

barian kingdoms could not function. So what little we know of the history of this period is the work of the clergy who drafted the monastic chronicles, titles to properties, episcopal decrees, and imperial charters that are the only written sources we have. The scribes who labored in the episcopal curia, the monastic scriptoria and the imperial chancery created the fund of historical memory on which we rely when we try to reconstruct the events that transpired in Turin and its surrounding region during these long centuries of obscurity.

2. *After the Fall of Rome: The Ostrogoths.*

The final passing of the Roman empire in 476 would have had little if any perceptible impact on Turin and its citizens. The deposition of the last Roman emperor by the barbarian general Odoacer would have done nothing to change the political situation at the local level: life would have gone on as before. The bishop would have continued to govern the city, ministering to his people's spiritual needs and striving to protect them from the perils that threatened on all sides. Nor did the situation change significantly when in 493 Odoacer in his turn was overthrown by the invading Ostrogoths under their leader Theoderic. The Ostrogothic conquest seemed for a time to promise some stability and order to the people of northern Italy. A rudimentary "Pax Barbarica" took shape on the ruins of the "Pax Romana". Theoderic made himself king of Italy, with his capital at Ravenna, and attempted to preserve the basic elements of the Roman system of government. In one respect at least the rule of the barbarian Ostrogoths marked an improvement over the late Roman administration, for Theoderic reduced taxation, easing the burden on the general populace. He installed garrisons to guard the frontiers of his new kingdom. One of these would have been based at Turin, which remained a critical frontier post for the Ostrogoths, as it had been for the Romans. We know that early in Theoderic's reign an invading army of Burgundians penetrated northern Italy from the west, through the Val d'Aosta, and went on to ravage the Lombard plain as far as Milan. The invaders took many of the local inhabitants captive, and Theoderic deputed the bishop of Pavia together with Victor, the bishop of Turin, to negotiate with the Burgundian king for their release. The two clerics carried out their dangerous mission with great success: we are told that the prisoners were set free without the payment of any ransom. In 508 Theoderic expelled the Burgundians from Lombardy and Piedmont into the Val d'Aosta, where some of them