

THE STORY OF THE MIDDLE AGES

Upheaval

The Transformation of an Era

CONFESSION – THE RETURN TO IRELAND – PATRICK'S TRIUMPH – THE LEGACY OF PATRICK – ROMANS AND BARBARIANS – THE SPREAD OF THE BARBARIANS – GAISERIC – THEODORIC – BENEDICT – THE POISONED CUP – SCHOLASTICA – EXCERPTS FROM THE RULE OF ST. BENEDICT – – SOME (SOMETIMES SILLY) EXPLANATIONS – WHY DID ROME FALL? – DID ROME REALLY FALL?



Patrick of Ireland: “Confession”

From *The Confession of Saint Patrick* (AD Fifth Century)

I, Patrick, a sinner, a most simple countryman [rustic], the least of all the faithful and most contemptible to many, had for father the deacon Calpurnius, son of the late Potitus, a priest, of the settlement [vicus] of Bannavem Taburniae; he had a small villa nearby where I was taken captive. I was at that time about sixteen years of age. I did not, indeed, know the true God; and I was taken into captivity in Ireland with many thousands of people, according to our deserts, for quite drawn away from God, we did not keep his precepts, nor were we obedient to our priests who used to remind us of our salvation. And the Lord brought down on us the fury of his being and scattered us among many nations, even to the ends of the earth, where I, in my smallness, am now to be found among foreigners.

And there the Lord opened my mind to an awareness of my unbelief, in order that, even so late, I might remember my transgressions and turn with all my heart to the Lord my God, who had regard

for my insignificance and pitied my youth and ignorance. And he watched over me before I knew him, and before I learned sense or even distinguished between good and evil, and he protected me, and consoled me as a father would his son....

And therefore for some time I have thought of writing, but I have hesitated until now, for truly, I feared to expose myself to the criticism of men, because I have not studied like others ... But why make excuses close to the truth, especially when now I am presuming to try to grasp in my old age what I did not gain in my youth because my sins prevented me from making what I had read my own? ... A young man, almost a beardless boy, I was taken captive before I knew what I should desire and what I should shun. So, consequently, today I feel ashamed and I am mightily afraid to expose my ignorance, because, [not] eloquent, with a small vocabulary...

But after I reached Ireland I used to pasture the flock each day and I used to pray many times a day. More and more did the love of God, and my fear of him and faith increase, and my spirit was moved so that in a day [I said] from one up to a hundred prayers, and in the night a like number; besides I used to stay out in the forests and on the mountain and I would wake up before daylight to pray in the snow, in icy coldness, in rain, and I used to feel neither ill nor any slothfulness, because, as I now see, the Spirit was burning in me at that time.

And it was there of course that one night in my sleep I heard a voice saying to me: 'You do well to fast: soon you will depart for your home country.' And again, a very short time later, there was a voice prophesying: 'Behold, your ship is ready.' And it was not close by, but, as it happened, two hundred miles away, where I had never been nor knew any person. And shortly thereafter I turned about and fled from the man with whom I had been for six years, and I came, by the power of God who directed my route to advantage (and I was afraid of nothing), until I reached that ship.

And on the same day that I arrived, the ship was setting out from the place, and I said that I had the wherewithal to sail with them; and the steersman was displeased and replied in anger, sharply: 'By no means attempt to go with us.' Hearing this I left them to go to the hut where I was staying, and on the way I began to pray, and before the prayer was finished I heard one of them shouting loudly after me: 'Come quickly because the men are calling you.'

And immediately I went back to them and they started to say to me: 'Come, because we are admitting you out of good faith; make friendship with us in any way you wish.' ... I had hopes that they would come to faith in Jesus Christ, because they were barbarians.) And for this I continued with them, and forthwith we put to sea.

And after three days we reached land, and for twenty-eight days journeyed through uninhabited country, and the food ran out and hunger overtook them; and one day the steersman began saying: 'Why is it, Christian? You say your God is great and all-powerful; then why can you not pray for us? For we may perish of hunger; it is unlikely indeed that we shall ever see another human being.'

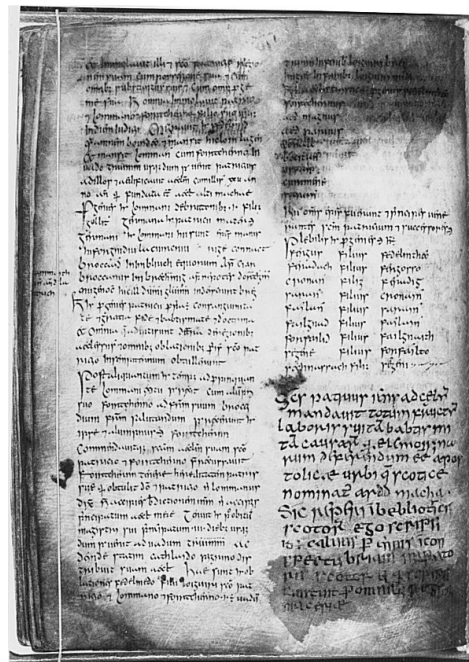
In fact, I said to them, confidently: 'Be converted by faith with all your heart to my Lord God, because nothing is impossible for him, so that today he will send food for you on your road, until you be sated, because everywhere he abounds.'

And with God's help this came to pass; and behold, a herd of swine appeared on the road before our eyes, and they slew many of them, and remained there for two nights, and the men were full of their meat and well restored, for many of them had fainted and would otherwise have been left half dead by the wayside. And after this they gave the utmost thanks to God, and I was esteemed in their eyes, and from that day they had food abundantly. They discovered wild honey, besides, and they offered a share to me, and one of them said: 'It is a sacrifice.' Thanks be to God, I tasted none of it....

[At last] I was again in Britain with my parents [kinsfolk], and they welcomed me as a son, and

asked me, in faith, that after the great tribulations I had endured I should not go anywhere else away from them. And, of course, there, in a vision of the night, I saw a man whose name was Victoricus coming as if from Ireland with innumerable letters, and he gave me one of them, and I read the beginning of the letter: ‘The Voice of the Irish’; and as I was reading the beginning of the letter I seemed at that moment to hear the voice of those who were beside the forest of Foclut which is near the western sea, and they were crying as if with one voice: ‘We beg you, holy youth, that you shall come and shall walk again among us.’ And I was stung intensely in my heart so that I could read no more, and thus I awoke. Thanks be to God, because after so many years the Lord bestowed on them according to their cry.

[Patrick determined to become a priest so that he might spread the faith. Eventually, Pope Celestine ordained him a bishop, and he was sent to preach to the Irish.]



Photograph of a page from the Book of Armagh, which contains the Vita Sancti Patricii.

Muirchú moccu Machtheni: “The Return to Ireland” From *Vita Sancti Patricii* (7th Century AD)

In the days when this took place there was in those parts a great king, a fierce pagan, an emperor of non-Romans, with his royal seat at Tara, which was then the capital of the realm of the Irish, by name Loíguire son of Níall, a scion of the family that held the kingship of almost the entire island. He had around him sages and druids, fortune-tellers and sorcerers, and the inventors of every evil craft, who, according to the custom of paganism and idolatry, were able to know and foresee everything before it happened.

There were two of these whom he preferred above all the others, whose names are these: Lothroch, also called Lochru, and Lucet Máel, also called Ronal; and these two, by their magical art, prophesied frequently that a foreign way of life was about to come to them, a kingdom, as it were, with an unheard-of and burdensome teaching, brought from afar over the seas, enjoined by few, received by many; it would be honoured by all, would overthrow kingdoms, kill the kings who offered resistance,

seduce the crowds, destroy all their gods, banish all the works of their craft, and reign for ever. They also described the man who was to bring this way of life and to win them for it, and they prophesied about him in the following words, in the form, as it were, of a poem, which these men often recited, and especially during the two or three years immediately before the coming of Patrick. These are the words of the poem— not very intelligible, owing to the peculiarity of their language:

*“There shall arrive Shaven-head,
with his stick bent in the head,
from his house with a hole in its head
he will chant impiety
from his table in the front of his house;
all his people will answer 'Be it thus, be it thus'.”*

In our own language all this can be expressed more clearly. 'When all this happens' (the druids would say) 'our kingdom, which is a pagan one, will fall.' And so it happened afterwards: when Patrick came the worship of idols was abolished and the catholic Christian faith spread over our whole country. Enough of this; let us return to our subject.

At the end and termination of the holy voyage the boat of the holy man, laden with marvels from across the sea and with spiritual treasures, reached a convenient port in the district of Cúalu, a well-known harbour of ours called Inber Dee. There it seemed to him that nothing was more fitting than first of all to redeem himself. Hence he made for the northern parts and went to see that pagan, Miliucc, whose slave he once had been, bringing him a double price to buy himself free from slavery, an earthly and a heavenly one, to free from captivity the man whom he had formerly served as a captive. He turned the bow of his boat to an island east of the coast, which to the present day is named after him. Then, leaving Brega and the territory of Conaille and that of the Ulaid on his left side, he finally entered the inlet of Bréne. He and those who were with him in the boat landed at Inber Sláne, hid their small craft, and went a short distance inland in order to rest there.

They were found by the swineherd of a man who was good by nature, although a pagan, whose name was Díchu. He lived in the place where there is now the barn named after Patrick. The swineherd, thinking they were thieves or robbers, went to tell his master Díchu (about them), and led him upon them unawares. Díchu had come with intent to kill them, but when he saw the face of holy Patrick the Lord changed his mind for the better, and Patrick preached the faith to him, and there and then he believed Patrick—the first man to do so—and the holy man stayed with him for a few days. However, as he was anxious to go without delay to visit the said man, Miliucc, and bring him the price (of his freedom) and in this way, after all, to convert him to the faith of Christ, he left his boat with Díchu and set out on his way by land to the territory of the Cruithni until he came to Slíab Miss...

When Miliucc heard that his slave was about to come and see him, in order to make him accept, forcibly as it were, a way of life against his will at the end of his days, for fear he might be subject to his slave and the latter might become his master, the devil put it into his mind to seek death of his own free will in fire. He gathered all his wealth together in the palace where until then he had lived as king, and burnt himself along with it. Holy Patrick, standing in the said place on the right flank of Slíab Miss, from which, on his return full of grace, he had the first view of the district where he had lived as a slave—to the present day a cross stands there to mark (the spot of) his first view of that district—he at once saw, right under his eyes, the pyre of the king.

