A. T. Jones, Ecclesiastical Empire

THE PAPAL TEMPORAL POWER ESTABLISHED

Chapter 12
The empire perished when the Heruli, under Odoacer, overran all Italy, deposed the last emperor of the West, appropriated to themselves one third of all the lands, and established the Herulian kingdom, with Odoacer as king of Italy. The very calamities which rapidly wrought the ruin of the empire, and which were hastened by the union of Church and State, were turned to the advantage of the bishopric of Rome. During the whole period of barbarian invasions from 400 to 476, the Catholic hierarchy everywhere adapted itself to the situation, and reaped power and influence from the calamities that were visited everywhere.
117—Pax Romana
Heruli—one of the three horns plucked up by the roots (Daniel 7:8)

* Jones brings out that throughout the conquest by and the establishment of the Heruli kingdom, “the increasing power and importance of the Catholic ecclesiastics” was evident. They became “ambassadors, mediators in treaties,” traveling from one dispute to another, and by so doing they strengthened the “wavering loyalty” for themselves and “instigate[d] the revolt of cities” (quoting Milman, page 123).
Daniel 7:8

The three horns

Most likely the Heruli, Vandals, Ostrogoths
Zeno, the eastern emperor, commissioned Theodoric to invade Italy and destroy Odoacer and the Heruli.
476 AD

Romania under Zeno the Isaurian
Theodoric
Julian Alps
Soon after Theodoric killed Odoacer and destroyed his people and established himself as king, the pope called for a council of bishops, presbyters, and deacons at Rome in 499, the very first act of which was to repeal the law enacted by Odoacer that affected the Church’s acquisition of lands and other possessions.
The secret of the papacy in destroying the Herulian kingdom, Jones notes, was not just getting rid of Odoacer (the ruler) but also doing away with his law. In other words, the authority of the civil power had to be nullified.

An interesting point Jones makes is that even though Theodoric was Arian in belief, he cooperated with the papacy to destroy the Heruli. At the same time, the papacy cooperated with him and his followers, a group they considered heretical, to destroy another heretical nation, the Heruli, also Arian.

