy Years to every 25 years, and set the opening date to Christmas Eve.

**1475**

The Vatican Library inaugurated by Pope Sixtus IV.

**1500**

Celebration of Holy Year. This was the first time all the four Holy Doors were opened and closed at the same time.

**Edward Gibbon: General Observations on the Fall of the Roman Empire in the West**



**from *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Chapter 38**

**The Greeks, after their country had been reduced into a province, imputed the triumphs of Rome, not to the merit, but to the FORTUNE, of the republic. The inconstant goddess, who so blindly distributes and resumes her favours, had now consented (such was the language of envious flattery) to resign her wings, to descend from her globe, and to fix her firm and immutable throne on the banks of the Tiber.[1] A wiser Greek, who has composed, with a philosophic spirit, the memorable history of his own times, deprived his countrymen of this vain and delusive comfort by opening to their view the deep foundations of the greatness of Rome.[2] The fidelity of the citizens to each other, and to the state, was confirmed by the habits of education and the prejudices of religion. Honour, as well as virtue, was the principle of the republic; the ambitious citizens laboured to deserve the solemn glories of a triumph; and the ardour of the Roman youth was kindled into active emulation, as often as they beheld the domestic images of their ancestors.[3] The temperate struggles of the patricians and plebeians had finally established the firm and equal balance of the constitution; which united the freedom of popular assemblies with the authority and wisdom of a senate-and the executive powers of a regal magistrate. When the consul displayed the standard of the republic, each citizen bound himself, by the obligation of an oath, to draw his sword in the cause of his country, till he had discharged the sacred duty by a military service of ten years. This wise institution continually poured into the field the rising generations of freemen and soldiers; and their numbers were reinforced by the warlike and populous states of Italy, who, after a brave resistance, had yielded to the valour, and embraced the alliance, of the Romans. The sage historian, who excited the virtue of the younger Scipio and beheld the ruin of Carthage,[4] has accurately described their military system; their levies, arms, exercises, subordination, marches, encampments; and the invincible legion, superior in active strength to the Macedonian phalanx of Philip and Alexander. From these institutions of peace and war, Polybius has deduced the spirit and success of a people incapable of fear and impatient of repose. The ambitious design of conquest, which might have been defeated by the seasonable conspiracy of mankind, was attempted and achieved; and the perpetual violation of justice was maintained by the political virtues of prudence and courage. The arms of the republic, sometimes vanquished in battle, always victorious in war, advanced with rapid steps to the Euphrates, the Danube, the Rhine, and the Ocean; and the images of gold, or silver, or brass, that might serve to represent the nations and their kings, were successively broken by the iron monarchy of Rome.[5]**

**The rise of a city, which swelled into an Empire, may deserve, as a singular prodigy, the reflection of a philosophic mind. But the decline of Rome was the natural and inevitable effect of immoderate greatness. Prosperity ripened the principle of decay; the causes of destruction multiplied with the extent of conquest; and, as soon as time or accident had removed the artificial supports, the stupendous fabric yielded to the pressure of its own weight. The story of its ruin is simple and obvious; and, instead of inquiring why the Roman empire was destroyed, we should rather be surprised that it had subsisted so long. The victorious legions, who, in distant wars, acquired the vices of strangers and mercenaries, first oppressed the freedom of the republic, and afterwards violated the majesty of the purple. The emperors, anxious for their personal safety and the public peace, were reduced to the base expedient of corrupting the discipline which rendered them alike formidable to their sovereign and to the enemy; the vigour of the military government was relaxed, and finally dissolved, by the partial institutions of Constantine; and the Roman world was overwhelmed by a deluge of Barbarians.**