Stunned by this sight, (he stood there) for two or three hours without uttering a word, sighing

and mourning and weeping, and then spoke these words: 'I know not, God knows, this man and king, who chose to burn himself in fire rather than believe at the end of his life and serve eternal God, I know not, God knows, none of his sons shall sit on his throne as king of his kingdom in generations to come; what is more, his line shall be subordinate for ever.' Having said this, he prayed, armed himself with the sign of the cross, turned round at once and went back to the territory of the Ulaid by the same way that he had come. He returned to Mag Inis, to Díchu, stayed there for many days and travelled around the whole plain. He favoured and loved the district, and the faith began to spread there.



A modern stained glass depiction of Saint Patrick, [Cathedral of Christ the Light, Oakland, California](#)

In those days Easter was approaching, the first Easter to be offered to God in the Egypt of this our island as it once was (offered), as we read in Genesis, in Gessen; and they took counsel where they should celebrate this first Easter among the pagans to whom God had sent him, and after many proposals had been made in this matter, at last holy Patrick, divinely inspired, decided that this great feast of the Lord, being the principal feast of all, should be celebrated in the great plain of Brega, because it was there that there was the greatest kingdom among these tribes, the head of all paganism and idolatry; there, in the words of the Psalmist, he would smash the head of the dragon, and for the first time an irresistible wedge would be driven into the head of all idolatry with the hammer of brave action joined to faith by the spiritual hands of holy Patrick and his companions. And so it was done.

... It so happened in that year that a feast of pagan worship was being held, which the pagans used to celebrate with many incantations and magic rites and other superstitious acts of idolatry. There assembled the kings, satraps, leaders, princes, and the nobles of the people; furthermore, the druids, the fortune-tellers, and the inventors and teachers of every craft and every skill were also summoned to king Loíguire at Tara,... and they held and celebrated their pagan feast on the same night on which holy Patrick celebrated Easter. They also had a custom, which was announced to all publicly, that whosoever, in any district, whether far or near, should have lit a fire on that night before it was lit in the king's house, that is, in the palace of Tara, would have forfeited his life.

Holy Patrick, then, celebrating Holy Easter, kindled the divine fire with its bright light and

blessed it, and it shone in the night and was seen by almost all the people who lived in the plain. Thus the fire from his tent happened to be seen at Tara, and as they saw it they all gazed at it and wondered. And the king called together the elders and said to them: 'Who is the man who has dared to do such a wicked thing in my kingdom? He shall die.'

They all replied that they did not know who had done it, but the druids answered: 'King, may you live for ever! Unless this fire which we see, and which has been lit on this night before the (fire) was lit in your house, is extinguished on this same night on which it has been lit, it will never be extinguished at all; it will even rise above all the fires of our customs, and he who has kindled it and the kingdom that has been brought upon us by him who has kindled it on this night will overpower us all and you, and will seduce all the people of your kingdom, and all kingdoms will yield to it, and it will spread over the whole country and will reign in all eternity.'

When the king heard this he was greatly alarmed, as once was Herod, and all Tara (was alarmed) with him. And the king answered and said: 'It will not be so, but we shall go and see what is going on, and restrain and kill those who are doing such a wicked thing against our kingdom.' Loíguire ordered thrice nine chariots to be equipped, according to the tradition which they had received from their gods, took with him the two druids who were most powerful of all in a contest, that is, Lucet Máel and Lochru, and towards the end of that night went out from Tara to the burial place of the men of Fíacc; they turned the faces of the men and horses to the left, as was befitting them.

As they went along, the druids said to the king: 'King, do not yourself go to the place where the fire is, lest perhaps you afterwards adore him who lit it, but stay outside, and that man will be summoned to your presence so that he may adore you and you be his lord, and we and that man shall dispute before you, o King, and in this way you will test us.' The king answered and said: 'You have devised sound advice; I shall do as you have said.' And they came to the above-mentioned place and dismounted from their horses; and they did not enter the perimeter of the place that was illumined by the light, but sat down beside it.

Amy Steedman: "Patrick's Triumph" From *Saint Patrick* (AD 1912)

The company sat silent and unmoved as Patrick approached. Only one little lad, watching with intent eyes the face of the stranger, rose to his feet in reverent greeting, forgetting the King's command.

A gentle look came into Patrick's eyes as he noticed the eager greeting and, raising his hand, he blessed the little lad.

"Who art thou, and what is thy errand here?" thundered the King.

"I am a torchbearer," answered Patrick. "I bring the True Light to lighten this dark land, to spread around peace and goodwill. All I ask is that thou wilt hear my message."

Alone and unarmed but quite fearless, Patrick stood up before the angry men next day, and spoke such words as they had never heard before. It was a new and wonderful teaching, and many of the wise men and nobles listened eagerly; and when he was done they came and asked to be baptized and enrolled under the banner of Patrick's God.

That was a glad Eastertide for the bishop, and as time went on the light spread far and wide. Many there were who shut their eyes and loved the darkness rather than the light, but Patrick was wise in his dealings with them all. He was never harsh or scornful of their beliefs, but always tried to lead them through what was good and beautiful in their own religion, using old customs and feasts to do honour to Christ, giving them a new meaning that linked them to

His service.

Then, too, he wisely tried to win over the chief men of the land to become Christians, knowing that their followers would the more readily follow their masters. Young boys were also his special care, remembering as he always did his bitter years of lonely slavery, and these lads were to him as sons. The boy he had blessed on that Easter Eve on the hillside of Slane was now one of his followers, and years afterwards we hear of him as Bishop of Slane. It was one of these lads whom Patrick loved so well, whose bravery and loyal devotion once saved the good bishop's life.



Patrick preaches to the Irish – image origin unknown.

Coming one day to the spot where a great stone marked the place of the Druids' worship, Patrick overthrew the stone that he might set up an altar instead. This was considered a terrible insult, and one of the heathen chiefs vowed that, come what might, he would kill Patrick wherever he found him.

Now the lad who drove Patrick's chariot heard this threat, and accordingly guarded his master with increased watchfulness. At last, however, his enemy's opportunity came, for Patrick's journeying took him past the chief's abode. The boy Oran knew that his master had no fear and would never turn aside to escape danger, so, as they neared the place, he thought of a plan to save him.

"I grow so weary with this long day of driving, my master," he said. "My hands can scarce hold the reins. If thou wouldst but drive for a space and let me rest, all would be well."

"Thou shouldst have asked sooner, my son," said the bishop kindly. "I am but a hard master to overtask thy strength."

So saying, Patrick changed seats, and gathering up the reins, drove on, while the boy sat behind in his master's seat, and prayed that the gathering darkness might close in swiftly, so that no one could mark the change.

Very soon they reached the outskirts of a dense wood, and from the sheltering trees a dark figure sprang out. The frightened horse reared for a moment, there was a singing sound of some weapon whizzing through the air, and when Patrick turned to see what it meant, the boy lay dead with a javelin in his heart—the murderer's weapon, which had been meant for the master. Well might Patrick, as he knelt there in his bitter grief, bear in his heart the echo of his Master's words, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Beatrice Home: "The Legacy of Patrick"
From *Ireland – Peeps at History* (AD 1914)

The story of his progress sounds miraculous, for the whole country seems to have fallen under the spell of his intense enthusiasm and to have accepted the Christianity which he offered. Doubtless the knowledge of the Irish character which he had obtained as a slave, helped him in his mission, for realizing the devotion to the chief, he invariably appealed first to the head of the tribe, and in winning him, won the whole clan. As has been mentioned before, ...Patrick did not introduce Christianity, but, as Professor Bury says, "he secured its permanence, shaped its course, and made it a power in the land." By bringing it into contact with Rome, and teaching Latin to the clergy, he made all the culture of the Empire possible for Ireland, and in this way founded those schools of learning for which the island afterwards became famous. ...Patrick is entirely worthy of the reverence with which he is still regarded by the Irish people, for he "made Christianity a living force in Ireland which could never be extinguished."

So great was the zeal with which. ...Patrick had inspired the Irish clergy, that not only were churches and monasteries built in their own land, but they spread themselves abroad, carrying the light of Christianity to the wilds of Germany and the Alps. ...Columba crossed over to Iona and converted the Picts, while other fervent missionaries were to be found as far south as Northern Italy. During the dark centuries when the Empire was being overthrown by the heathen barbarians, the Irish Church remained untouched, attracting to its schools students from all over Western Europe; indeed, at one time it seemed, as one writer puts it, that "Celtic, and not Latin, Christianity was to mould the destinies of the Church of the West."

While Rome was occupied in preserving her very existence, the Irish Church was developing independence and producing certain differences of ritual and dress, which were later on a cause of its isolation, Rome considering these differences as schism. ... Patrick had endeavoured to institute the complete Roman method, but after his death the prevailing tribal system had influenced the Church, making it distinct from the distant and little-known Rome. The chief differences consisted in celebrating Easter according to the old reckoning of the Christians before ...Patrick, and the practice of a peculiar tonsure for the priests, the Druidical form, from ear to ear. Undoubtedly Ireland's isolation at this period, and the development of a peculiar Irish Church, was a cause of additional trouble in later times.

While Ireland had attained a considerable reputation in the ecclesiastical world, in the secular she was still in a backward condition. The towns were merely collections of huts built of wood, and even the strongholds of the chiefs were very rough and primitive, the art of building in stone being practically unknown. But in certain forms of art the Irish were extremely skilful, as the gold ornaments to be seen in the museums witness. The famous Book of Kells is a masterpiece of illumination, and the numerous stone crosses of this period show very delicate carving. Music was much loved, the harper being a welcome guest everywhere, his proficiency over his instrument being remarked upon some time later when the English came to Ireland. As will be noticed, the arts were those of the monastery rather than of the outer world, road-making and bridge-building being still performed in a rude and primitive method.

[But meanwhile on the Continent, peace could not reign. While Attila the Hun had been turned back by Pope Leo, Europe remained in upheaval.]

Salvian: Romans and Barbarians From *On the Government of God* (c. AD 440)

[*Salvian was a Fifth Century Christian priest.*]

In what respects can our customs be preferred to those of the Goths and Vandals, or even compared with them? And first, to speak of affection and mutual charity (which, our Lord teaches, is the chief virtue, saying, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"), almost all barbarians, at least those who are of one race and kin, love each other, while the Romans persecute each other. For what citizen does not envy his fellow citizen? What citizen shows to his neighbor full charity?

