Church History  
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The Church and the Decline of Rome

1. Introduction: The Roman Empire had been the church’s birthplace, its persecutor, its supporter, defender, and promoter, its home…now, in the 300s and 400s it began to weaken and fall apart. It was inevitable that the decline and fall of the Roman Empire would have an effect on the church.
2. Reasons for Rome’s decline
   1. Rome’s political disorder
   2. Economic disorder
   3. Moral decay
3. Fall of Rome
   1. Groups of people from north of the Roman empire called the Germanic tribes or the “barbarians” began to take advantage of Rome’s weaknesses and invade its territory
   2. The last Roman emperor was removed from power in A.D. 476.
4. Effect on the church
   1. As the Western Roman Empire disintegrated, the church assumed much of the Empire’s former role as provider of stability, unity, and authority
   2. Arian or pagan at the time of the invasions, the Germanic tribes converted to the Catholicism of the Roman church over time.
   3. The Roman Catholic Church was the only institution enjoying widespread respect and authority in western Europe.