The Heritage of the Ancient World

From the Earliest Times to the Fall of Rome
The Heritage of the Ancient World

FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES TO THE FALL OF ROME
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Preface

When The Heritage of the Past: From the Earliest Times to the Close of the Middle Ages was published in 1955 as a survey text for the first half of the customary History of Civilization course, its reception from critics was very flattering. In particular, the chapters on the ancient world were thought to be exceptionally full for a text with such a wide coverage, and my publisher and I learned that these chapters were sometimes used in single-semester ancient history courses. The present book is therefore an answer to many requests for a separate printing of the ancient history chapters, which appear here exactly as they did in the original text.

This, of course, is not exactly the manner in which I should have prepared an ancient history text, if it had been written as such from the beginning. In particular, Chapter 6, which offers a contrast between the civilizations of the Far East and those of the West, would not have been included. Yet when I came to consider whether or not this chapter should be excised, it seemed to me that there was much in it that might be found interesting by students of ancient history, even though this chapter covers material later in time than the Fall of Rome. Some instructors and students may care to use it, while others may omit it altogether, and no harm will be done.

The present volume will be found less factual than some ancient history texts. But it is my belief that the general topical arrangement of the chapters has the virtue of concentrating on essentials. There is no reason why, especially in a one-semester course on ancient history, there should be an attempt to cover all the events of importance that may be found in the sources. These may be left for the specialist in graduate school. The selection of a few topics to which fairly ample coverage is given, together with an interpretation which may arouse controversy or at least discussion, should be as useful in an ancient history course as in a Civilization Survey. It is assumed that the instructor will assign additional readings from the ancient sources or from modern specialized works, and the chronological charts that appear in most chapters will serve to orient the student and to give him a selection of those important events that may not be dealt with in the body of the work.

Particular mention should be made of the material that I have used for the Egyptian chapter. It will be apparent to all those familiar with modern American Egyptology, particularly the research being carried on at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, how deeply I have drawn on the published writings of the late Henri Frankfort, John A. Wilson, and their colleagues for
the interpretations offered in the chapter on Egypt and to a lesser degree in the other Near Eastern chapters. There are specific footnote references to the work of these scholars, but these references do not begin to cover the suggestions and ideas obtained from them. Though their work is a pioneer effort, and I am aware that many of their conclusions are not universally accepted, it seems to me that explanations and interpretations of the kind they present are in the highest degree valuable, even though in detail they may not be accepted by posterity. Indeed, I must admit to having drawn from their work further conclusions that might not be considered acceptable even by themselves. The student should therefore be warned that, even though these interpretations appear in a textbook, they are not the last possible word on the subject. Though I personally believe that the general outlines of the Chicago group’s work will stand the test of time, I think the supreme value of their efforts lies in the fact that they give coherence to Egyptian civilization and truly make some sense of it. If the student thinks otherwise, then the road is wide open for him to pursue his studies further and come to his own understanding and interpretation.

A word should be said about the illustrations and maps. Almost every illustration has been chosen for the light it will throw on the text. The publisher designed the book in such a way that, with rare exceptions, a picture will be found on the same page as the point illustrated. The illustrations, though they may incidentally be decorative, were not included for decorative purposes. They are an integral part of the text, which in some sections, for instance that on Hellenic art, cannot well be understood without them. The maps have been designed to give im-
portant information supplementary to that in the text. They are all drawn to an exact scale. Every place mentioned in the text has been included in one map or another, and the index, made by the late Mr. Irving Garbaty, at that time a candidate for the Ph.D. degree in history at Columbia University, indicates on which map each such place is to be found. Like the text itself, the maps strive to hold a balance between useful information and impressionism. In each case the student should be able to grasp the general picture at once, and then study later the details for the purpose of acquiring essential information. The maps are by Mr. Vincent Kotschar, to whom I am greatly indebted for his brilliant work in designing them to bring out the points I felt needed to be made.

To all those others who read portions of the original manuscript and made wise and useful suggestions for its improvement I should like to pay tribute here but perhaps most of all to my publisher, Rinehart & Company, who broke new ground with this book when it first appeared, who designed it with loving care, and who incorporated in it several innovations which have now become almost commonplace. If the work itself is now useful and readable, this is due almost as much to the publisher as to the author; and if it now appears in a new dress, this too is due to the initiative and encouragement of the publisher as well as to those readers of the original who requested a smaller work for their courses in ancient history and liked what had been written in The Heritage of the Past: From the Earliest Times to the Close of the Middle Ages.