**The decay of Rome has been frequently ascribed to the translation of the seat of empire; but this history has already shewn that the powers of government were divided rather than removed. The throne of Constantinople was erected in the East; while the West was still possessed by a series of emperors who held their residence in Italy and claimed their equal inheritance of the legions and provinces. This dangerous novelty impaired the strength, and fomented the vices, of a double reign; the instruments of an oppressive and arbitrary system were multiplied; and a vain emulation of luxury, not of merit, was introduced and supported between the degenerate successors of Theodosius. Extreme distress, which unites the virtue of a free people, embitters the factions of a declining monarchy. The hostile favourites of Arcadius and Honorius betrayed the republic to its common enemies; and the Byzantine court beheld with indifference, perhaps with pleasure, the disgrace of Rome, the misfortunes of Italy, and the loss of the West. Under the succeeding reigns, the alliance of the two empires was restored; but the aid of the Oriental Romans was tardy, doubtful, and ineffectual; and the national schism of the Greeks and Latins was enlarged by the perpetual difference of language and manners, of interest, and even of religion. Yet the salutary event approved in some measure the judgment of Constantine. During a long period of decay, his impregnable city repelled the victorious armies of Barbarians, protected the wealth of Asia, and commanded, both in peace and war, the important straits which connect the Euxine and Mediterranean seas. The foundation of Constantinople more essentially contributed to the preservation of the East than to the ruin of the West.**

**As the happiness of a future life is the great object of religion, we may hear, without surprise or scandal, that the introduction, or at least the abuse, of Christianity had some influence on the decline and fall of the Roman empire. The clergy successfully preached the doctrines of patience and pusillanimity; the active virtues of society were discouraged; and the last remains of the military spirit were buried in the cloister; a large portion of public and private wealth was consecrated to the specious demands of charity and devotion; and the soldiers' pay was lavished on the useless multitudes of both sexes, who could only plead the merits of abstinence and chastity. Faith, zeal, curiosity, and the more earthly passions of malice and ambition kindled the flame of theological discord; the church, and even the state, were distracted by religious factions, whose conflicts were sometimes bloody, and always implacable; the attention of the emperors was diverted from camps to synods; the Roman world was oppressed by a new species of tyranny; and the persecuted sects became the secret enemies of their country. Yet party-spirit, however pernicious or absurd, is a principle of union as well as of dissension. The bishops, from eighteen hundred pulpits, inculcated the duty of passive obedience to a lawful and orthodox sovereign; their frequent assemblies, and perpetual correspondence, maintained the communion of distant churches: and the benevolent temper of the gospel was strengthened, though confined, by the spiritual alliance of the Catholics. The sacred indolence of the monks was devoutly embraced by a servile and effeminate age; but, if superstition had not afforded a decent retreat, the same vices would have tempted the unworthy Romans to desert, from baser motives, the standard of the republic. Religious precepts are easily obeyed, which indulge and sanctify the natural inclinations of their votaries; but the pure and genuine influence of Christianity may be traced in its beneficial, though imperfect, effects on the Barbarian proselytes of the North. If the decline of the Roman empire was hastened by the conversion of Constantine, his victorious religion broke the violence of the fall, and mollified the ferocious temper of the conquerors.**

**This awful revolution may be usefully applied to the instruction of the present age. It is the duty of a patriot to prefer and promote the exclusive interest and glory of his native country; but a philosopher may be permitted to enlarge his views, and to consider Europe as one great republic, whose various inhabitants have attained almost the same level of politeness and cultivation. The balance of power will continue to fluctuate, and the prosperity of our own or the neighbouring kingdoms may be alternately exalted or depressed; but these partial events cannot essentially injure our general state of happiness, the system of arts, and laws,and manners, which so advantageously distinguish, above the rest of mankind, the Europeans and their colonies. The savage nations of the globe are the common enemies of civilized society; and we may inquire with anxious curiosity, whether Europe is still threatened with a repetition of those calamities which formerly oppressed the arms and institutions of Rome. Perhaps the same**

