

The End of the Ancient World, or The Beginning of the Medieval?

I. The Downfall of Rome, or How Was It Able to Last So Long?

A. Historians Have Many Pet Theories (top 20, in no particular order)

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| 1. Soil Exhaustion | 11. Road Restrictions |
| 2. Climatic Change | 12. Christianity |
| 3. Lead Water Pipes | 13. Exhaustion |
| 4. Inter-marriage with Slaves | 14. Barbarians |
| 5. Government Interference in Economic Life | 15. Nobody Cared |
| 6. Destruction of Urban Middle Class | 16. Deforestation |
| 7. Failure in intelligence and character | 17. Disease |
| 8. Failure to adapt to natural environment | 18. Moral decay |
| 9. Lack of Succession System | 19. Celibacy |
| 10. God did it | 20. Some or all of the above |

B. My Pet Theory—The Egg Shell Hypothesis

1. Administrative, military, and financial strength of Empire on periphery
2. Epidemic diseases: malaria, smallpox, measles, mumps, chickenpox
3. Empire split into two administrative units
 - a. Greek in East and Latin in West
 - b. Eastern half may have been strangling Western half economically
4. Increased pressures from Germanic peoples
5. Increased pressure of steppe pastoralists on Germanic peoples

II. Struggles of Early Christian Church

A. Evolution of Early Christianity

1. Appeal to oppressed and downtrodden (message of Gospels)
2. Appeal to “uppies” (Paul)
3. Appeal to army
 - a. C. John Cadoux, *The Early Christian Attitude to War*, London 1919.
 - b. Constantine the Great (emperor 324–337)
 - Battle of Milvian Bridge, October 28, 312 (or 311?)
 - Maxentius (emperor 308–312 [or 311?])
 - Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea
 - Lactantius, aide-de-camp to Constantine
 - chi-rho (Χριστός)
 - Edict of Milan
4. Conflict of Neoplatonism with Christianity and Their Synthesis
 - a. Plotinus (204–270), *Enneads*
 - b. Porphyry (ca. 232–ca. 305), *Isagoge*

- c. Augustine (354–430), *Confessions*; *City of God*
 - d. Hypatia tortured to death by Christian fanatics in Alexandria (415)
 - e. Emperor Zeno (477–491) — forced conversion of Neoplatonists
 - f. Emperor Justinian closes Neoplatonic Academy at Athens (529)
 - g. Non-Christians ousted from Alexandrian Academy (6th century)
 - h. Muslims capture Alexandria (646)
 - 5. Preservation of “Salvation Kit of Latinity” for Distant Future
 - a. Martianus Capella (d. 429), *The Marriage of Mercury with Philology*
 - b. Boethius (480–524), *The Consolation of Philosophy*
 - c. Cassiodorus (ca. 490–575) — Monastery of Vivarium (Calabria)
 - d. Isidore of Seville (ca. 560–636) — *Etymologiae*
- B. Four Main Centers: Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Rome
- 1. Question of primacy of bishop of Rome (pope)
 - 2. Celebration of Easter—Victor, Bishop of Rome (189–199)
 - 3. Filioque Question
- C. Attempt to Establish Theological Consistency
- 1. Donatism
 - 2. Subordinationist (*homoi-ousious* vs. *homo-ousious*)
 - a. Arianism (Arius)
 - b. Nestorianism (Nestorius)
 - 3. Monophysite
 - 4. Ascetism and Mysticism
 - a. Manicheans (Mani 216–276)
 - b. Gnostics
 - 5. Ecumenical Councils
 - a. Nicea, 325 (1st)—Nicean Creed
 - b. Constantinople, 381 (2nd)—condemned Arianism
 - c. Ephesus, 431 (3rd)—condemned Nestorianism
 - d. Chalcedon, 541 (4th)

Recommended Reading:

- Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).
- Eusebius of Caesarea, *The Ecclesiastical History* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1858).
- Michael McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300–900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
- Alden M. Rollins, comp., *The Fall of Rome: A Reference Guide* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1983).
- Edward Kennard Rand, *Founders of the Middle Ages* (New York: Dover, 1928).
- Robert L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).