

The Dark Ages - *Mixed Martial Arts & the Decline of American Empire VS A Lion's Diet of Christians and The Fall of Rome*

[The Roman Empire declined](#) for a variety of reasons. Certainly, it was partially caused by the “invasion” of assorted Germanic and Northern tribes – [Ostrogoths](#), [Visigoths](#), [Vikings](#), and [Huns](#) as well as the [Vandals](#) in North Africa.

This invasion South was not necessarily so much a violent one where huge armies of “barbarians” drove to the heart of Rome in one fell swoop one year in the 5th century AD. It was more like one of pastoral nomads moving over many years South into, and taking over control of small then larger areas and a reorganization of communities left in a relative political leadership vacuum. The modern village would be a later invention of these “[Dark Ages](#)”. The structure of the fundamental Roman society was falling apart through misguided central leadership in Rome- e.g. extravagant Coliseum games and dinner /sexual orgies.

In the North the [Angles](#) and [Saxons](#) occupied Roman Briton. Recent evidence suggests this Anglo “invasion” of Northumbria (York) Briton occurred because it was a more lightly populated area as Roman rule ended. The Saxon invasion was of a similar nature and in fact, Saxons, Jutes, Frisians and Franks had been permitted to settle less populated coastal areas. Jute warlords Hengist and Horst were hired by Rome to occupy Kent to protect against the northern Picts at sea.

For the most part, the Roman system of massive taxation and tribute from all reaches of the Empire to support the lavishly decadent lifestyle of the Caesars (Donald Trumps) and their entourage was replaced by the Visigoths et al with a more democratic government where taxation was used locally for bridges, roads, dikes, wind-mills, churches and other cooperative projects. Community wealth was pooled and shared and massive projects like the Coliseums were no longer undertaken. The standing army was disbanded as all men were expected to bear arms in defense of the local community. The period of time between Classical Rome and the High Middle Ages is pejoratively known as Dark Ages. The rise of local Kings cut slightly into the local economy relative to

the large amounts of wealth previously extracted to Rome.

Dark Ages- “... transitional period between Classical Roman Antiquity and the High Middle Ages, including not only the lack of Latin literature, but also a lack of contemporary written history, general population decline, limited building activity and material cultural achievements in general. Popular culture further expanded the term to depict the Mediaeval / Middle Age period as a time of backwardness.”

The defining reason for the “lack of contemporary written history” was the stranglehold the rising Catholic Church had in restricting literary focus to the Bible as if it was the only source of knowledge necessary. The best-known extant work of this period is the Icelandic saga Beowulf translated into Olde English. Manual reproduction of books was almost exclusively limited to illuminated biblical manuscripts and related religious material.

From here on, I'll use the term **Dark Ages** loosely.

If there had been advertising in the Dark Ages it would have been exclusively about the bible and something like- “The Bible! It has all the answers you'll ever need.” It was not that the human race was suddenly profoundly less intelligent during this period, in fact many people were very well educated- **in bible study**. People thought the Sun went around the Earth for a reason - the bible. Even centuries later in 1633 when [Galileo](#) pointed out this was wrong the church condemned him to life under house arrest for heresy.

It is interesting to note that post Dark Age literature such as **Chaucer's Canterbury Tales** were based on **The Decameron**, a collection of 100 novellas by Italian **Giovanni Boccaccio** who much like **the Brothers Grimm** would later do, set down traditional Dark Age folke stories handed down in the oral tradition. To my way of thinking, word of mouth story telling is as valid a literary tool as the printed word AND in fact, all due respect to the intellectual memory capabilities of Dark Age people should be given.

As time went on, the economy became localized as regions, even localities, became largely self-sufficient. Large-scale international trade dried up.

The educational and cultural standards of the late Empire could not be maintained. Political fragmentation led to the rise of local strongmen and eventually kings who had poor control over their supposed kingdoms.

Dark Age not so Dark

The 300+ year Dark Age was more a time of transitional inventiveness – inventions were definitely the mother of necessity. The development of early European monasteries provided little islands of order within the larger more chaotic transitional landscape. Disciplined monks applied the best agricultural techniques they developed and shared with the larger community. The three-field crop rotation system as well as invention of the windmill and irrigation technology greatly increased arable agricultural land and crop yield. The invention of the horse collar along with the heavy metal plough multiplied the effectiveness of draft animals further increasing crop yield and thus population growth. Better weather coincided as well with greater crop yields prior to the Little Ice Age (1400-1750). Some monasteries perpetuated a basic kind of education and through copying manuscripts preserved the heritage of the classical past though monks initially guarded this knowledge carefully. Eventually the University was invented. Algebra arrived from the Arabs inducing modern architecture. In other words, Europeans in the Dark Ages were not devoid of human ingenuity and creativity. The invention of the stirrup - such a seemingly simple device - was a slight setback as it had an escalating effect on military combat and the rise to importance of the mounted soldier and a regression towards power struggle warfare.

It was an exciting time to be alive. No one used the expression “Dark Ages” or said “Poor me! I was born in the terrible dark Middle Ages”. It has always been possible for some to lament their particular circumstances, even today if you visit a homeless shelter or talk to those in a refugee camp. In many respects, the Dark Ages were characterized by expansion, increased opportunity, and optimism.

[Francesco Petrarch](#) and others during the Early Renaissance first disparaged this period of time as *The Dark Ages*, in part to bestow self-congratulatory praise and a kind of blue ribbon upon their own age. They spoke of it as a brutal and primitive time.

Hitler, Stalin, [Pol Pot](#), Idi Amin, Saddam Hussein, [Suharto](#), Ronald Regan, [Henry Kissinger](#), Dick Chaney and GW Bush did not live in the classical Dark Ages. Historians can point to examples of brutality in the Dark Ages, but the bloodiest, most inhumane time in all human history has been the 20th and 21st centuries, but the worst may be yet to come.