**reflections will illustrate the fall of that mighty empire, and explain the probable causes of our actual security.**

**I. The Romans were ignorant of the extent of their danger, and the number of their enemies. Beyond the Rhine and Danube, the northern countries of Europe and Asia were filled with innumerable tribes of hunters and shepherds, poor, voracious, and turbulent; bold in arms, and impatient to ravish the fruits of industry. The Barbarian world was agitated by the rapid impulse of war; and the peace of Gaul or Italy was shaken by the distant revolutions of China. The Huns, who fled before a victorious enemy, directed their march towards the West; and the torrent was swelled by the gradual accession of captives and allies. The flying tribes who yielded to the Huns assumed in their turn the spirit of conquest; the endless column of Barbarians pressed on the Roman empire with accumulated weight; and, if the foremost were destroyed, the vacant space was instantly replenished by new assailants. Such formidable emigrations can no longer issue from the North; and the long repose, which has been imputed to the decrease of population, is the happy consequence of the progress of arts and agriculture. Instead of some rude villages, thinly scattered among its woods and morasses, Germany now produces a list of two thousand three hundred walled towns; the Christian kingdoms of Denmark, Sweden, and Poland, have been successively established; and the Hanse merchants, with the Teutonic knights, have extended their colonies along the coast of the Baltic, as far as the Gulf of Finland. From the Gulf of Finland to the Eastern Ocean, Russia now assumes the form of a powerful and civilized empire. The plough, the loom, and the forge, are introduced on the banks of the Volga, the Oby, and the Lena; and the fiercest of the Tartar hordes have been taught to tremble and obey. The reign of independent Barbarism is now contracted to a narrow span; and the remnant of Calmucks or Uzbecks, whose forces may be almost numbered, cannot seriously excite the apprehensions of the great republic of Europe.[6] Yet this apparent security should not tempt us to forget that new enemies, and unknown dangers, may possibly arise from some obscure people, scarcely visible in the map of the world. The Arabs or Saracens, who spread their conquests from India to Spain, had languished in poverty and contempt, till Mahomet breathed into those savage bodies the soul of enthusiasm.**

**II. The empire of Rome was firmly established by the singular and perfect coalition of its members. The subject nations, resigning the hope, and even the wish, of independence, embraced the character of Roman citizens; and the provinces of the West were reluctantly torn by the Barbarians from the bosom of their mother-country.[7] But this union was purchased by the loss of national freedom and military spirit; and the servile provinces, destitute of life and motion, expected their safety from the mercenary troops and governors, who were directed by the orders of a distant court. The happiness of an hundred millions depended on the personal merit of one or two men, perhaps children, whose minds were corrupted by education, luxury, and despotic power. The deepest wounds were inflicted on the empire during the minorities of the sons and grandsons of Theodosius; and, after those incapable princes seemed to attain the age of manhood, they abandoned the church to the bishops, the state to the eunuchs, and the provinces to the Barbarians. Europe is now divided into twelve powerful, though unequal, kingdoms, three respectable commonwealths, and a variety of smaller, though independent, states; the chances of royal and ministerial talents are multiplied, at least with the number of its rulers; and a Julian, or Semiramis, may reign in the North, while Arcadius and Honorius again slumber on the thrones of the South.[7a] The abuses of tyranny are restrained by the mutual influence of fear and shame; republics have acquired order and stability; monarchies have imbibed the principles of freedom, or, at least, of moderation; and some sense of honour and justice is introduced into the most defective constitutions by the general manners of the times. In peace, the progress of knowledge and industry is accelerated by the emulation of so many active rivals: in war, the European forces are exercised by temperate and undecisive contests. If a savage conqueror should issue from the deserts of Tartary, he must repeatedly vanquish the robust peasants of Russia, the numerous armies of Germany, the gallant nobles of France, and the intrepid freemen of Britain; who, perhaps, might confederate for their common defence. Should the victorious Barbarians carry slavery and desolation as far as the Atlantic Ocean, ten thousand vessels would transport beyond their pursuit the remains of civilized society; and Europe would revive and flourish in the American world which is already filled with her colonies and institutions.[8]**

**III. Cold, poverty, and a life of danger and fatigue, fortify the strength and courage of Barbarians. In every age they have oppressed the polite and peaceful nations of China, India, and Persia, who neglected, and still neglect, to counterbalance these natural powers by the resources of military art. The warlike states of antiquity, Greece, Macedonia, and Rome, educated a race of soldiers; exercised their bodies, disciplined their courage, multiplied their forces by regular evolutions, and converted the iron which they possessed into strong and serviceable weapons. But this superiority insensibly declined with their laws and manners; and the feeble policy of Constantine and his successors armed and instructed, for the ruin of the empire, the rude valour of the Barbarian mercenaries. The military art has been changed by the invention of gunpowder; which enables man to command the two most powerful agents of nature, air and fire. Mathematics, chymistry, mechanics, architecture, have been applied to the service of war; and the adverse parties oppose to each other the most elaborate modes of attack and of defence. Historians may indignantly observe that the preparations of a siege would found and maintain a flourishing colony;[9] yet we cannot be displeased that the subversion of a city should be a work of cost and difficulty, or that an industrious people should be protected by those arts, which survive and supply the decay of military virtue. Cannon and fortifications now form an impregnable barrier against the Tartar horse; and Europe is secure from any future irruption of Barbarians; since, before they can conquer, they must cease to be barbarous. Their gradual advances in the science of war would always be accompanied, as we may learn from the example of Russia, with a proportionable improvement in the arts of peace and civil policy; and they themselves must deserve a place among the polished nations whom they subdue.**