STEWART C. EASTON

College of the City of New York
January, 1960
Contents

Preface v
Maps xi
Illustrations xi

I Before History

1 The Foundations of an Organized Society
   The economic, political, and cultural foundations of a society 3
   The rise and fall of civilizations 8

2 Prehistoric Man
   Difficulties of studying prehistory 11
   The first beginnings of man 12
   Paleanthropic man—Lower Paleolithic period—Neanderthal man
     (ca. 150,000 b.c.) 15
   Upper Paleolithic period 16
   The Neolithic Revolution 19
   The beginnings of metallurgy 24

II East of the Mediterranean—
    The Foundation of Civilization

3 Egyptian Civilization
   General considerations—Reason for extended study 29
   "River-valley" civilizations—The meaning of the classification 31
Contrast between Egyptian and Mesopotamian river valleys—Physiography, government, outlook on life 32
Prehistoric or predynastic Egypt 35
The Old Kingdom 37
First Intermediate Period 51
The Middle Kingdom 54
The New Kingdom—Period of expansion 58
The New Kingdom—Period of decline 66
General summary of Egyptian achievements 70

4 Mesopotamia

General characteristics of Mesopotamian civilization 75
The Sumerians 78
Semitic conquests of Mesopotamia 92
Mesopotamia under Hammurabi—The Hammurabi Code 93
The Empire of the Assyrians 95
The Chaldeans and New Babylonia 99
The great Persian Empire 102
Conclusion—The influence of Mesopotamia 106

5 Maritime and Other Civilizations of the Ancient World

General characteristics of the minor civilizations of the Near East 108
The civilizations of Asia Minor 109
The trading civilizations of the Near East 113
The peoples of Palestine 115
The Hebrew contribution to civilization 119
Aegean civilization 128

6 Far Eastern Contrasts with the Western World

Reasons for inclusion of the Far East 139
India—The land and its history 140
China—The land and its history 150
Similarities between China and India—Contrast of both with the West 158

III Classical Civilization in the West

7 Greek Civilization

Physiography 179
The peoples of Greece 180
The Homeric Age 181
General characteristics of the Greek peoples 187
Political evolution 190
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Inter city relations 211 |
| The economic basis of Athenian imperialism 218 |
| Athenian society 222 |

8 Hellenic Culture 228

| The originality of Greek thought 228 |
| Wonder about the world 229 |
| From religion to philosophy 232 |
| Hellenic art of the Classical Age 251 |
| Literature 258 |

9 The Hellenistic Age 265

| The end of the independent polis in Greece 265 |
| The career of Alexander the Great 271 |
| Results of the conquests 277 |
| The Hellenistic Age in Greece 278 |
| The Hellenistic Age in Egypt 281 |
| The Hellenistic Age in Asia—Pergamum and the Seleucid Empire 282 |
| Hellenistic culture 283 |
| Transition to the Roman world—Hellenistic “conquest” of Rome 299 |

10 The Roman Republic 301

| Divisions of Roman history—Republic and empire 301 |
| Roman history as the classical case of a democracy destroyed by its own imperialism 301 |
| Early Italy 303 |
| Early political evolution 306 |
| The ruling oligarchy of the mature republic 313 |
| External history 315 |
| The Gracchan revolution 327 |
| The collapse of the republic 329 |

11 The Foundation of the Roman Empire 341

| The Civil War and the establishment of one-man rule 341 |
| The problems facing Augustus and his solutions 345 |
| The successors of Augustus 359 |

12 Roman Culture 364

| General characteristics of Roman culture 364 |
| Religion 367 |
| Philosophy—Transformation of Greek thought by the Roman spirit 370 |
| Science 372 |
| Art 373 |
| Rhetoric 378 |
13 The Rise of Christianity

Religious conditions in the Roman Empire at the beginning of the Christian Era 391
The life and death of Jesus Christ 393
The early Christian Church 398
The organization of the Church 403
The establishment of Christian doctrine 404
The persistent ideal of poverty and holiness—Monasticism 408

IV The Centuries of Transition

14 The End of the Roman Empire, and the Establishment of Successor States 415

The beginning of the end 415
Re-establishment of discipline—Totalitarianism 417
External dangers to the empire 425
Barbarian conquest of Italy 432
Barbarian kingdoms in the West 438
The end of an era 442

Index 447
Maps

End Papers: (left) Italy—31 B.C.—A.D. 14;  
(right) Greece—431 B.C.