But the kingdom of the Ostrogoths did not last. They were finally destroyed by this vengeful papacy in 538, forty-seven years later. However, while Theodoric ruled Italy, she enjoyed peace, quietness, and security.
That the three were “plucked up by the roots,” indicated complete destruction. It was “three of the first horns” that were uprooted or subdued. In the fourth century, Arius, a priest of Alexandria, began teaching that Christ was the first created being and was therefore inferior to the Father. The Council of Nicea, called by Constantine in 325, condemned Arius as a heretic and his teachings as heresy. Arianism, however, continued to grow until four of the ten kingdoms were Arian in belief. Three of these were the Heruli, the Vandals, and the Ostrogoths. Through war and diplomacy the papacy, which clung to the Nicene Creed, endeavored to destroy these heretical nations. It was three of the first that were uprooted and destroyed. (See Taylor Bunch, The Book of Daniel, p. 100)
(1) The **Heruli**. “The first kingdom established by the barbarians in Italy was that of the Heruli.”—Ridpath. The historian gives the date of the overthrow of the Heruli as 493. They were overthrown by the Goths under Theodoric by what he called a divine commission from Zeno, the emperor of Eastern Rome. The fact that the Heruli and Ostrogoths were both Arian in belief did not restrain the ... pontiff from using the one to destroy the other when the outcome resulted in his advancement in power. See *History of the World*, by Ridpath, Vol. 4, chap. 74 and Gibbon’s *Roman Empire*, chapters 39 and 40. The destruction of this Arian nation was complete. “After the middle of the sixth century, however, their name completely disappears.”—*Encyclopedia Britannia*, Vol. XIII, p. 403, art. “Heruli.” “After this their “name disappears from history.”—*Standard Encyclopedia of World Knowledge* Vol. XIII, p. 334. See also the *New Standard Encyclopedia*, art. “Heruli.” The kingdom was so completely uprooted that no trace is left, and no modern nation or province bears the name or can be identified with the Heruli. (Ibid.)
“Being Arian Christians, the Vandals persecuted with furious zeal the orthodox party, the followers of Athanasius. Moved by the entreaties of the African Catholics, Justinian, the Eastern emperor, sent his general, Belisarius, to drive the barbarians from Africa. The expedition was successful....The Vandals remaining in the country were gradually absorbed by the old Roman population, and after a few generations no certain trace of the barbarian invaders could be detected....The Vandal nation had disappeared; the name alone remained.”—*A History of Rome*, by Myers, p. 193. (*Ibid.*, p. 101)
“The Arian heresy (of the Vandals) was proscribed, and the race of these remarkable conquerors was in a short time exterminated. A single generation sufficed to confound [mix up] their women and children in the mass of the Roman inhabitants of the province, and their very name was soon totally forgotten. There are few instances in history of a nation disappearing so rapidly and so completely as the Vandals of Africa.”—History of Greece, George Finlay, Vol. I, p. 232. “It is reckoned that during the reign of Justinian, Africa lost five millions of inhabitants; thus Arianism was extinguished in that region, not by any enforcement of conformity, but by the extermination of the race which had introduced and professed it.”—History of the Christian Church, J.C. Robertson, Vol. I, p. 521. (Ibid., p. 101)
(3) The **Ostrogoths**. Ridpath dates the establishment of the Ostrogothic nation in 493, and its overthrow in 538, and its total destruction in 554. The following is from Ridpath’s *History of the World*, Vol. IV, pp. 408-417: “Bishop Wulfila, or Ulfilas, labored for forty years among the Goths, and saw as the fruits of his labors the conversion of the entire people to the Arian branch of Christianity....The Ostrogoths had grown to be first in influence among the barbarian states....In religious faith Theodoric, like his people, was an Arian. This fact opened a chasm between the Goths and the Italians, the latter accepting the Nicene creed....Certain it is that Justinian, who had now succeeded to power at Constantinople, resolved to purge the church of heresy as well in the West as in his paternal dominions.” The agent of the emperor in the extermination of heresy was Belisarius who had destroyed the Vandal nation. *(Ibid., p. 101)*
“Nearly the whole Gothic nation gathered around the Eternal City; but Belisarius [Justinian’s general] held out until reenforcements arrived from the East, and after a siege of a year and nine days’ duration, Rome was delivered from the clutch of her [barbarian] assailants. Vitiges (the Ostrogothic leader) was obliged to burn his tents and retreat (538), before his pursuing antagonist, to Ravena....It was evident that the kingdom of the Goths was in the hour and article of death.” (Ibid., p. 101)
Speaking of the final defeat of the Goths in [538?], Ridpath says that there was “inflicted on the barbarians a defeat so decisive as to refix the status of Italy. The greater part of the Gothic army perished either by the sword or in attempting to cross the river...As for the Goths, they either retired to their native seats beyond the mountains or were absorbed by the Italians.”—Ibid. In chapter 41 of Gibbon’s *Roman Empire* is a graphic description of the campaigns of Belisarius against the Vandals and Ostrogoths resulting in their defeat and overthrow. Thus the three Arian nations who refused to renounce their heretical faith were uprooted or subdued and the other Arian peoples turned orthodox, leaving the bishop of Rome the undisputed ruler of nations and the corrector of heretics. How completely the prophecy was fulfilled. (Ibid., p. 101)
The year 538 marks the conquest of Italy, the taking of Rome, and the destruction of the kingdom of the Ostrogoths. This is the date which marks the establishment of the temporal authority of the papacy and the exercise of that authority as a world power. With the barbarian powers rooted out of her way, her assertion of dominion over all other dominions and her disputing dominion with the powers of the earth began. (See Jones, 208, 209)
Brief History of the Rise of the Roman Empire
The Romans built an empire of gigantic proportions. At its height, it encompassed nearly the entire European continent as well as parts of the Middle East and Africa. The Roman Empire’s tentacles stretched from England to Egypt, from Spain to Iraq, and from southern Russia to Morocco. More significantly, ancient Roman civilization thrived for nearly one thousand years. The influence of the Romans over all of those peoples over that span of time defies measure. 