**Should these speculations be found doubtful or fallacious, there still remains a more humble source of comfort and hope. The discoveries of ancient and modern navigators, and the domestic history, or tradition, of the most enlightened nations, represent the human savage, naked both in mind and body, and destitute of laws, of arts, of ideas, and almost of language.[10] From this abject condition, perhaps the primitive and universal state of man, he has gradually arisen to command the animals, to fertilise the earth, to traverse the ocean, and to measure the heavens. His progress in the improvement and exercise of his mental and corporeal faculties[11] has been irregular and various, infinitely slow in the beginning, and increasing by degrees with redoubled velocity; ages of laborious ascent have been followed by a moment of rapid downfall; and the several climates of the globe have felt the vicissitudes of light and darkness. Yet the experience of four thousand years should enlarge our hopes, and diminish our apprehensions; we cannot determine to what height the human species may aspire in their advances towards perfection; but it may safely be presumed that no people, unless the face of nature is changed, will relapse into their original barbarism. The improvements of society may be viewed under a threefold aspect. 1. The poet or philosopher illustrates his age and country by the efforts of a single mind; but these superior powers of reason or fancy are rare and spontaneous productions, and the genius of Homer, or Cicero, or Newton, would excite less admiration, if they could be created by the will of a prince or the lessons of a preceptor. 2. The benefits of law and policy, of trade and manufactures, of arts and sciences, are more solid and permanent; and many individuals may be qualified, by education and discipline, to promote, in their respective stations, the interest of the community. But this general order is the effect of skill and labour; and the complex machinery may be decayed by time or injured by violence. 3. Fortunately for mankind, the more useful, or, at least, more necessary arts can be performed without superior talents, or national subordination; without the powers of one or the union of many. Each village, each family, each individual, must always possess both ability and inclination to perpetuate the use of fire[12] and of metals; the propagation and service of domestic animals; the methods of hunting and fishing; the rudiments of navigation; the imperfect cultivation of corn or other nutritive grain; and the simple practice of the mechanic trades. Private genius and public industry may be extirpated; but these hardy plants survive the tempest, and strike an everlasting root into the most unfavourable soil. The splendid days of Augustus and Trajan were eclipsed by a cloud of ignorance; and the Barbarians subverted the laws and palaces of Rome. But the scythe, the invention or emblem of Saturn,[13] still continued annually to mow the harvests of Italy: and the human feasts of the Laestrygons[14] have never been renewed on the coast of Campania.**

**Since the first discovery of the arts, war, commerce, and religious zeal have diffused, among the savages of the Old and New World, those inestimable gifts: they have been successively propagated; they can never be lost. We may therefore acquiesce in the pleasing conclusion that every age of the world has increased, and still increases, the real wealth, the happiness, the knowledge, and perhaps the virtue, of the human race.[15]**

**NOTES**

**[[1]] Such are the figurative expressions of Plutarch (Opera, tom. ii. p. 318, edit. Wechel), to whom, on the faith of his son Lamprias (Fabricius, Bibliot. Graec. tom. iii. p. 341), I shall boldly impute the malicious declamation, PERI\ TH=S P(WMAI/WN TU/XHS. The same opinions had prevailed among the Greeks two hundred and fifty years before Plutarch; and to confute them is the professed intention of Polybius (Hist. 1. i. p. 90, edit. Gronov. Amstel. 1670 [c. 63]).**

**[[2]] See the inestimable remains of the sixth book of Polybius, and many other parts of his general history, particularly a digression in the seventeenth [leg. eighteenth] book, in which he compares: the phalanx and the legion [c. 12-15].**

**[[3]] Sallust, de Bell. Jugurthin. c. 4. Such were the generous professions of P. Scipio and Q. Maximus. The Latin historian had read, and most probably transcribed, Polybius, their contemporary and friend.**