[The Romans oppress each other with exactions] nay, not each other: it would be quite tolerable, if each suffered what he inflicted. It is worse than that; for the many are oppressed by the few, who regard public exactions as their own peculiar right, who carry on private traffic under the guise of collecting the taxes. And this is done not only by nobles, but by men of lowest rank; not by judges only, but by judges' subordinates. For where is the city even the town or village which has not as many tyrants as it has curials? . . . What place is there, therefore, as I have said, where the substance of widows and orphans, nay even of the saints, is not devoured by the chief citizens? . . . None but the great is secure from the devastations of these plundering brigands, except those who are themselves robbers.

[Nay, the state has fallen upon such evil days that a man cannot be safe unless he is wicked] Even those in a position to protest against the iniquity which they see about them dare not speak lest they make matters worse than before. So the poor are despoiled, the widows sigh, the orphans are oppressed, until many of them, born of families not obscure, and liberally educated, flee to our enemies that they may no longer suffer the oppression of public persecution. They doubtless seek Roman humanity among the barbarians, because they cannot bear barbarian inhumanity among the Romans. And although they differ from the people to whom they flee in manner and in language; although they are unlike as regards the fetid odor of the barbarians' bodies and garments, yet they would rather endure a foreign civilization among the barbarians than cruel injustice among the Romans.

So they migrate to the Goths, or to the Bagaudes, or to some other tribe of the barbarians who are ruling everywhere, and do not regret their exile. For they would rather live *free* under an appearance of slavery than live as captives under an appearance of liberty. The name of Roman citizen, once so highly esteemed and so dearly bought, is now a thing that men repudiate and flee from. . . . It is urged that if we Romans are wicked and corrupt, that the barbarians commit the same sins, and are not so miserable as we. There is, however, this difference, that the barbarians commit the same crimes as we, yet we more grievously. . . . All the barbarians, as we have already said, are pagans or heretics. The Saxon race is cruel, the Franks are faithless, the Gepidae are inhuman, the Huns are unchaste, in short, there is vice in the life of all the barbarian peoples. But are their offenses as serious as ours? Is the unchastity of the Hun so criminal as ours? Is the faithlessness of the Frank so blameworthy as ours? Is the intemperance of the Alemanni so base as the intemperance of the Christians? Does the greed of the Alani so merit condemnation as the greed of the Christians? If Hun or the Gepid cheat, what is there to wonder at, since he does not know that cheating is a crime? If a Frank perjures himself, does he do anything strange, he who regards perjury as a way of speaking, not as a crime?

Christopher Dawson: "The Spread of the Barbarians" From *The Making of Europe* (AD1956)

The barbarian peoples were not merely a passive and negative background for the creative activities of the higher culture. They had cultural traditions of their own, and we are only now beginning to learn from prehistoric research how ancient and deeply rooted these traditions were. As far back as the Bronze Age, and even earlier, there were centres of culture in Central and Northern Europe which had an autonomous development and which exerted an influence not only on the surrounding peoples but even on the higher culture of the Eastern Mediterranean.

It may seem at first sight unjustifiable to describe ancient cultures of this kind as barbaric. But barbarism in the sense in which we are using the word is by no means the same thing as savagery. It is applied to any stage of social development which has not acquired the higher organisation of a settled urban and territorial state - in short, to the culture of the tribe as against that of the city. The essence of barbaric society is that it rests on the principle of kinship rather than on that of citizenship or that of the absolute authority of the state. It is true that kinship is not the only element in tribal society; in practically every case the territorial and the military factors also intervene. But whereas in a civilised state the unit is the individual or the economic group, the unit of tribal society is the group of kinsmen. A man's rights depend not on his direct relation to the state, but on his position in the kindred, and in the same way crime is not conceived as an offence against the state, but as an occasion of feud or negotiation between two groups of kinsfolk. The guilt of blood lies on the whole kindred of the slayer and must be atoned by compensation to the kindred of the slain. It is true that the higher political unit of the tribe or clan does not necessarily consist of men of common blood, though they are apt to claim such unity by some genealogical fiction. It is usually a territorial or military union of groups of kinsmen.

Consequently, in spite of the protests of patriotic Irish scholars... it is legitimate to describe the social organisation of Celtic Ireland as a tribal one, since it was, no less than that of the ancient Germans, based on kinship-groups, such as the sept or the clan. The reluctance to accept this definition is, of course, due to the suggestion of cultural inferiority which the word "tribe" carries with it. Nevertheless, though the tribe is a relatively primitive form of social organisation, it possesses virtues which many more advanced types of society may envy. It is consistent with a high ideal of personal freedom and self-respect and evokes an intense spirit of loyalty and devotion on the part of the individual tribesman towards the community and its chief. Consequently its moral and spiritual development is often far in advance of its material culture. The tribal ideal, at least in the case of the more warlike pastoral peoples, is essentially, of the heroic type. In fact, we may say that all the great heroic traditions which are the inspiration of epic poetry and national legend, whether Greek, Celtic, Germanic or Arab, owe their existence to the tribal culture, though as a rule only at the moment when it has come into contact with the higher culture and is itself in process of dissolution.

At the time when Roman civilisation came into contact with the barbarian world, this warlike tribal culture of the Celts and the Germans was dominant throughout continental Europe and gave it a superficial appearance of national and cultural unity. Nevertheless, barbarian culture was never a single or uniform thing. There was an extreme variety of local types which crossed with one another and produced new mixed forms of culture. Just as in West Africa to-day we may see native states with a relatively high type of social and political organisation existing side by side with tribes whose way of life was hardly changed since remote prehistoric ages, so it was in barbarian Europe. The way in which we map out ancient Europe among a comparatively small number of historic peoples - Celts, Germans, Thracians and so on - gives a very misleading idea of the real situation. For these peoples were not, as we are apt to imagine, nations, but loose tribal groups which might embrace or overlies the remnants of numerous older peoples and cultures. A group of warlike tribes might overrun a great territory and give their name to it, but they did not thereby create a unified state and culture.

... In the second century AD., the barbarian world was exposed from every side to influences coming from the higher civilisation of the Mediterranean world, and the whole of Continental Europe seemed in a fair way to become Romanised. By the following century, however, the situation had completely changed. The influence of Roman civilisation was no longer in the ascendant, and the increasing pressure of the barbarian world threatened the very existence of the Empire. Henceforward Rome stands on the defensive, and even her own civilisation begins to show traces of barbarian influences.

Nevertheless, this reassertion of the barbaric element in European life was itself in a large measure due to the work of Rome. The pressure which the Empire had exerted for centuries on the Germanic peoples by its military power and its civilising influence had transformed their culture and changed the conditions of their national life. They had acquired new methods of warfare and had been forced to combine in resistance to the disciplined power of Rome. Moreover, their natural tendency towards expansion had been checked by a relentless pressure from the Roman frontiers, so that the border peoples had been forced back on the interior. [They pushed back in an explosion against the frontier in a way which they might never have done had not the Roman pressure been so overwhelming.] Henceforward the screen of half-civilised buffer states is destroyed, and the Empire is brought into immediate contact with the moving forces of barbarism of the interior.



... As we have seen, it was no longer the same empire. The new empire of Diocletian and Constantine was a semi-oriental state that resembled the Persian monarchy more than the Roman republic. It no longer rested on the foundation of a citizen army, but on a semi-barbaric militia, supported by barbarian auxiliaries from beyond the frontiers. And, in the same way, the emperors were no longer the presidents of the Roman Senate and the representatives of the old civic tradition, like Augustus and the Antonines. They lived either on the frontiers, surrounded by their barbarian men-at-arms, like Valentinian I, or surrounded by their eunuchs and officials in the oriental seclusion of the court life of Constantinople or Ravenna, like Honorius and Theodosius II. In fact the Empire itself had changed its orientation. It no longer looked inwards to the Mediterranean world of city-states with its centre at Rome, but outwards from its new capitals of Treves and Milan and Sirmium and Constantinople to the frontiers of the Rhine, the Danube and Euphrates. The great age of Mediter-

anean culture was over and a new period of continental development had begun.

The age of the barbarian invasions and the foundation of the new Germanic kingdoms in the West has always been regarded as one of the great turning-points in world history; and as the boundary between the ancient and mediaeval worlds.... Nevertheless it is easy to exaggerate the catastrophic character of the change. The breach with the old tradition of culture was far less sudden....

As we have already seen, the life had passed out of the ancient classical civilisation as early as the third century, and a new culture had arisen which was due not to the coming of the Germanic barbarians but to the infiltration of new influences from the East. The old culture of the city-state with its civic religion passed away owing to a gradual process of internal change, and its place was taken by a theocratic monarchy in close alliance with the new... religion, Christianity. But while in the East this development was closely linked with a native oriental tradition of immense antiquity, in the West it was entirely new, with no basis in past history; and here, accordingly, it failed to strike root. In its place we find the old European type of tribal society tending to reassert itself, and on the ruins of the provincial city-states there re-appears a rural society of noble landowners and peasant serfs, such as had existed in Central Europe before the coming of Rome. Consequently the new age in the West is not to be explained solely by the forcible intrusion of the Germanic peoples, but also to the renaissance of an older type of society on the soil of the Empire itself.... In fact, the break-up of the imperial system and the rise of the new territorial states might have followed very much the same course, even without the intervention of the barbarian invaders.

We have already seen how the increasing pressure of taxation and of governmental control crushed the life out of the self-governing municipalities which had been the living cells of the earlier Roman imperial organism. The government did all in its power by forced measures to galvanise the machinery of municipal life into artificial activity and to prevent the middle classes from deserting the city or escaping their obligations by entering the ranks of the senatorial aristocracy or buying a privileged sinecure in the imperial service. But what they tried to build up with one hand, they destroyed with the other, since they rendered the life of the middle class economically impossible....

The city was, in fact, no longer a vital organ in the life of the Empire. Economically, the state was becoming purely agrarian and the primary concern of the government was to maintain the numbers of the rural population and the prosperity of agriculture.... It is true that the power of the landlord over his slaves was considerably limited. They were no longer chattels to be bought and sold; they were serfs... who could not be separated from their holdings, and who consequently enjoyed their own family life.... Their tenure, as a rule, involved not only the payment of rent, but also a specified period of work on the lord's own land. Since he was responsible for their tax, they also, no less than the slaves, were bound to the soil. And since the lord represented them to the revenue, he also came to represent them before the law. He possessed police powers, and in many cases he held his own local court and executed justice among his dependents.... Thus already before the fall of the Empire, a semi-feudal condition of society was establishing itself. In the fifth century we hear of nobles like Ecdicius, who could support 4,000 poor in time of famine, and raise his own troop of horse in time of war....