http://www.ushistory.org/civ/6.asp
It all began when the Romans overthrew their Etruscan conquerors in 509 B.C.E. Centered north of Rome, the Etruscans had ruled over the Romans for hundreds of years. Once free, the Romans established a republic, a government in which citizens elected representatives to rule on their behalf. A republic is quite different from a democracy, in which every citizen is expected to play an active role in governing the state.
The invading army reached the outskirts of Rome, which had been left totally undefended. In 410 C.E., the Visigoths, led by Alaric, breached the walls of Rome and sacked the capital of the Roman Empire.
They looted, burned, and pillaged their way through the city, leaving a wake of destruction. The plundering continued for three days. For the first time in nearly a millennium, the city of Rome was in the hands of someone other than the Romans. This was the first time that the city of Rome was sacked, but by no means the last.
One of the factors that contributed to the fall of the Roman Empire was the rise of Christianity. Christianity ran counter to the Roman religion, in which the emperors were considered gods, and, as a result, the Christians were persecuted.
In 313, however, the Roman emperor, Constantine the Great, ended the persecution and declared toleration for Christianity. Later, Christianity became the official state religion. This change spread Christianity to every corner of the Empire. By approving Christianity, the Roman state directly undermined its religious traditions. Romans considered their emperor a god, but the Christian believed in one god,* which was seen as weakening the authority and credibility of the emperor.

*Council of Nicea was 325
Constantine enacted another change that helped accelerate the fall of the Roman Empire. In 330 he split the empire into two parts: the western half centered in Rome and the eastern half centered in Constantinople, a city he named after himself.

Why two empires?