Ancient Egypt 38
Egyptian Empire under Thutmose III 59
Sumerian City States 78
Old Babylonian Empire under Hammurabi 93
Assyrian Empire at its height 97
Chaldean Empire about 570 B.C. 99
Persian Empire under Darius I 101
Phoenician settlements about 550 B.C. 114
Palestine about 800 B.C. 118
Aegean civilization about 1500 B.C. 131
Sites of Indus Valley civilization 141
Empire of Assaka 144
Muslim Empire in India 148
Growth of Kingdom of China 155
Greece: Distribution of peoples 181
Greek colonization about 550 B.C. 193
Messenian Wars 197
Persian Wars 213

Greece, 431 B.C. 217
Chalcidian League, 385–383 B.C. 266
Greece at time of conquest by Philip 271
Empire of Alexander, 323 B.C. 275
Hellenistic kingdoms about 250 B.C. 279
Achaean and Aetolian Leagues 280
Ptolemaic Egypt about 250 B.C. 281
Principal Roman roads about 220 B.C. 316
Unification of Italy 318
Second Punic War 323
Expansion of Roman Republic 325
Roman Empire in time of Augustus 351
Division of East and West Roman Empires about 395 421
Roman and Hunnic Empires about 450 431
East Roman Empire and Germanic kingdoms in 526 435
Europe and East Roman Empire, 590–604 438
Territory of Franks, 614 440
Britain about 600 441

Illustrations

The Black Bull of Lascaux Caves 1
Restored skulls of prehistoric men 15
Tools of prehistoric men 16
Cave painting from Altamira 18
Charcoal drawings from Las Monedas 18
Lake dwellings of Neolithic Man 21
Megaliths at Carnac 22
Aerial view of Stonehenge 23
Pyramids of Gizeh 27
Predynastic Egyptian jar 36
Thutmose III destroying enemies 42
Amenhotep II killing lion 42
Model of mastaba 44
Stepped Pyramid of Zoser 45

Model of Great Pyramid complex 45
Diorite statue of Khafre 49
Head of Amenemhet III 54
Granite statue of Senufer of 55
Model of weaving shop 56
Mummy of Egyptian minister 56
Necklace of beads 57
Ohelisk of Thutmose III 58
Funerary papyrus, judgment of Ostris 60
Gold coffin of Akhenaton 62
Painting of birds and plants 63
Akhenaton and family worshiping 64
Relief sculpture of horse and workers 65
Temple of Amon at Karnak 67
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustration Description</th>
<th>Plate Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Court of Temple of Amon at Karnak</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Rameses II</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xith Dynasty collar of beads</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xvith Dynasty collar of beads</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hieratic script</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demotic script</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papyrus capital</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuneiform symbol for bird</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuneiform tablet</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two pictures of mound at Tepe Gawra</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model of city of Ur</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ziggurat at Assur</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewelry from Ur</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sumerian vase</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sumerian white gypsum figure</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Gudea of Lagash</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stela of Hammurabi receiving laws</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wall slab from palace of Sennacherib</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pavement from palace of Sennacherib</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sculptured relief from Persepolis</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hittite hieroglyphs</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydian coins</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonah and the whale</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phaeus disk</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creton snake goddess</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bull-leaping</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Men and women in garden&quot;</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of a young girl (Creton)</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two women watching a boar hunt</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creton jug</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cat hunting a pheasant</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creton household drinking cup</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inlaid daggers from Mycenae</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site of Mohenjo-Daro</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seals from Mohenjo-Daro</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emperor Shah Jehan</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronze vessels of Shang dynasty</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Wall of China</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Palace at Peking</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jade dish</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese impressionistic painting</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese flower painting</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese Buddhist temple</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goddess Durga</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vishnu the Preserver</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The god Brahma</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior of Indian temple</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parthenon vista</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronze sword of Homeric age</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple of Poseidon at Paestum</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spartan kylix (side and interior)</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model of Athenian Agora</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three amphorae (Athenian)</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil flask in shape of athlete</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water clock for timing Athenian speakers</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth-century Athenian ostraka</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inscription recording allied tribute</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bust of Pericles</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold bow case found in Scythia</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gravestone in form of lekythos</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farewell scene from gravestone</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statue of Socrates</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archaic Athenian head of Hercules</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athenian statue showing Egyptian influence</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model of Parthenon</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of La Madeleine (Paris)</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of temple of Hephaistos</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triglyphs and metopes on temple of Hephaistos</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volute of Ionic column</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Maenad</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two slabs from Parthenon frieze</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of a young athlete</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hermes of Praxiteles</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lady playing a cithara</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statue of Alexander the Great</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruins of temple of Zeus at Pergamum</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restored stoa at Athens</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple of Zeus at Igel</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altar of Zeus from Pergamum</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statue of old market woman</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Laoccoon group</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping Eros</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aphrodite of Smyrna</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nike of Samothrace</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aphrodite of Melos</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Hellenistic head of a man</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etruscan biga</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appian Way</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple of Mars in Roman Forum</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bust of Augustus</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mausoleum dedicated to Gaius and Julius Caesar</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triumphal arch of Augustus, St. Rémy</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military diploma granting Roman citizenship</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconstructed bedroom from Boscoreale</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House of Vetii family at Pompeii</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bust of Antoninus Pius</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pantheon at Rome</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Library of Columbia University</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lar</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pont du Card</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman theater at Arles</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colosseum at Rome</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman of 3rd century b.c.</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman of 1st century b.c.</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colosseum seen through Arch of Titus</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arch of Constantine</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John writing his Gospel</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crucifixion of Jesus Christ (Fra Angelico)</td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monastery of Monte Cassino</td>
<td>409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of Hagia Sophia</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconstruction of Diocletian’s palace, Split</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I