H. E. Marshall: "Gaiseric" From *The Story of Europe* (AD 1920)

ROME had been saved from the Hun only to fall into the hands of another barbarian foe. From Andalusia the Vandals had crossed the Straits of Gibraltar, overrun the northern shores of Africa, and, under their savage king, Gaiseric [also known as Genseric, AD 389 - 477] made themselves complete masters of that Roman province. Up and down the Mediterranean they sailed in their pirate ships, plundering the rich and fruitful islands, causing peaceful traders to tremble and flee before them. Their sole joy was in plunder and bloodshed, and they cared not where they went in quest of it.

"I sail to the cities of men with whom God is angry," said Gaiseric. And from his actions

it would appear that he thought God was angry with all who crossed his path. So, having robbed and wasted many a fair city of the Mediterranean, Gaiseric and his Vandals one day appeared before Rome. The emperor and the people fled, and the walls were left defenceless. But as the Vandals advanced the gates were thrown open. It was, however, no armed force which issued forth, but a company of priests.

Once again Leo sought to save the imperial city. Unarmed save by his dauntless courage, with the Cross carried before him, and his clergy following after, he advanced to meet the foe. But this time he could not altogether prevail. The Vandals were bent on booty. Booty they would have. Leo could only wring from their chief a promise that there should be no bloodshed, no burning of houses, no torture of the defenceless. With that he was fain to be content, and the sack of Rome began. For fourteen days the pillage lasted. Then, having stripped the city of its treasures, the robbers sailed away in their richly laden galleys, carrying with them thousands of Roman citizens as slaves.

The Western Empire was now almost entirely in the hands of the Teutonic tribes which had overrun its borders....

The last emperor of Rome bore the same name as its founder—Romulus. He was, however, only a feeble, beautiful boy of fourteen, so he was called Romulus Augustulus or the Little Emperor. He was deposed by Odoacer the German, who was the first barbarian to sit upon the throne of the Cæsars. [This occurred in AD 476, the traditional date of the end of the Ancient world and beginning of the Medieval Era.] Odoacer, however, did not take to himself the title of emperor. For the Roman Empire in the east still existed, a Roman emperor still reigned in Constantinople. To this emperor then, Odoacer sent the purple robe and the royal diadem, with a letter, in which he declared that one emperor was enough both for East and West, and demanding the right to rule in Italy as patrician or king.

Marion Florence Lansing: "Theodoric"
From *Barbarian and Noble* (AD 1911)

KING THEUDEMIR sat in his carved seat at the head of the long Gothic hall, thinking deeply. Warriors of hostile nations, who met the king only when he was commanding his troops in war, could not understand why his people called him "Theudemir the Affectionate," "Theudemir the Good," and "Theudemir the Beloved." To them the stern, fierce general who was always in the forefront of the battle, seemed more like some old Teutonic war-god, appearing on earth once more in human form. Had they seen him to-night, as the firelight played about his features, they would not have wondered at the love his people bore him, for the piercing blue eyes were gentle, and the stern lines of his face were softened. All the court had [58] gone on a hunt, but Theudemir had remained at home to consider what answer he should give to the message which had come that morning from the Roman court. His little son, Theodoric, had come with his tiny broadsword to show him the new drill which he had learned, and his wife, the fair queen Erelieva, had sat with him for a time; but he had sent them both away and was alone with his problem.

It was the old story of tribute money and boundaries, but now it was the Romans who paid, the money, hiding its real meaning under the name of "New Year's presents," and they paid it only to the barbarian nations from whom they feared attack. When at the beginning of the new year the money failed to come, the East Goths had known that something was wrong. The messengers whom Theudemir sent to Constantinople returned from their mission humiliated and angry. The emperor had transferred his friendship to another Gothic chieftain, another Theodoric, who sat at his table and took the money that had been theirs, assuring the emperor that the East Goths were a feeble and unimportant nation of whom he need not take an anxious thought.

The East Goths had soon shown Emperor Leo his mistake. Theudemir smiled as he thought of the quick raid into the nearest Roman provinces which [59] had followed closely on the return of the ambassadors. There was never a Goth who would not rather ravage his neighbor's field for corn and grain, even at the risk of his life, than plant and till and harvest by his own slow, laborious toil.

The message of conciliation had come from the emperor that morning, and the Goths had gone wild with delight. "Leo has learned his lesson!" "Now the emperor knows that the East Goths are not a weak people to be trodden down and neglected." The hall with its high Gothic arches had rung with the boasts and taunts of the nobles, and then they had gone on a great hunt to celebrate the occasion. But Theudemir had remained behind. One part of the message the others had passed over lightly and seemed to forget. The emperor would pay the friendship money which was due; he would promise that henceforth an even larger sum should come regularly. But he demanded of the Goths one pledge,—that they would keep the faith and not send any more war parties across the Danube. They must give over to be brought up as a hostage in the Roman court the heir to the East Gothic throne, Theodoric, the eight-year-old son of Theudemir.

It was no wonder that the king had sent the child away when he came to him with his happy, thoughtless [60] prattle. To deliver this child, the pride and hope of the Gothic nation, over to the Romans to be trained by Roman teachers in Roman ways in a court hundreds of miles away! To have his son the price of Gothic peace! The father's heart might well be troubled. The Goths loved the lad, but would they remember, through the long years while he was growing to manhood, that his life was forfeit if once they broke the peace? One expedition of plunder into the forbidden territory, and Theodoric's life would be worth nothing at the imperial court, where murder and assassination were far too common for the putting to death of a hostage to be questioned. Moreover the boy must be prepared for the Gothic kingship. Would he not lose in the Roman life that love of freedom which was the safety of the Gothic nation?

These questions King Theudemir had been pondering all day, and in the evening, when darkness had fallen and the great hall was lighted only by the fires on the hearths, he came to his decision. He owed it to his people to give his royal consent and let the boy go. He must trust the God of the Christians, whose faith his nation had so lately adopted, that Theodoric would return safely when his period of exile was over. Moreover his old heathen superstition, in which he still half believed, gave him [61] encouragement. Theodoric had been born on a lucky day, the day of the last great defeat of the Huns. The messenger who brought Theudemir the news of his son's birth had carried back to the anxious house hold the report of the victory which meant that the Goths had been delivered from their forty-year-long subjection to a barbarian despot, and that their prince was born to the kingship of a free and independent people. Remembering that day, could he not take it as a prophecy that Theodoric would go through this new peril unharmed, and carry further the fulfillment of the family name which his father and many generations of kings before him had borne so proudly, the noble name of Amal, which means in the Gothic language "the fortunate"?

Of the life of the boy Theodoric at Constantinople little is reported. That he never learned to read or write we know, for when he was ruler of a great empire he could not sign his own name, but had a gold plate with the first four letters of his name pierced through it, so that when he wished to sign any document he could place the plate upon the parchment and trace through the lines the first four letters of his name, "THEO." Whether no one took pains to teach the young barbarian, or whether he scorned [62] the young Romans who knew better how to use the pen than the sword, we do not know. His handsome face and his ready wit found him a place in the close circle of the emperor's favorites, and his skill at arms and his horsemanship made him a leader in the drill and sports which were the occupation of every Roman youth. It

was with regret that Emperor Leo granted his request, when he was seventeen years old, that he be no longer detained at the court, but be allowed to return to his own people and his father's palace, and he sent him home loaded with royal presents.

King Theudemir's fears that the Roman training would spoil the Goth in Theodoric were soon dispelled. The feasting and merrymaking over his return had hardly ended before the young prince was missing and with him a group of young Gothic nobles who had been his playmates in childhood and with whom he had fallen into a cordial comradeship on his return. The king smiled when the word of his son's absence was brought to him, and waited well pleased for the report which soon came from the frontier of the Gothic kingdom. A Roman army had just been defeated by Babai, the king of the Sarmatians, who had conquered and taken from the Romans one of their leading eastern cities, [63] the modern Belgrade. Babai was gloating over his victory when the young Roman trained barbarian appeared before the gates of the city with an array of forces which he had carried off from his father's army, and succeeded in wresting it from him. If the Emperor Leo had thought he had tamed the young barbarian into a submissive Roman courtier, he soon found he was mistaken. Theodoric did not hand back to the Romans the city which their army had just lost, but kept it for his own private rulership.

The Goths had given Theodoric a warm welcome when he returned from his long exile in Constantinople. Now they took him to their hearts. In spite of his Roman dress and Roman ways he was no foreigner. He had followed the unwritten law of the Gothic nobility that every young man must prove himself by some warlike deed, and had shown himself worthy of their love and pride. With one accord the people declared that he and he alone should succeed his father as their king.

The chief problem of a barbarian king was to find means to feed his people. In the century of the wandering of the nations the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire had been so often plundered and devastated by barbarian peoples that they had become barren and unfruitful. It was a heavy responsibility which fell on the shoulders of the young king Theodoric, coming to the Gothic throne when he was only twenty years old, and he deemed himself fortunate that he was able to render assistance to the new claimant to the imperial chair of Rome, which was left vacant in that year by the death of Emperor Leo. Roman favor meant Roman gold with which to pay his armies and buy corn and grain. When the new emperor, Zeno, assumed the purple robes, he did not forget the protection which Theodoric had given him when, a fugitive from his enemies, he had been forced to flee into Gothic territory, but presented to him a position and title which few men as young as he had held,—the office of Patrician and Master in Arms. Besides this he [65] publicly adopted him as his own personal son in arms. The good fortune which had begun on the day of his birth seemed to be continuing with the young king.

No one's fortunes were secure, however, from one day to another in the fickle Roman court. The second year of Zeno's reign and Theodoric's favor had not closed before the other Theodoric, known in history as the One-eyed, who had made trouble for King Theudemir by obtaining the friendship of Emperor Leo fifteen years before, appeared at Constantinople to stir up trouble for Theudemir's son with the new emperor. Again he claimed that he was the rightful king and leader of a much larger nation of East Goths than that over which the boy Theodoric ruled. The wily Zeno was in a quandary. There was not money enough to pay both sets of Goths. Loyalty bade him stand by the son of Theudemir, the prince of the house of Amal; but Roman emperors cared little in those days for loyalty and much for power. Zeno only wanted to keep on his side the one who could help him most, and to leave as his enemy the one who could do least harm, and it is a rare compliment to our young Theodoric that he decided it was better policy to keep friendship with him.