The western Empire spoke Latin and was the precursor of Roman Catholicism. The eastern Empire spoke Greek and worshipped under the Eastern Orthodox branch of the Christian church. Over time, the east thrived, while the west declined. In fact, after the western part of the Roman Empire fell, the eastern half continued to exist as the Byzantine Empire for hundreds of years. Therefore, the “fall of Rome” really refers only to the fall of the western half of the Empire.
There were political and military difficulties, as well. Army generals dominated the emperorship, and corruption was rampant. Over time, the military was transformed into a mercenary army with no real loyalty to Rome. As money grew tight, the government hired the cheaper and less reliable Germanic soldiers to fight in Roman armies. By the end, these armies were defending Rome against their fellow Germanic tribesmen. It was under these circumstances, in addition to monetary inflation, that the sack of Rome occurred.
Wave after wave of Germanic barbarian tribes swept through the Roman Empire. Groups such as the Visigoths, Vandals, Angles, Saxons, Franks, Ostrogoths, and Lombards took turns ravaging the Empire, eventually carving out areas in which to settle. The Angles and Saxons populated the British Isles, and the Franks ended up in France. In 476 Romulus, the last of the Roman emperors in the west, was overthrown by the Germanic leader Odoacer, who became the first Barbarian to rule in Rome.
One marker for the end of the Roman empire is 476, when Odoacer deposed the western emperor and proclaimed himself king, but other key dates for the fall of the western Roman Empire include the Crisis of the Third Century, the Crossing of the Rhine in 406 (or 405), the sack of Rome in 410, and the death of Julius Nepos in 480.
In the year 532, Justinian [emperor] issued an edict declaring his intention “to unite all men in one faith.” Whether they were Jews, Gentiles, or Christians, all who did not within three months profess and embrace the Catholic faith, were by the edict “declared infamous, and as such excluded from all employments both civil and military; rendered incapable of leaving anything by will; and all their estates confiscated, whether real or personal.” As a result of this cruel edict, “Great numbers were driven from their habitations with their wives and children, stripped and naked. Others betook themselves to flight, carrying with them what they could conceal, for their support and maintenance; but they were plundered of what little they had, and many of them inhumanly massacred.”—Bower (Jones 200)
Theological issues arose within the clergy on the trinity—a bishop was murdered, sides took to each other with sticks and stones.
Then things were ready for the complete deliverance of the Catholic Church from Arian dominion....The crusade began with the invasion of the Arian kingdom of the Vandals in Africa, of whom Gelimer was the king...[This was] in the interests of the Catholic religion and Church....[but] Justinian was dissuaded from undertaking the African War. He hesitated, and was about to relinquish his design, when he was rallied by a fanatical bishop, who exclaimed: “I have seen a vision! It is the will of heaven, O emperor, that you should not abandon your holy enterprise for the deliverance of the African Church. The God of battle will march before your standard and disperse your enemies, who are the enemies of His Son.” (Jones 203)
This persuasion was sufficient for the “pious” emperor, and in June 533, “the whole fleet of six hundred ships was ranged in martial pomp before the gardens of the palace,” laden and equipped with thirty-five thousand troops and sailors, and five thousand horses, all under the command of Belisarius. He landed on the coast of Africa in September; Carthage was captured on the 18th of the same month; Gelimer was disastrously defeated in November, and the conquest of Africa and the destruction of the Vandal kingdom were completed by the capture of Gelimer in the spring of 534. During the rest of the year, Belisarius “reduced the islands of Corsica, Sardinia, Majorica, Minorica, and whatever else belonged to the Vandals, either on the continent or in the islands.”—Bower. (Jones 204, 205)
As soon as the work of uprooting the Vandal kingdom had been accomplished, the arms of Justinian were turned against Italy and the Arian Ostrogoths. The Goths assembled at Ravenna for the defense of their country, one hundred and fifty thousand fighting men, in the spring of 537. The whole nation of the Ostrogoths assembled for the attack and was almost entirely consumed in the siege of Rome, which continued for over a year. One year and nine days after the siege began, the army of the Ostrogoths burnt their tents and left. Rome was taken by Belasarius on March 12, 538. The remains of the kingdom of the Ostrogoths were soon afterward destroyed. “They had lost their king (an inconsiderable loss), their capital, their treasures, the provinces from Sicily to the Alps, and the military force of two hundred thousand barbarians, magnificently equipped with horses and arms.” -- Gibbon. And thus was the kingdom of the Ostrogoths destroyed before the vengeful arrogance of the papacy. (See Jones 206)
The record of the papacy slanders us all. Because it claims to be Christian, all Christianity is brought down.
The record of Christianity from the days when it first obtained the power to persecute is one of the most ghastly in history. The total number of Manichaeans, Arians, Priscillianists, Paulicians, Bogomiles, Cathari, Waldensians, Albigensians, witches, Lollards, Hussites, Jews and Protestants killed because of their rebellion against Rome clearly runs to many millions; and beyond these actual executions or massacres is the enormously larger number of those who were tortured, imprisoned, or beggared. (Joseph McCabe, The Story of Religious Controversy, Chapter XXIII, “The Spanish Inquisition”)
The papacy brings all individual Christians and all Christianity down. Way down.

And to a much less extent have true followers of God done so.
Through successive generations infidels have pointed to the character of David, bearing this dark stain [of killing Uriah], and have exclaimed in triumph and derision, “This is the man after God’s own heart!” Thus a reproach has been brought upon religion, God and His word have been blasphemed, souls have been hardened in unbelief, and many, under a cloak of piety, have become bold in sin. (PP 722.4)
The difference is David repented.
It was when he was walking in the counsel of God that he was called a man after God’s own heart. When he sinned, this ceased to be true of him until by repentance he had returned to the Lord….Though David repented of his sin and was forgiven and accepted by the Lord, he reaped the baleful harvest of the seed he himself had sown. The judgments upon him and upon his house testify to God’s abhorrence of the sin. (PP 723.1)
Next: The Restoration of the Western Empire