**[[4]] While Carthage was in flames, Scipio repeated two lines of the Iliad, which express the destruction of Troy, acknowledging to Polybius, his friend and preceptor (Polyb. in Excerpt. de Virtut. et Vit. tom. ii. p. 1466-1465 [xxxix. 3]), that, while he recollected the vicissitudes of human affairs, he inwardly applied them to the future calamities of Rome (Appian. in Libycis, p. 136, edit. Toll. [Punica, c. 82]).**

**[[5]] See Daniel, ii. 31-40. "And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron; forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces, and subdueth all things." The remainder of the prophecy (the mixture of iron and clay) was accomplished, according to St. Jerom, in his own time. Sicut enim in principio nihil Romano Imperio fortius et durius, ita in fine rerum nihil imbecillius: quum et in bellis civilibus et adversus diversas nationes aliarum gentium barbararum auxilio indigemus (Opera, tom. v. p. 572).**

**[[6]] The French and English editors of the Genealogical History of the Tartars have subjoined a curious, though imperfect description of their present state. We might question the independence of the Caimucks, or Eluths, since they have been recently vanquished by the Chinese, who, in the year 1759, subdued the lesser Bucharia, and advanced into the country of Badakshan, near the sources of the Oxus (Mémoires sur les Chinois, tom. i. p. 325-400). But these conquests are precarious, nor will I venture to ensure the safety of the Chinese empire.**

**[[7]] The prudent reader will determine how far this general proposition is weakened by the revolt of the Isaurians, the independence of Britain and Armorica, the Moorish tribes, or the Bagaudae of Gaul and Spain (vol. i. p. 280, vol. iii. p. 362, 402, 480).**

**[[7a]] In the first edition this text read "... thrones of the House of Bourbon". In his Autobiography (I follow now a note of J.B. Bury), Gibbon adds a note: "It may not be generally known that Louis XVI. is a great reader, and a reader of English books. On the perusal of a passage of my History (vol. iii p. 636), which seems to compare him with Arcadius or Honorius, he expressed his resentment to the Prince of B-------, from whom the intelligence was conveyed to me. I shall neither disclaim the allusion nor examine the likeness; but the situation of the late King of France excludes all suspicion of flattery, and I am ready to declare that the concluding observations of my third Volume were written before his accession to the throne."**

**[[8]] America now contains about six millions of European blood and descent, and their numbers, at least in the North, are continually increasing. Whatever may be the changes of their political situation, they must preserve the manners of Europe; and we may reflect with some pleasure that the English language will probably be diffused over an immense and populous continent.**

**[[9]] On avoit fait venir (for the siege of Turin) 140 pièces de canon; et il est à remarquer que chaque gros canon monté revient a environ 2000 écus; il y avoit 110,000 boulets; 106,000 cartouches d'une façon, et 300,000 d'une autre; 21,000 bombes; 27,700 grenades, 15,000 sacs à terre, 30,000 instruments pour le pionnage 1,200,000 livres de poudre. Ajoutez à ces munitions, le plomb, le fer, et le fer blanc, les cordages, tout ce qui sert aux mineurs, le souphre, le salpêtre, les outils de toute espèce. Il est certain que les frais de tous ces práparatifs de destruction suffiroient pour fonder et pour faire fleurir la plus nombreuse colonie. Voltaire, Siècle de Louis XIV. c. xx. in his Works, tom. xi. p. 391. [[10]] It would be an easy though tedious task to produce the authorities of poets, philosophers, and historians. I shall therefore content myself with appealing to the decisive and authentic testimony of Diodorus Siculus (tom. i. 1. i. p. 11,12 [c. 8], 1. iii. p. 184, &c. [c. 14, 15], edit. Wesseling). The Ichthyophagi, who in his time wandered along the shores of the Red Sea, can only be compared to the natives of New Holland (Dampier's Voyages, vol. i. p. 464-469). Fancy or perhaps reason may still suppose an extreme and absolute state of nature far below the level of these savages, who had acquired some arts and instruments.**

**[[11]] See the learned and rational work of the President Goguet, de l'Origine des Loix, des Arts, et des sciences. He traces from facts or conjectures (tom. i. p. 147-337, edit. 12mo) the first and most difficult steps of human invention.**