[66] Theodoric the One-eyed promptly began to make trouble. He and his people

plundered neighboring cities, and came southward toward Constantinople. Reports reached the Roman capital of large armies which he was gathering on the frontier. Zeno began to repent of his decision and to wonder if he had done well to antagonize one who was proving himself so powerful a leader. He tried to make terms with him, offering to take him into the circle of allies on the same conditions which he had come to Constantinople to seek a few months before; but this time it was the turn of the Goth to refuse. He would not yield until the quarrel was settled once for all, and Theodoric the Amal was discredited forever.

The emperor had now no choice. There must be a war, but who should carry it on? Who, he reflected, but the man over whom he was having all this trouble? So he sent to Theodoric the Amal a pressing and peremptory message, saying that the time had come for him to prove himself worthy of the honors bestowed upon him, by assisting in the war which was being waged against his rival.

Theodoric had not been brought up in the midst of Roman intrigue for nothing. He refused to come into the quarrel until the emperor and senate had bound themselves by a solemn vow to enter into no [67] treaty with the other Gothic leader. Then, knowing that otherwise he would lose his important alliance with the Romans, and that his people would lose the money which meant meat and drink to them in the impoverished province where they lived, he proceeded to the war. A campaign was laid out by which his troops and Roman forces from two neighboring provinces were to arrive at the same time in the Balkan country where the One-eyed had stationed his forces. Theodoric carried out his part of the program and found himself, after a terrible march through wild mountain country, alone with his Gothic troops in the presence of the enemy, who were occupying an impregnable position at the top of a steep cliff. The Romans had failed to appear.

There was no chance for battle. Parties of horsemen came down the steep paths from the heights and skirmished with Theodoric's men, who attacked in their turn when the horsemen from the cliff had to come into the plains to get fodder for their horses; but there could be no decisive fighting till the enemy were willing to come down into the valley and take their chances in an open battle. So it went on from day to-day. Still the Romans did not come; and each morning Theodoric the One-eyed would take advantage of his unassailable position and, sheltered [68] by some rock from the arrows of the warriors in the valley, would stand on his hilltop and pour forth a storm of reproach on the young Theodoric, "that perjurer and enemy to the whole Gothic race," as he called him.

"Silly and conceited boy!" he would shout, and Theodoric was powerless to stop him or to prevent his people from listening, "you do not understand the Romans nor see through their design. They intend to let the Goths tear one another to pieces, while they sit by and watch the game at their ease, sure of the real victory, whichever side is defeated. And we the while, turning our hands against our brethren, are to be left an easy prey to the tricks of the Romans. O son of Theudemir! which of their promises have they kept? They have led you to your own destruction, and the penalty of your stupidity will fall on the people whom you have betrayed."

Such were the words which came from the cliff one morning, and then the voice ceased, and Theodoric's people were left to think over what had been said. The next morning it would begin again.

"Ho, Theodoric, scoundrel! why art thou leading so many of my brethren to destruction? Why hast thou made so many Gothic women widows? What has become of all that abundance of good things [69] which filled their wagons when they first set forth from their homes to march under thy standard? Then they owned two and three horses apiece. Now, without a horse they must needs limp on foot through Thrace, following thee as if they were thy slaves. Foolish boy, not long will they heed thy calls. They will be wiser than their king."

Theodoric could have fought with flesh and blood, but against these cool and cutting

taunts delivered by an unseen voice he was powerless, for the picture drawn by his rival was all too true. Roman ingenuity and treachery had devised this new scheme of slipping out of the war at the last moment and leaving the Goths to fight against and destroy each other. When the men and women of the Gothic camp came to the tent of the young king, clamoring for peace with their kinsmen, he had nothing to say. It was a bitter moment for Theodoric when he came to the banks of the stream to make terms with the man who had been the cause of his childhood exile in the court of Constantinople, and whose voice he had daily heard in reproach and insult. He went through his part like the king he was, and made a formal treaty of reconciliation and peace with his namesake, but he did not forget to whose treachery this humiliation was due. It took ten years of Roman favors [70] to wipe out from the memory of the proud young barbarian the bitterness of that hour.

So Emperor Zeno found himself with two enemies instead of one, and for a time even he was baffled by this new turn of affairs. He went to work with his usual weapon of intrigue, trying to make terms secretly with each party of the Gothic alliance, but his efforts were in vain. Both sides stoutly maintained that they had come at last to see reason. Goth would no longer fight with Goth for no quarrel of their own, but at the bidding of an outsider.

Theodoric the One-eyed met the Roman ambassadors with high flown protestations about the unity of the Gothic race and the evils of brothers fighting with one another. His only quarrel was with the young king Theodoric, whose army, as a matter of fact, he hoped to win over to his standards. Theodoric the Amal met the Roman advances with a recital of his grievances which Emperor Zeno must have found it hard to answer.

"I was willing enough," said he, "to live in peace and quiet in my Gothic province, beyond the Roman territory, giving obedience to the emperor and doing injury to no man. Who summoned me forth from this retirement and insisted on my taking the field against this rival Goth, Theodoric the One-eyed? [71] The emperor. He promised that the Master of the Soldiery for Thrace should join me with an army; he never came. Then that Claudius, the keeper of the funds, should bring me pay for my troops; he, too, did not appear. Thirdly, guides who were given to me, instead of taking the smooth and easy roads which would have led me straight to the camp of my foe, brought me up and down all kinds of steep and dangerous places where, if I had been attacked, with all my long train of horses and wagons and my following of women and children, I must without doubt have been destroyed. Brought at a disadvantage into the presence of our enemies, I was forced to make peace with them. Yea, in truth, I owe them great thanks for saving me alive, when owing to your treachery they might easily have wiped out me and my army forever."

These personal claims and his desire for revenge he would nevertheless lay aside for the sake of his hungry people, if the emperor would assign to him some district for a permanent dwelling place and would provide rations of corn for his people until they could reap their own harvest. Otherwise, he added significantly, he could not prevent his famished army from supplying their needs in any way they could. It was a noble and kingly answer, but it [72] did not suit the emperor, who had no intention of drawing so heavily on the imperial treasures if he could help it.

Things began to look serious in Constantinople. The generals called in their troops from Greece and Turkey. This might be the end of Roman intrigue and the beginning of the great Gothic-Roman war which had so long been predicted. But Zeno had not used all his schemes. He had not yet tried personal bribery. To Theodoric the Amal he now offered large sums of gold and silver and a Roman damsel of the imperial family in marriage. The straightforward son of King Theudemir and the good queen Erelieva would not hear to such proposals. But the One-eyed was not so upright. He only waited till the offers became large enough, and then he forgot his horror of Goth fighting Goth, and agreed to turn upon his ally and drive him out of the

country. He did not, however, succeed. For the next few years Theodoric the Amal proved a troublesome enemy to the Romans. One unchanging need controlled and guided his movements. He must have food for his wandering peoples. So we hear of him now in one city, now in another, with his army, always victorious but never despoiling save to win food and shelter for his people. Other barbarian [73] tribes tore down the treasures of art from the palaces and churches and stripped the buildings of all that made them beautiful. Theodoric had lived too long at the Roman court to allow such barbarities save when the inhabitants refused him corn and provisions. Then his Gothic temper came to the front, and he burned and pillaged without mercy.

There was never a lasting peace between the Roman emperor and our Theodoric till the One-eyed died. Then Theodoric became the undisputed leader of all the Goths. Thirty thousand men were added to his armies, and he was able to terrorize the whole Roman border. Zeno made haste to conclude a satisfactory peace with him, and we see him once more in Constantinople, this time as consul, giving his name to the year and exercising all the prerogatives of that honorable office. Three years he enjoyed the luxuries of life at the Roman court, and to the Roman-bred young ruler they must have had many charms over the hard life as leader and provider for a wandering people. But Theodoric had too much nobility of character and too much Gothic blood in his veins to be satisfied as the petted dependent of an alien race. The call of his people came to him, and he responded. This is the way the historian tells it:

[74] "Meanwhile Theodoric, who was bound by covenant to the empire of Zeno, hearing that his nation were not too well supplied with the necessaries of life while he was enjoying all the good things of the capital, and choosing rather, after the old manner of his race, to seek food by labor than to enjoy in luxurious idleness the fatness of the Roman realm while his people were living in hardship, made up his mind and spoke to the emperor."

With the wisdom which was to make him a world famous ruler, Theodoric had seen that there was no chance for him or his people in the crowded eastern provinces of the Roman Empire. Ignoring, with an audacity which leaves us breathless but admiring, the thousand miles of mountain and valley and river which lay between, he announced to the Roman emperor that he would like to go over with his people into Italy, and requested that he and his people be given that kingdom to hold "as a gift and under his imperial protection." Both parties seem to have ignored the fact that Italy was held by a barbarian people and ruled over by Odoacer, a Goth who had lost favor with his people by becoming, in his young manhood, a courtier of the hated Attila. The emperor had little friendship for these barbarian occupants of Italy, although they were nominally under his [75] control; but he could not give any real help to Theodoric, who must win the land by hard fighting. He went through the form of granting Theodoric's request, and with many expressions of regret allowed the Goths to go. But we must think that he was more willing to spare them than he admitted, and that he was glad to get so powerful and difficult a "son in arms" safely out of his way in the distant land of Italy.

So Theodoric started with his nation army of more than two hundred thousand Goths on the long, hard journey over into Italy. "Since Moses led the Children of Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness," says the chronicler, "so great a migration had not been undertaken." Putting into the wagons the women and children and as much furniture as they could take, the men set out on the great highway that followed the course of the Danube River, but their way did not lie for many miles over smooth roadways. There is a story of a great swamp to which they came. Enemies pressed upon them before and behind, and there was no chance to turn aside. The Gothic vanguard drove their horses into the swamp. Many sank in the treacherous waters, and those who came safely across were falling before [76] the lances which their foes on the other side were hurling against the reed woven breastplates of the Goths. Then Theodoric shouted: "Whoso will fight the enemy let him follow me. Look not to any other leader, but only

charge where you see my standards advancing. The Gepids shall know that a king attacks them; my people shall know that Theodoric saves them."

Cool and watchful in the moment of peril, he had seen in the apparently trackless swamp a narrow way which he believed to be solid ground. Urging his horse to a gallop he dashed across it, and his people followed his lead. "As a swollen river through the harvest field, as a lion through the herd," so did Theodoric charge upon the enemy, and they fell back in terror before him. The victory was doubly important because in their flight the enemy left their wagons of provisions behind them, and the Goths were delivered from famine for another stage of their journey.

