

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910953390003321
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Titolo	The fall of the Roman household // Kate Cooper
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Cambridge : , : Cambridge University Press, , 2007
ISBN	1-281-37036-3 9786611370367 0-511-39395-4 0-511-48272-8 0-511-39460-8 0-511-39181-1 0-511-39064-5 0-511-39312-1
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (xvi, 319 pages) : digital, PDF file(s)
Disciplina	306.630937
Soggetti	Families - Religious aspects - Christianity Families - Rome Rome History Empire, 30 B.C.-476 A.D Rome Religion Rome Civilization Christian influences
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Title from publisher's bibliographic system (viewed on 05 Oct 2015).
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references (p. 284-308) and index.
Nota di contenuto	'The battle of this life' -- 'The obscurity of eloquence' -- Household and empire -- 'Such trustful partnership' -- The invisible enemy -- Appendix. Ad Gregoriam in palatio / English translation by Kate Cooper.
Sommario/riassunto	Edward Gibbon laid the fall of the Roman Empire at Christianity's door, suggesting that 'pusillanimous youth preferred the penance of the monastic to the dangers of a military life ... whole legions were buried in these religious sanctuaries'. This surprising 2007 study suggests that, far from seeing Christianity as the cause of the fall of the Roman Empire, we should understand the Christianisation of the household as a central Roman survival strategy. By establishing new 'ground rules' for marriage and family life, the Roman Christians of the last century of the

Western empire found a way to re-invent the Roman family as a social institution to weather the political, military, and social upheaval of two centuries of invasion and civil war. In doing so, these men and women - both clergy and lay - found themselves changing both what it meant to be Roman, and what it meant to be Christian.