Think of the millions throughout the world today who live without an inkling of guilt for their behaviour. Even while using Cell phones and the Internet, they are already living in relative darkness about what is happening to the climate, environment and starving masses as a result of their relatively decadent lifestyle.

Dark Delicious Irony

Ironically, the American Empire while bullying the world towards a new dark age, is imploding under trillion dollar debts. Debt is paying for military protection of the oil necessary to fund a massive military to protect a society built around a lifestyle of consumerism. Debt is transferring trillions more to China to have those consumer goods produced cheaply, while keeping American's unemployed, un-housed and health insurance free. Huge numbers of Americans are employed in unsustainable and dying automobile manufacturing related industries. Too many are employed in weapons manufacturing related industries. The USA and we in the Western world need to drastically retool and reorganize.

The Dark Age was a time of reorganization and recovery from barbarian/ Goth/ Hun disruption. We today are the barbarians disrupting our very own society, environment and planet. Europe then, was in disarray. It was a challenge to simply survive. Roman knowledge of “science, technology, and medicine”, as well as literature went missing or was ignored. The Dark Ages lasted 300 years from 500 to 800 and was marked by mass migrations, internal warring over resources (read “oil” today) and plagues (read AIDS today). Emperor Charlemagne crowned in 800 AD promoted order, education and civilization. We do not need a supreme dictator like him, but we do need a supreme dedication towards reorder.

Roman roads were used primarily to get troops quickly from one place to a point of uprising. A secondary use was transport of grain and goods from the outer empire to Rome and Roman fortified military towns e.g. outlying Briton to Londinium,

Bath, Sarum and York. Post-empire there was no need for so many roads, effort was no longer expended to maintain them and they grew over. It's not as if people in the Dark Ages suddenly said, "Does anyone remember what that long line of cobbled stones was for?" Some unused roads were even dismantled and the material used for buildings, including churches and Cathedrals like Salsbury.

Bloody Circus

While television has given us worthwhile educational programming it has declined into endless offerings glorifying consumerism and climate frying behaviour. An excellent example is Discovery Channel. Amongst a smattering of programs like *Daily Planet* we find: *Myth Busters*- focused on blowing shite up and spewing toxic waste; *Future Weapons*- glorification of battlefield killing tools; *Dirtiest Jobs* – the best of our human toxic behaviour; *Deadliest Catch*- over-fishing to the extreme; *Smash Lab*- title speaks for itself; Endless shows about massively stupid construction projects such as those in *Dubai*- indoor skiing with outside temperatures soaring to 45' C.

Television and the sporting world in the 1990's rejected the bloody behaviour professional wrestling had escalated into- banning steel chair to head gashes. By 2005 the activity of Mixed Martial Arts *MMA* had been embraced for its blood gashing kicks and semi-gloved punches to the nose, face and head- the more sweat-bloody-body the better.

It may not be Christians ripped to shreds by starved lions but it is ironically reminiscent in entertaining a sick society and decline of empire.

The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire - Edward Gibbon- 1776

- Roman Empire succumbed to barbarian invasions because of a loss of civic virtue among its citizens.
- Rome had become weak, outsourcing their duties to defend their Empire to barbarian mercenaries, (Black Water and Chilean ex-military, etceteras.)
- Romans had become affluent and "soft", unwilling and unable to live a self-sufficient lifestyle
- Christianity created a belief that a better life existed after death, which fostered an indifference to the present among Roman citizens, thus sapping their desire to sacrifice for society and the Empire (US movement towards Christian "rapture")
- Gibbon held in contempt the resultant superstitious, pre-dark age society

The Good News

There have been times in human history when total destruction of society begat a better era. The destruction of Roman society, begat the Dark Ages which begat the Renaissance which begat a period of stable GDP per capita allowing the industrial revolution which resulted in a quick rise to abusive of nature and in turn the destruction of the environment and subsequently our world and society.

It is my hope that the relative economic collapse of modern consumer society is pending and will arrive full force in order to destroy our misguided environmentally destructive way of life. An example of what can happen afterwards is the town of Greensburg Kansas after tornados completely destroyed it. The people who remained housed in FEMA trailers, have begun to rebuild their town from the sewers up in an energy neutral green way. <http://www.greensburggreentown.org>

Seeing the Light

We would do well to heed **James Michener** when he said, "*An age is called Dark not because the light fails to shine, but because people refuse to see it*".

If we do not see the light, if we fail to see we are entering a darker age, we will bring it on more fully and most successfully. It is time to reinvent society. We must reduce our dependency on our massive standing armies for oil. We must abandon our fossil fuel dependent road, sea and air goods transportation system while increasing local production and reestablish crop rotation and sustainable local farming. We must re-invent the windmill and reestablish the University (post secondary) as the centre of enlightenment and formal criticism of the social status quo. If we do not we may well be condemning future generations to the darkest of all ages.

If we do this; if we reject gratuitous consumerism and embrace the spirit of the 1930s depression generation during WW2, we can weather the coming battle on climate change. What ended the depression was a complete and dedicated social shift to war, a retooling of factories to supply the war machine. Along with this came rationing and a more austere lifestyle "without silk stockings". If we the people focus our energy on retooling GM, Ford, and Daimler-Chrysler into production of alternate energy farm equipment; Boeing, Lockheed Martin and Northrup-Gruman into

alternate energy production and equipment, if we strive to live more simply, the human and animal species losses, though many, will be far less than if we do not.

Most of all, we must reject consumer society where fashions come and go and advertising convinces us to expend endless quantities of energy and carbon waste on crap, stuff and things we do not need to survive, because we are entering an age of survival that will make the Dark Ages look like the time of plenty it was.

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