No other leader could have planned such a march, and no people less hardy and courageous could have carried it through. Queen Erelieva and the Gothic women suffered untold miseries in the wild mountain passes, where the cold was so intense that the yellow locks of the chiefs were whitened with frost, [78] and the icicles hung from their beards. But the day came when the pastures were green again and the rich lowlands of Italy lay before the eyes of the weary company. On the plains of Verona Theodoric met Odoacer, the soldier-general who then ruled Italy.

As Theodoric was donning his armor, buckling on his breastplate of steel and hanging his sword by his side, his mother Erelieva and his sister Amalfrida came to the royal tent.

"Bring forth, O my mother and sister, my most splendid robes, those on which your fingers have worked the most gorgeous embroidery," he said to them. "I would be more gayly dressed on this day than on a holiday. Mother, to-day it behooves me to show to the world that it was indeed a man child whom you bore on that great day of the victory over the Huns. I too, in the play of lances, have to show myself worthy of my ancestor's renown by winning new victories of my own. Before my mind's eye stands my father, the mighty Theudemir, he who never doubted of victory, and therefore never failed of it. Clothe me therefore in rich apparel for this great day. If the enemy do not recognize me, as I intend they shall, by the violence of my onset, let them know me by the brilliancy of my raiment. If fortune give my throat to the sword of my enemy, let them at least [79] say, 'How splendid he looks in death,' if they have not had the chance to admire me fighting."

With such brave and confident words Theodoric cheered his mother and sister, and then went forth to fight for the land which he had come a thousand miles to conquer. His good fortune did not desert him, and though it took more than one battle to win so great a land, yet within five years he was the conqueror and acknowledged ruler of all Italy.

Another barbarian approaching Rome, but this time with a new purpose,—not to destroy but to buildup! It has been said that until they met the Teutonic peoples the Romans had been able to Romanize every nation with which they came in contact, but that the Goths succeeded in Teutonizing Roman institutions. It was this which Theodoric was to do in Italy. With his Gothic inheritance and his Roman training he took up the work, which the Romans had been forced by weakness to lay down, of ruling the barbarian nations of Europe. By an administration in which Gothic strength was tempered with Roman wisdom he earned the title of "The Gothic Civilizer."

George Hodges: "Benedict"

From Saints and Heroes to the End of the Middle Ages (AD 1911)

WHEN it was reported in Rome that a man was living in a cave in a wild gorge by the river Anio, forty miles away, people were interested but not surprised. It was not at that time an uncommon thing to live in a cave.

The monastic life... had by this time attracted great numbers of people, in the West as in the East. [Those who embraced this form of religious life took as the model the lifestyle of the Apostles and early Christian communities, discussed in the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 2, Verses 42-45: "*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.*"(KJV) Like the early communities, they sold their goods and lived in community so that they could be free to serve God by prayer, reading of the Scriptures, penance, work, and acts of love, rather than having to fit these things in around other worldly preoccupations. They did not believe that the world was evil and flee from it – on the contrary, they thought it was a reflection of the goodness of God. Rather they gave up many good things in the same way that a spouse gives up many good things that come with the single life when they choose marriage – to follow the greater good of a mission given them by God. They tried to embrace a rigorous form of life, often set out in the form of a Rule of Life, so that rather than growing lazy and comfortable they would cultivate the same spirit of sacrifice Christ had demonstrated on Earth. Monks and nuns hoped not only to lead a holy way of life, but to pray for the souls of those who had followed other good ways of life in the world.

And how the world needed prayer.]... All things were in confusion. Alaric the Goth and Genseric the Vandal were followed by Attila the Hun, and by a thousand other lesser captains. The Lombards were settling in the north of Italy. The Franks were taking France.... The Goths, indeed, had become Christians; but their Christianity was of the Arian kind. And when the Franks, under their king Clovis, were converted and became Catholic Christians, the Franks and the Goths fell to fighting, and the miseries of the times were multiplied. No peaceful citizen could be sure when he went to bed at night that his house would not be burned down before morning. Under these circumstances, even a cave in a dark gorge, while it might not be very comfortable, had at least the advantage of being safe.

So thought Benedict when he hid himself beside the river Anio. He belonged to a noble family in Rome, and spent his youth there. And when he had had enough, and more than enough, of the hard world, he put it all behind him, and found [91] peace and the presence of God in his cave. He had a friend who every day lowered over the face of the cliff to the mouth of the cave a little basket of bread. A bell tied to the basket informed the hermit that his dinner was approaching.

The reports which were carried about by neighboring shepherds concerning the holiness of the man in the cave caused the monks of a monastery in that region to invite him to be their abbot. "You don't want me for your abbot," said Benedict, when they appeared at the mouth of the cave with their request. "You don't know what sort of man I am. You would not be willing to live according to my rule." But the monks were full of enthusiasm at the idea of a holy abbot and a better life, and they insisted till Benedict consented. So he took command, and at the end of the first week they tried to poison him.

Amy Steedman: "The Poisoned Cup" From *In God's Garden* (AD 1922)

Benedict was grieved to think of leaving his little cell which he had grown to love, and the simple mountain people, who so often came to him in their need. But he thought this was a call he ought to obey, so he sorrowfully set out and journeyed many miles till he came to the convent of the brothers.

It was all very strange to him after the stillness of his mountain cell, and he could not

accustom himself to hearing voices all day long and to seeing so many faces. Still he strove to do his duty and soon made many changes in the convent life. He told the brothers plainly that there were many comforts they must put away, and above all that they must eat less and work more.

Now the brothers did not like this at all, and they began to repent that they had asked so great a saint to come and rule over them, for he made their rule so hard and strict, that few of them cared to keep it.

Then one day a strange thing happened. The brothers were all dining together, and Benedict was silently eating his portion, his thoughts far away in the little mountain cell at Subiaco, when some one touched his arm and offered him a cup of wine. Benedict turned and looked searchingly into the brother's face, and then with upraised hand made the sign of the cross over the cup [for he was in the habit of giving thanks for all he ate or drank before he consumed it.] It fell broken to the ground, and the wine was spilt upon the floor... There had been poison in the cup....

Then Benedict looked round at the company of brothers, who sat with downcast eyes, ashamed and silent, and, without a word, he rose and left them. He returned, alone as he had come, back to his mountain home....

[“He therefore returned to Sublacum; which desert he soon peopled with monks, for whom he built twelve monasteries, placing in each twelve monks with a superior.” - Reverend Alban Butler, 1866]

Gregory I: “Scholastica”

From *The Dialogues: The Life of Benedict* (Late 6th Century AD)

Speaking of that, I must tell you how there was one thing which the venerable father Benedict would have liked to do, but he could not.

His sister, named Scholastica, was dedicated from her infancy to our Lord. Once a year she came to visit her brother. The man of God went to her not far from the gate of his monastery, at a place that belonged to the Abbey. It was there he would entertain her. Once upon a time she came to visit according to her custom, and her venerable brother with his monks went there to meet her.

They spent the whole day in the praises of God and spiritual talk, and when it was almost night, they dined together. As they were yet sitting at the table, talking of devout matters, it began to get dark. The holy Nun, his sister, entreated him to stay there all night that they might spend it in discoursing of the joys of heaven. By no persuasion, however, would he agree to that, saying that he might not by any means stay all night outside of his Abbey.

At that time, the sky was so clear that no cloud was to be seen. The Nun, hearing this denial of her brother, joined her hands together, laid them on the table, bowed her head on her hands, and prayed to almighty God.

Lifting her head from the table, there fell suddenly such a tempest of lightning and thundering, and such abundance of rain, that neither venerable Benedict, nor his monks that were with him, could put their heads out of doors....

The man of God, seeing that he could not, in the midst of such thunder and lightning and great abundance of rain return to his Abbey, began to be heavy and to complain to his sister, saying: "God forgive you, what have you done?" She answered him, "I desired you to stay, and you would not hear me; I have desired it of our good Lord, and he has granted my petition. Therefore if you can now depart, in God's name return to your monastery, and leave me here alone."

But the good father, not being able to leave, tarried there against his will where before he would not have stayed willingly. By that means, they watched all night and with spiritual and heavenly talk

mutually comforted one another. ..

I am desirous, Peter, to tell you many things of this venerable father, but some of purpose I let pass, because I make haste to treat also of the acts of other holy men. Yet I would not have you be ignorant of the fact that the man of God, among so many miracles for which he was so famous in the world, was also sufficiently learned in divinity.

He wrote a rule for his monks, both excellent for discretion and also eloquent for its style. If any be curious to know further of his life and conversation, he may understand all his manner of life and discipline in the institution of that rule for the holy man could not otherwise teach, than he himself had lived.

Benedict of Nursia: “Excerpts from The Rule of Benedict” (Early to mid-6th Century AD)

Prologue

... We are about to found therefore a school for the Lord's service; in the organization of which we trust that we shall ordain nothing severe and nothing burdensome. But even if, the demands of justice dictating it, something a little irksome shall be the result, for the purpose of amending vices or preserving charity; - thou shalt not therefore, struck by fear, flee the way of salvation, which can not be entered upon except through a narrow entrance. But as one's way of life and one's faith progresses, the heart becomes broadened, and, with the unutterable sweetness of love, the way of the mandates of the Lord is traversed. Thus, never departing from His guidance, continuing in the monastery in his teaching until death, through patience we are made partakers in Christ's passion, in order that we may merit to be companions in His kingdom.

1. Concerning the Kinds of Monks and Their Manner of Living.

It is manifest that there are four kinds of monks. The cenobites are the first kind; that is, those living in a monastery, serving under a rule or an abbot. Then the second kind is that of the anchorites; that is, the hermits-those who, not by the new fervour of a conversion but by the long probation of life in a monastery, have learned to fight against the devil, having already been taught by the solace of many. They, having been well prepared in the army of brothers for the solitary fight of the hermit, being secure now without the consolation of another, are able, God helping them, to fight with their own hand or arm against the vices of the flesh or of their thoughts.

But a third very bad kind of monks are the sarabaites, approved by no rule, experience being their teacher, as with the gold which is tried in the furnace. But, softened after the manner of lead, keeping faith with the world by their works, they are known through their tonsure to lie to God. These being shut up by twos or threes, or, indeed, alone, without a shepherd, not in the Lord's but in their own sheep-folds-their law is the satisfaction of their desires. For whatever they think good or choice, this they call holy; and what they do not wish, this they consider unlawful. But the fourth kind of we are about to found, therefore, a school for the monks is the kind which is called gyatory. During their whole life they are guests, for three or four days at a time, in the cells of the different monasteries, throughout the various provinces; always wandering and never stationary, given over to the service of their own pleasures and the joys of the palate, and in every way worse than the sarabaites. Concerning the most wretched way of living of all such monks it is better to be silent than to speak. These things therefore being omitted, let us proceed, with the aid of God, to treat of the best kind, the cenobites.