Before History
The Black Bull, a prehistoric fresco from the Lascaux Caves, Dordogne, France. From L'art préhistorique; peintures, gravures, et sculptures rupestres, 1951. (COURTESY LES EDITIONS BRAUN ET CIE, PARIS, NEW YORK)
The Foundations of an Organized Society

The economic, political, and cultural foundations of a society • The rise and fall of civilizations • Theories of history: Marx, Spengler, Toynbee • The necessity of objectivity and imagination in historical study

The economic, political, and cultural foundations of a society

The Economic Requirements of a Society

Every human being as an individual has certain cultural and religious needs, as a member of a society he has to regulate his relations with other human beings, and as a producer and consumer he must take his part in economic affairs. These three necessities in his life have always been reflected in human societies. Our first task must therefore be to consider the cultural, political, and economic foundations upon which social institutions have rested.

While each society is in some degree unique, the difference between societies is most visible in the field of culture, in which the creativeness of the individual human being finds the greatest opportunity for expression. In culture, taken in its widest sense, the possibilities for creativeness are infinite; whereas the economic needs of human beings are ultimately limited by their far from infinite ability to consume material goods and in historical societies by the availability of adequate resources and techniques. It is essential for the historian to indicate how each society organized to produce these material goods, and to show how far its failure to produce enough for all the needs of the human beings in it seriously limited their leisure to engage in cultural pursuits and affected its political organization in a crucial manner. But the economic activities in themselves have been so similar in all the societies considered in this book that it has not been thought necessary to go into much detail unless a particular society made important innovations. In a premachine society such as existed from the Neolithic period to the modern Industrial Revolution, the overwhelming majority of mankind was forced to labor for long hours under difficult conditions to make a bare subsistence. Only since the Industrial Revolution, when man was presented with the necessity of organizing the production and consumption of material goods on a scale hitherto unheard of, did the human efforts to do this become a subject worthy of detailed study in itself.

The basic economic requirements of human beings may be limited to three—food, shelter, and clothing. In the earliest societies known to us, their pursuit consumed such an enormous proportion of available human
energies that there was little left for other activities. Food could be obtained from animals and wild plants, which were hunted or harvested in accordance with the skills and techniques available to the society. Such an economy may be termed a natural one—man was dependent entirely upon what was provided for him by nature, especially if he clothed himself in animal skins and lived in caves. When nature failed him, he moved on to a more favorable location, where he continued to live in a natural economy.

At the next stage of development, called the Neolithic Revolution, man ceased to be totally dependent upon nature and began in some degree to control it. He learned to breed and tend animals, so that they were always available to him for food when he needed them, and he taught them to work for him and supplement the labor of his own hands. He also learned to plant crops and harvest them, laying down seeds in some spot cleared for the purpose and in which such plants did not grow by nature. He learned to build himself a home where none had been provided by nature, and he even discovered how to grow special crops such as flax from which he could make himself clothing.

Having thus learned in some degree to control and harness nature, man at last found himself both with leisure to produce luxuries which made life more pleasant and comfortable, and with a surplus of crops beyond the consuming needs of his society. These surpluses of manufactured luxuries, and of crops for human consumption, he was able to offer in exchange for goods produced by other men outside his immediate group. This trade was ultimately supplemented and fed by the products of industry. Industrial production is characterized by a more intensive division of labor under which some members of the society, freed from direct agricultural work, specialize in manufacturing a varied assortment of articles to be consumed at home or to be traded in exchange for foreign products. An economically advanced society is characterized by the diversity of products manufactured, and by effective organ-

ization of production to take advantage of specialized skills, and minimize the waste of human energies in unnecessary labor.