**[[12]] It is certain, however strange, that many nations have been ignorant of the use of fire. Even the ingenious natives of Otaheite, who are destitute of metals, have not invented any earthen vessels capable of sustaining the action of fire and of communicating the heat to the liquids which they contain.**

**[[13]] Plutarch. Quest. Rom. in tom. ii. p. 275. Macrob. Saturnal. 1. i. c. 8, p. 152 edit. London. The arrival of Saturn (or his religious worship) in a ship may indicate that the savage coast of Latium was first discovered and civilised by the Phoenicians.**

**[[14]] In the ninth and tenth books of the Odyssey, Homer has embellished the tales of fearful and credulous sailors, who transformed the cannibals of Italy and Sicily into monstrous giants.**

**[[15]] The merit of discovery has too often been stained with avarice, cruelty, and fanaticism, and the intercourse of nations has produced the communication of disease and prejudice. A singular exception is due to the virtue of our own times and country. The five great voyages successively undertaken by the command of his present Majesty were inspired by the pure and generous love of science and of mankind. The same prince, adapting his benefactions to the different stages of society, has founded a school of painting in his capital, and has introduced into the islands of the South Sea the vegetables and animals most useful to human life.**

**Source:**

**Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Chapter 38**

**------------------------------------------------------------------------**

**Internet Medieval Source Book, on the Internet at** <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/gibbon-fall.html>

**Indonesia and the Fall of Rome**

**In 416 AD a volcanic Island, 40 kilometers off the west coast of Java in the Sunda Strait, experienced a "phreatomagmatic event". Seawater entered a cracking magma dome and vaporized immediately. The steam blast may have been the most violent explosion in recorded history -- and, yes, that includes the nuclear tests of the 20th century. The Earth's atmosphere filled with dust, and the average worldwide temperature dropped several degrees for several years. Another cataclysmic explosion, apparently almost as large as the 416 event and with the same kind of temperature-altering dust cloud, occurred in 535.**

**After the explosions, a new and much smaller island rose in the center of the remains of the island. That new island blew up on August 26 1883 and that was the largest natural explosion in modern history. The new island had, in the meantime, been named Krakatoa. Krakatoa, still active today, is one of the volcanoes of the Sunda volcanic arc. The volcanoes were formed by the subduction of the Indian-Australia Plate under the Eurasian Plate.**

**Records from around the Krakatoa area say that the 416 explosion was much the larger, and it had the greater impact on Rome. The scene shifts to the steppes of Central Asia.**

**Mongolia and parts of Siberia were dominated at the time by the Avars. Chinese chronicles described the Avars as a disgusting people who never washed and who cleaned their plates by having their womenfolk lick them dry. But the Chinese also said the Avars were a superb mounted fighting force who troubled the Chinese for more than 200 years. They are believed to have been the inventors of stirrup and other sophisticated horse tack still used today. Somewhere around 420, it appears that the horse-based Avar economy simply collapsed as the vegetation on the Mongol steppes became too meager to sustain the Avar herds of mounts. This was a result of the drastic climatological change caused by 416 eruption of Krakatoa.**

**The sequel was that tens of thousands of Avar refugees drifted as far westward as the Carpathian Mountains, and there they found more horses. Because of their ferocity and superior fighting skills, the Avars appear to have taken over leadership of some of the local tribes -- including the Huns. The Avar-led Huns, always seeking wider and greener pastures (and, eventually, under pressure from other Mongol Hordes), pushed other tribes before them into the Roman Empire. The Huns eventually besieged Constantinople extracting huge piles of golden tribute and then wandered in and out of Italy under Attila. That story is well known.**

**What few people know is that Attila drowned in his sleep in his own blood after a having a nosebleed in a drunken wrestling match at the banquet celebrating his last marriage. Hunnish leaders had multiple wives to cement inter-tribal loyalties, and part of the traditional festivities was a wrestling match between the bridegroom and the best man. It's not known who Attila's opponent was, but one good guess is that it was his Chief-of-Staff, Orestes.**

**When Attila died, the Hun alliance, which he alone had forged and kept together, split as his lieutenants fought for his mantle. Orestes took one group back south into Italy and again menaced Rome. A Gothic chieftain who had earlier been co-opted by Attila, led another group off in the opposite direction.**