2. What the Abbot Should Be Like

. An abbot who is worthy to preside over a monastery ought always to remember what he is called, and

carry out with his deeds the name of a Superior. For he is believed to be Christ's representative, since he is called by His name, the apostle saying: "Ye have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we call Abba, Father." And so the abbot should not grant that he may not teach, or decree, or order, any thing apart from the precept of the Lord; but his order or teaching should be sprinkled with the ferment of divine justice in the minds of his disciples. Let the abbot always be mindful that, at the tremendous judgment of God, both things will be weighed in the balance: his teaching and the obedience of his disciples. And let the abbot know that whatever the father of the family finds of less utility among the sheep is laid to the fault of the shepherd. Only in a case where the whole diligence of their pastor shall have been bestowed on an unruly and disobedient flock, and his whole care given to their morbid actions, shall that pastor [be] absolved in the judgment of the Lord....

Therefore, when any one receives the name of abbot, he ought to rule over his disciples with a double teaching; that is, let him show forth all good and holy things by deeds more than by words. So that to ready disciples he may propound the mandates of God in words; but, to the hard-hearted and the more simpleminded, he may show forth the divine precepts by his deeds. But as to all the things that he has taught to his disciples to be wrong, he shall show by his deeds that they are not to be done....

3. About Calling in the Brethren to Take Council

As often as anything especial is to be done in the monastery, the abbot shall call together the whole congregation, and shall himself explain the question at issue. And, having heard the advice of the brethren, he shall think it over by himself, and shall do what he considers most advantageous. .

5. Concerning Obedience

. The first grade of humility is obedience without delay. This becomes those who, on account of the holy service which they have professed, or on account of the fear of hell or the glory of eternal life, consider nothing dearer to them than Christ: so that, so soon as anything is commanded by their superior, they may not know how to suffer delay in doing it, even as if it were a divine command. Concerning whom the Lord said: "As soon as he heard of me he obeyed me."....

16. How Divine Service Shall Be Held through the Day.

As the prophet says: "Seven times in the day so I praise Thee." Which sacred number of seven will thus be fulfilled by us if, at matins, at the first, third, sixth, ninth hours, at vesper time and at "completorium" we perform the duties of our service; for it is of these hours of the day that he said: "Seven times in the day do I praise Thee."....

20. Reverence in Prayer

Whenever we want to ask some favor of a powerful man, we do it humbly and respectfully, for fear of presumption. How much more important, then, to lay our petitions before the Lord God of all things with the utmost humility and sincere devotion. We must know that God regards our purity of heart and tears of compunction, not our many words. Prayer should therefore be short and pure, unless perhaps it is prolonged under the inspiration of divine grace. In community, however, prayer should always be brief; and when the superior gives the signal, all should rise together.

22. How the Monks Shall Sleep.

They shall sleep separately in separate beds. They shall receive positions for their beds, after the manner of their characters, according to the dispensation of their abbot. If it can be done, they shall all sleep in one place. If, however, their number do not permit it, they shall rest, by tens or twenties, with elders who will concern themselves about them. A candle shall always be burning in that same cell until early in the morning. They shall sleep clothed, and girt with belts or with ropes; and they shall not have their knives at their sides while they sleep, lest perchance in a dream they should wound the sleepers.

And let the monks be always on the alert; and, when the signal is given, rising without delay, let them hasten to mutually prepare themselves for the service of God with all gravity and modesty, however. The younger brothers shall not have beds by themselves, but interspersed among those of the elder ones. And when they rise for the service of God, they shall exhort each other mutually with moderation on account of the excuses that those who are sleepy are inclined to make....

39 Concerning the Amount of food

We believe, moreover, that, for the daily refectation of the sixth as well as of the ninth hour, two cooked dishes, on account of the infirmities of the different ones, are enough for all tables: so that whoever, perchance, can not eat of one may partake of the other. Therefore let two cooked dishes suffice for all the brothers: and, if it is possible to obtain apples or growing vegetables, a third may be added. One full pound of bread shall suffice for a day, whether there be one refectation, or a breakfast and a supper. But if they are going to have supper, the third part of that same pound shall be reserved by the cellarer, to be given back to those who are about to sup. But if, perchance, some greater labour shall have been performed, it shall be in the will and power of the abbot, if it is expedient, to increase anything; surfeiting above all things being guarded against, so that indigestion may never seize a monk: for nothing is so contrary to every Christian as surfeiting, as our Lord says: "Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting. " But to younger boys the same quantity shall not be served, but less than that to the older ones; moderation being observed in all things. But the eating of the flesh of quadrupeds shall be abstained from altogether by every one, excepting alone the weak and the sick....

48. Concerning the Daily Manual Labour.

Idleness is the enemy of the soul. And therefore, at fixed times, the brothers ought to be occupied in manual labour; and again, at fixed times, in sacred reading. ... there shall certainly be appointed one or two elders, who shall go round the monastery at the hours in which the brothers are engaged in reading, and see to it that no troublesome brother chance to be found who is open to idleness and trifling, and is not intent on his reading; being not only of no use to himself, but also stirring up others....

55. Concerning Clothes and Shoes

. Vestments shall be given to the brothers according to the quality of the places where they dwell, or the temperature of the air. For in cold regions more is required; but in warm, less. This, therefore, is a matter for the abbot to decide. We nevertheless consider that for ordinary places there suffices for the monks a cowl and a gown apiece-the cowl, in winter hairy, in summer plain or old-and a working garment, on account of their labours. As clothing for the feet, shoes and boots.

Albert A. Nofi: "The Fall of the Roman Empire – Some (Sometimes Silly) Explanations From "Strategy and Tactics Magazine" #39, p. 21 (AD 1973)

- PLAGUES reduced the population, and the fertility of the survivors.
- LEAD PIPES and utensils poisoned the aristocracy, lowering their birth-rate and intelligence level of this most important class (S. Colum Gilfillan)
- The admission of INFERIOR RACES to the citizenship lowered the vigor of the Pure Roman Stock.
- CHRISTIANITY made people less concerned with this world. (Edward Gibbon)
- Augustus' jury-rigged apparatus of state was unable to cope with certain types of crisis.
- CIVIL WARS sapped the strength of the Empire.
- The People practiced BIRTH CONTROL without restraint, thus causing a loss of population.

- Failure to establish a workable CONSTITUTION.
- "Bread and Circuses": the people became LAZY.
- The ARMY got out of hand due to lowering of standards of discipline
- God turned his favor from Rome because of its sins.
- The State collapsed under the weight of its bureaucracy.
- The BARBARIANS became civilized enough to contend with the Romans on an equal footing.
- Abandonment of the old religion, which had given moral strength to the Roman People
- Widespread HOMOSEXUALITY among the upper classes led to a decline in the birth rate among aristocrats, thereby reducing the available pool of leadership manpower.
- [DISEASE caused by riotous living] and other entertainments sapped the vigor of the Roman People.
- LIBERAL-THINKING EMPERORS attempted to spend too much on the poor in their efforts to lift them up, thus draining the financial resources of the Empire
- The flow of gold to the Orient to pay for luxury goods eventually dealt a death blow to the Roman economy.
- The existence of slavery and an impoverished citizen mass created a large internal proletariat which would eventually prove disloyal to the empire
- The Aristocracy permitted too many of the lower classes to participate in affairs of state, thereby diluting the value of experience and brains which the Aristocracy possessed.
- As the State became more despotic, the average citizen, and even members of the Upper Classes, became less interested in it, thereby causing a LOSS OF CONFIDENCE and support.
- Abandonment of the old, good Roman institutions and virtues which had helped to bring Rome to greatness.
- Too many of the old institutions were left with a measure of power, which tended to disrupt the machinery of Empire
- Easy living made the Romans soft, permitting the Barbarians to overrun them with ease.
- Slavery impoverished the Citizenry.
- The bulk of the inhabitants of the Empire failed to share in the incredible prosperity, remaining impoverished and restive.

Edward Gibbon: Why Did the Roman Empire Fall? Perspective #1 **From *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (AD 1789)**

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 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 shown 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....

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 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 more earthly passions of malice and ambition, kindled the flame of theological discord; the church, and even the state, were distracted by religious factions... 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.... Perhaps the same reflections will illustrate the fall of that mighty empire, and explain the probable causes of our actual security...

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. 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....

Hilaire Belloc: Did Rome Really Fall? Perspective #2 From *Europe and the Faith* (AD 1920)

... Hardly had the Roman Empire turned in its maturity to accept the fruit of its long development (I mean the... Church), when it began to grow old and was clearly about to suffer some great transition. But that transition, which threatened to be death, proved in the issue not death at all, but a mixture of Vision and Change.... Now it has been the singular fortune of our European civilization that an end did not come. Dissolution was in some strange way checked. Death was averted. And the more closely one looks into the unique history of that salvation — the salvation of all that could be saved in a most ancient and fatigued society — the more one sees that this salvation was effected by no agency save that of the...Church. Everything else, after, say, 250 A.D., the empty fashionable philosophies, the barbarians filling the army, the current passions and the current despair, made for nothing but ruin.

There is no parallel to this survival in all the history of mankind. Every other great civilization has, after many centuries of development, either fallen into a fixed and sterile sameness or died and disappeared. There is nothing left of Egypt, there is nothing left of Assyria. The Eastern civilizations remain, but remain immovable; or if they change can only vulgarly copy external models.

But the civilization of Europe — the civilization, that is, of Rome and of the Empire — had a third fortune differing both from death and from sterility: it survived to a resurrection.... It is impossible to understand this truth, indeed it is impossible to make any sense at all of European history, if we accept that story of the decline which is currently put forward in anti-[Christian] academies, and which has seemed sufficient to anti-[Christian] historians.

Their version is, briefly, this: The Roman Empire, becoming corrupt and more vicious through the spread of luxury and through a sort of native weakness to be discovered in the very blood of the

Mediterranean, was at last invaded and overwhelmed by young and vigorous tribes of Germans.... But at the same time this evil effect was counter-balanced by the ineradicable strength and virtues of the Northern barbaric blood. This sacred Teutonic blood it was which brought into Western Europe the subtlety of romantic conceptions, the true lyric touch in poetry, the deep reverence which was (till recently) the note of their religion, the love of adventure in which the old civilization was lacking, and a vast respect for women. At the same time their warrior spirit evolved the great structure of feudalism, the chivalric model and the whole military ideal of mediaeval civilization....”

