

Attila and the downfall of Roman Empire

Written by W.J.Pais

King and general of the Huns; died 453. Succeeding in 433 to the kingship of Scythian hordes disorganized and enfeebled by internal discords, Attila soon made of his subjects a compact and formidable people, the terror of [Europe](#) and [Asia](#). An unsuccessful campaign in [Persia](#) was followed in 441 by an invasion of the [Eastern Roman Empire](#), the success of which emboldened Attila to invade the West. He passed unhindered through Austria and [Germany](#), across the Rhine into [Gaul](#), plundering and devastating all in his path with a ferocity unparalleled in the records of barbarian invasions and compelling those he overcame to augment his mighty army. In 451 he was met on the Plains of Chalons by the allied Romans under Aetius and the [Visigoths](#) under Theodoric and Thorismund, who overcame the Huns and averted the peril that menaced Western civilization. Turning then to [Italy](#), Attila, in the spring of 452, laid waste [Aquileia](#) and many [Lombard](#) cities, and was approaching [Rome](#), whither [Valentinian III](#) had fled before him, when he was met near [Mantua](#) by an embassy — the most influential member of which was [Pope Leo I](#) — which dissuaded Attila from sacking the city.

Attila died shortly after. [Catholic](#) interest in Attila centers chiefly in his relations with those [bishops](#) of [France](#) and [Italy](#) who restrained the Hunnish leader in his devastating fury. The moral power of these [bishops](#), more particularly of the [pope](#)

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during the dissolution of the empire, is evidenced as well by the confidence in which the [faithful](#)

looked to them for succour against the terrible invader as by the influence they sometimes exerted in staying that invader's destroying hand. St. Agnan of

[Orléans](#)

sustained the courage of his people and hastened the reinforcements that saved his apparently doomed city; at

[Troyes](#)

, St. Lupus prevailed upon Attila to spare the province of Champagne, and gave himself as a hostage while the Hunnish army remained in

[Gaul](#)

; when

[Rome](#)

seemed destined to meet the fate of the

[Lombard](#)

cities which Attila had pillaged, it was

[Pope Leo the Great](#)

who, by his eloquence and commanding personality, overawed the conqueror and saved the city. The terror which for centuries after clung to the name of Attila, "the Scourge of

[God](#)

", as he came to be called, and the gratitude of the people to their deliverers combined in time to encumber

[medieval](#)

[hagiography](#)

with

[legends of saints](#)

reputed to have overcome Attila by their imposing presence, or stayed his progress by their [prayers](#)

. But these fictions serve to emphasize the import of the facts which inspired them. They enable us to appreciate how widespread must have been that sentiment expressed in the recently discovered appeal of

[Eusebius of Dorylaeum](#)

to

[Pope Leo I](#)

: "Curavit desuper et ab exordio consuevit thronus apostolicus iniqua perferentes defensare . . . et humi Jacentes erigere, secundum possibilitatem quam habetis [see Harnack, *History of Dogma*

(Boston, 1903), II, 168]. National pride, too, came in time to invest the person of Attila with a halo of fiction. Most

[European](#)

countries have their legends of the Hunnish leader, who is diversely depicted, according as the vanity of nations would represent Attila as a friend who had contributed to their greatness or as a foe to whose superhuman strength it had been no discredit to succumb. Of these legends the best known is the story of Etzel (Attila) in the "Niebelungen-lied".

God controls the world, though through invisible means. ☐ Humans are catalysts in his plan.☐ Attila was one. ☐ This has happened again and again, and due to our myopic nature of our vision, we fail to see it. ☐ Not only humans can be used by God as catalysts for change, but also natural events like hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes.☐ Selfish man builds his possessions on the weaknesses of others, who can not fight his manipulation. ☐ These empires come crumbling down during these events. ☐ Have you not heard the media reports say: "8 people died, and 1 million dollars lost !" ☐ whose money was lost, when so few people die? ☐ In poor countries it is the opposite.☐ More people die, and very little wealth is lost. ☐☐ God equalizes these imbalances, and we do not realize it, as we always focus on the natural, but not the hidden Truth, behind what we see with our eyes.

[Attila](#)