**By this time Rome was completely dominated by the Eastern Empire, and the Eastern Emperor Leo had recently installed Julius Nepos as his puppet Emperor of Rome. Julius Nepos made three mistakes: first, he thought he new how to rule; second, he tried to coopt the menacing Barbarian, Orestes, by making Orestes commander-in-chief of Rome's own defensive forces; and third, he relied on the Eastern Emperor to keep him in power.**

**When the first mistake became obvious, Orestes chased Julius Nepos out of Rome to Ravenna (by then a sometimes capital of the West) and then completely off the peninsula to Dalmatia. Orestes installed his own adolescent son, Romulus Augustulus as Western Emperor. The new Eastern Emperor, Zeno, said it was an illegal turnover but did nothing to reverse the coup in the West.**

**The reign of Romulus Augustulus was short -- only ten months -- and certainly not long enough for his dad to establish any lasting bogus Roman lineage of the Orestean family. And, as could be expected, the reign had a bloody end. Odovacar (or Odoacer in some sources -- a Visigoth, but called a "Skyrian" in contemporary accounts) showed up at Ravenna in mid-476 AD. The father of Odovacar had been the Goth at Attila's court who went off the other way, so he was quickly welcomed and joined the "Roman" army of Orestes. As was usual in these circumstances, they fell out, and Odovacar, with a strong force of mutinous soldiers from Orestes' own army, quickly defeated and executed Orestes and the rest of his clique. Little Romulus was spared because of his tender years and was sent to live with relatives as a virtual prisoner on an imperial estate near Naples. It is recorded that he and his mother (identified only by the generic "barbarian female" name Barbaria) later founded a long-lived and successful monastery in the area. The only other notice of the later life of Romulus is that he twice had to renegotiate with Theodoric, Odovacar's Ostrogothic successor, the pension that Odovacar had granted him.**

**Neither Odovacar nor Theodoric (who killed and took over from Odovacar) ever claimed to be Emperors or anything other than kings in the areas they ruled, which never really amounted to more than part of Italy. Some sources, fifty or so years later, claimed that, to secure his survival, little Romulus, in his final imperial act, formally abdicated by letter in favor of the Eastern Emperor, and that Odovacar subsequently sent the Imperial regalia to Constantinople. This is shadowy stuff, however, and it's just the kind of propaganda that Justinian, who was Eastern Emperor in the mid-530's AD, would have cooked up to justify his own "reunification" of the Empire.**

**When the time came, Justinian sent into Italy his General, Belisarius, who established a few garrisons and then claimed that all of the former Western Empire was reunited with the East, under Justinian of course. But neither Justinian nor his successors ever came to Rome. Charlemagne showed up in Rome in 800 AD, and we just know that the few natives left in the city must have laughed behind their hands at the antics of that Imperial pretender from a French hick town, Paris.**

**And it all happened because a volcano erupted in the Sunda Straits. The eruption of 535 had a similar impact on the Avars. Their fodder supply decreased again, and more Avar refugees headed west pushing others before them into the Eastern Empire and a leading to an Avar-led seige of Constantinople. By that time Rome was already almost depopulated -- down to fewer than 50,000 from the high of more than 1.5 million at the time of the Five Good Emperors. The impact on Rome was therefore minimal -- there was virtually nothing left to "fall".**

**For more on Attila and on the succession of Romulus Augustulus, see these two items: <http://www.mmdtkw.org/VAttila.html>**

**and** [**http://www.mmdtkw.org/VRomulusAug.html**](http://www.mmdtkw.org/VRomulusAug.html)

**For more on Krakatoa and its far-reaching effects, go to**

**<http://www.roman-empire.net/decline/Krakatoa-535AD.html>**

**and** [**http://www.drgeorgepc.com/Vocano1883Krakatoa.html**](http://www.drgeorgepc.com/Vocano1883Krakatoa.html)

**To find out about the meteor impact that almost eliminated Rome in about 412 AD -- the power of 15 Hiroshima bombs just 60 miles east of the city -- read**

[**http://www.guardian.co.uk/online/science/story/0,12450,889308,00.html**](http://www.guardian.co.uk/online/science/story/0,12450,889308,00.html)

**and** [**http://spaceguard.ias.rm.cnr.it/tumblingstone/issues/current/eng/sirente.htm**](http://spaceguard.ias.rm.cnr.it/tumblingstone/issues/current/eng/sirente.htm)