Such is not an exaggerated summary of [popular thought about the Fall of the Empire.] At the moment when history was struggling to become a scientific study, this school of self-pleasing fairy tales held the field. When at last history did become a true scientific study, this school collapsed. But it yet retains, as an inheritance from its old hegemony, a singular power in the lower and more popular forms of historical writing; and where the English language is spoken it is, even today, almost the only view of European development which the general student can obtain. It will be noted at the outset that the whole of the fantastic picture which this old and now discredited theory presented, is based upon a certain conception of what happened at the breakdown of the Roman Empire.

...The theory which is deduced from them has no historical value whatsoever.

There was no conquest of effete Mediterranean peoples by vigorous barbarians. The vast number of barbarians who lived as slaves within the Empire, the far smaller number who were pressed or hired into the military service of the Empire, the still smaller number which entered the Empire as marauders, during the weakness of the Central Government towards its end, were not of the sort which this... theory, mistaking its desires for realities, pre-supposed.

The barbarians were not "Germans" (a term difficult to define), they were of very mixed stocks which, if we go by speech (a bad guide to race) were some of them Germanic, some Slav, some even Mongol, some Berber, some of the old unnamed races: the Piets, for instance, and the dark men of the extreme North and West.

They had no conspicuous respect for women of the sort which should produce the chivalric ideal.

They were not free societies, but slave-owning societies.

They did not desire, attempt, or even dream, the destruction of the Imperial power: that misfortune — which was gradual and never complete — in so far as it came about at all, came about in spite of the barbarians and not by their conscious effort.

They were not numerous; on the contrary, they were but handfuls of men, even when they appeared as successful pillagers and raiders over the frontiers. When they came in large numbers, they were wiped out.

They did not introduce any new institutions or any new ideas....

In a word, the gradual cessation of central Imperial rule in Western Europe, the failure of the power and habit of one united organization seated in Rome to color, define and administrate the lives of men, was an internal revolution; it did not come from without. It was a change from within; it was nothing remotely resembling an external, still less a barbaric, conquest from without.

All that happened was that Roman civilization having grown very old, failed to maintain that vigorous and universal method of local government subordinated to the capital, which it had for four or five hundred years supported. The machinery of taxation gradually weakened; the whole of central bureaucratic action weakened; the greater men in each locality began to acquire a sort of independence, and sundry soldiers benefited by the slow (and enormous) change, occupied the local "palaces" as they were called, of Roman administration, secured such revenues as the remains of Roman taxation could give them, and, conversely, had thrust upon them so much of the duty of government as the decline of civilization could still maintain. That is what happened, and that is all

that happened.

As an historical phenomenon it is what I have called it — enormous. It most vividly struck the imagination of men....

The reader will not be content with a mere affirmation, though the affirmation is based upon all that is worth counting in modern scholarship. He will ask what, then, did really happen? After all, Alaric did sack Rome [and so on.]

In order to understand what happened we must first of all clearly represent to ourselves the fact that the structure upon which our united civilization had in its first five centuries reposed, was the Roman Army. By which I do not mean that the number of soldiers was very large compared with the civilian population, but that the organ which was vital in the State, the thing that really counted, the institution upon which men's minds turned, and which they thought of as the foundation of all, was the military institution....

It was the Army which made and unmade Emperors; it was the Army which designed and ordered and even helped to construct the great roads of the Empire. It was in connection with the needs of the Army that those roads were traced. It was the Army which secured (very easily, for peace was popular) the civil order of the vast organism. It was the Army especially which guarded its frontiers against the uncivilized world without ...

Now this main instrument, the Roman Army — the instrument remember, which not only preserved civil functions, but actually created the master of all civic functions, the Government — went through three very clear stages of change in the first four centuries of the Christian era — up to the year A.D. 400 or so. And it is the transformation of the Roman Army during the first four centuries which explains the otherwise inexplicable change in society just afterwards, in the fifth and sixth centuries — that is, from 400 to 600 A.D. The turn from the full civilization of Rome to the beginning of the Dark Ages....

In the second phase (which corresponded with the beginning of a decline in letters and in the arts, which carries us through the welter of civil wars in the third century and which introduces the remodeled Empire at their close) the Army was becoming purely professional and at the same time drawn from whatever was least fortunate in Roman society. The recruitment of it was treated much after the fashion of a tax; the great landed proprietors (who, by a parallel development in the decline, were becoming the chief economic feature in the Roman State) were summoned to send a certain number of recruits from their estates.

Slaves would often be glad to go, for, hard as were the conditions of military service, it gave them civic freedom, certain honors, a certain pay, and a future for their children. The poorer freed men would also go at the command of their lord (though only of course a certain proportion — for the conscription was very light compared with modern systems, and was made lighter by reenlistment, long service, absence of reserves, and the use of veterans).

During this second stage, while the Army was becoming less and less civic, and more and more a profession for the destitute and the unfortunate, the unpopularity and the ignorance of military service among the rest of the population, was increasing. The average citizen grew more and more divorced from the Army and knew less and less of its conditions. He came to regard it partly as a necessary police force or defence of his frontiers, partly as a nuisance to him at home. He also came to regard it as something with which he had nothing to do. It lived a life separate from himself. It governed (through the power of the Emperor, its chief); it depended on, and also supported or re-made, the Imperial Court. But it was external, at the close of the Empire, to general society.

Recruiting was meanwhile becoming difficult, and the habit grew up of offering the hungry tribes outside the pale of the Empire the advantage of residence within it on condition that they should serve as Roman soldiers.... The army was becoming more sedentary (more attached, that is,

to particular garrisons), more permanent, more of an hereditary thing handed on from father to son.... It was also becoming more and more an army of men who, whether as auxiliaries or as true Roman soldiers, were in blood, descent, and to some extent in manners and less in language, barbarians...

In the third stage, which is the stage that saw the great convulsion of the fifth century, the army though not yet wholly barbaric, had already become in its most vital part, barbaric. It took its orders, of course, wholly from the Roman State, but great groups within it were only partly even Latin-speaking or Greek-speaking, and were certainly regarded both by themselves and by their Roman masters as non-Roman in manners and in blood.

It must most clearly be emphasized that not only no such thought as an attack upon the Empire entered the heads of these soldiers, but that the very idea of it would have been inconceivable to them. Had you proposed it they would not even have known what you meant. That a particular section of the army should fight against a particular claimant to the Empire (and therefore and necessarily in favor of some other claimant) they thought natural enough; but to talk of an attack upon the Empire itself would have seemed to them like talking of an attack upon bread and meat, air, water and fire. The Empire was the whole method and meaning of their lives. ... The army was always ready at a moment's order to cut such foreign raiders to pieces — and always did so successfully....

It must not be imagined, of course, that civilization had not occasionally to suffer then, as it had had to suffer at intervals for a thousand years past, the attacks of really large and organized barbaric armies. Thus in the year 404, driven by the pressure of an Eastern invasion upon their own forests, a vast barbaric host under one Radagaisus pushed into Italy. The men bearing arms alone were estimated (in a time well used to soldiery and to such estimates) at 200,000.

But those 200,000 were wiped out. The barbarians were always wiped out when they attempted to come as conquerors. Stilicho (a typical figure, for he was himself of barbarian descent, yet in the regular Roman service) cut to pieces one portion of them, the rest surrendered and were sold off and scattered as slaves.... We have, later, the very much more serious business of the Mongol Attila and his Huns... The end of that business — infinitely graver though it was than the raids that came before it — is just what one might have expected. The regular and auxiliary disciplined forces of the Empire destroy the barbarian power near Chalons, and the last and worst of the invasions is wiped out as thoroughly as had been all the others. In general, the barbaric eruptions into the Empire failed wholly as soon as Imperial troops could be brought up to oppose them.

What, then, were the supposed barbaric successes? What was the real nature of the action of Alaric, for instance, and his sack of Rome; and how, later, do we find local "kings" in the place of the Roman Governors?

The real nature of the action of men like Alaric is utterly different from the imaginary picture with which the old picturesque popular history recently provided us. That false history gives us the impression of a barbarian Chieftain gathering his Clan to a victorious assault on Rome. Consider the truth upon Alaric and contrast it with this imaginary picture.

Alaric was a young noble of Gothic blood, but from birth a Roman; at eighteen years of age he was put by the Court in command of a small Roman auxiliary force originally recruited from the Goths.... He had his commission from the Emperor Theodosius, and when Theodosius marched into Gaul against the usurper Eugenius, he counted Alaric's division as among the most faithful of his Army....

The total number of Alaric's men was at this moment very small; they were perhaps 30,000. There was no trace of nationality about them. They were simply a body of discontented soldiers; they had not come from across the frontier; they were not invaders; they were part of the long established and regular garrisons of the Empire; and, for that matter, many garrisons and troops of equally barbaric origin, sided with the regular authorities in the quarrel. Alaric marches on Rome

with this disaffected Roman Army, claiming that he has been defrauded of his due in salary... As a result of this action the Emperor promises Alaric his regular salary as a general, and a district which he may not only command, but plant with his few followers. Even in the height of his success, Alaric again demands the thing which was nearest his heart, the supreme and entirely Roman title of Magister Militum, the highest post in the hierarchy of military advancement. But the Emperor again refuses to give that. Alaric again marches on Rome, a Roman officer followed by a rebellious Roman Army. He forces the Senate to make Attalus nominal Emperor of the West, and Attalus to give him the desired title, his very craving for which is most significant of the Roman character of the whole business. Alaric then quarrels with his puppet, deprives him of the insignia of the Empire, and sends them to Honorius; quarrels again with Honorius, reenters Rome and pillages it, marches to Southern Italy, dies, and his small army is dismembered.

I have only dealt with the particular case of Alaric because it is the most familiar, and the most generally distorted: a test, as it were, of my theme [but more examples abound.]

Odoacer held a regular Roman commission; he was a Roman soldier: Theodoric supplanted him by leave of, and actually under orders from, the Emperor...

There was no destruction of Roman society, there was no breach of continuity in the main institutions of what was now the Western Christian world.

[While the Western Roman Empire Fell, the Eastern Empire, based in Constantinople, lasted for another thousand years approximately.]