THE POLITICAL REQUIREMENTS OF A SOCIETY

Protection through government and law

It used to be thought that man in a state of nature was forced to compete with all other human beings for his very subsistence, or, in the famous words of Thomas Hobbes, that his life was “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.” We have no record of such a way of life, either in early times, or among present-day “primitive” men. And it no longer seems as probable to us as it did in the nineteenth century, under the influence of the biological ideas of Darwin, that human survival was a matter of success in the constant struggle for existence, if this struggle is conceived of as a struggle between human beings. It now seems more probable that survival has always been due to successful cooperation between human beings to resist the always dangerous forces of nature.

The first political necessity for men has always been, and remains still, protection—whether from animals, natural hazards, or hostile human beings; and protection must necessarily mean that some human beings band together under some kind of accepted political organization. The first requirement of any government is that it should possess power to enforce its will upon individuals, forcing them to behave in accordance with its dictates. This power may be either military or moral or both; but a government cannot survive without one kind or the other.

It follows that a government must be acceptable either to a majority of the people or to a minority who possess enough moral or military power to coerce the majority. No government, whether by one man or by many, can survive without some support and acceptance.

A government, to ensure its acceptance by any of the people, cannot behave in an arbitrary and unpredictable manner. It must make clear what its policy is to be in matters
of daily concern to the people. This need for certainty is satisfied by the establishment of law, which explains to the people what is expected of them, and decrees penalties for the behavior it defines as unacceptable. Law is essentially the regulation of the public behavior of human beings in an organized society, and it is enforced by the power of the government, as long as the government is able to maintain its authority.

From very early times men have considered that laws should be made in accordance with an abstraction called justice. But, as there has never been any agreed conception of justice at any time in history, individuals in each society have arrived at their own conceptions of justice by their own thought, and have tried to modify the law accordingly. Justice has remained a valuable ideal, but in fact it has been the enforceable law which has prevailed rather than the abstract and unenforceable ideal. Most lawgivers in early societies claimed that they received the law from the gods and that their laws were therefore in accordance with the ideal of justice; hence they decreed severe penalties for anyone who should attempt, from his feeble human thinking, to change them. In ancient Egypt there was no written law at all until a very late date. The Pharaoh was supposed to "know the hearts of men," and since he was in constant touch with divine powers, he could judge cases in the light of his intuitive and immediate perception of justice.

Evolution of political institutions—From clans and tribes to the national state

In every society there has always been some form of government, since authority has always been necessary, however small the social unit. A natural social unit is the family; and it may be that in some far-off age the self-sufficient family may also have been the political unit, with one member exercising an authority recognized and accepted by the other members. This state of affairs, however, presupposes the self-sufficiency of the one family, and such self-sufficiency is unlikely at any time or in any place. The clan, or union of a small number of families, sometimes closely connected by blood relationship, with perhaps a recent common ancestor, is known as a historical unit, with the leaders of the component families exercising the functions of government. A larger unit is the tribe, composed of several clans. When tribes or clans are gathered together in one area, the government may be made up of the heads of families, or perhaps of a tribal chieftain, acceptable to the other heads by virtue of his birth into one leading family, or because of his own personal, military, or other qualities.

When these tribal units emerge into the light of history there is usually such a chieftain occupying the position of the head of the tribal government, advised by other minor chiefs or heads of families, and sometimes by the whole body of adults, who form an assembly whose advice is called for on special occasions, and whose consent is necessary for important decisions. Such a government is a Primitive Democracy, of the kind we shall find in Mesopotamia at an early date, and traces of which are found among other peoples, such as the primitive Greeks, Romans, and Germans of the West. In other societies we find at an early time the institution of kingship, with the ruler having already been granted the power to govern without the formality of consultation with his subjects. Larger units of government are city-states; empires, which sometimes rule over wide areas subdued by warfare; and, in our own times, national states. Common to all these forms of government are systems of law and officials who carry out the policies of the government under authority delegated by it. From the very primitive to the most advanced and modern forms of government the essential function is always the provision of protection to the governed; and though modern governments have undertaken multifarious subsidiary tasks, essentially they perform these tasks instead of the people themselves because the people have requested or allowed them to do so—tasks supposedly for their benefit which, in their view, can best
be performed by common rather than private effort and under direction from above. The modern political and economic theory known as socialism emphasizes the importance of the role of the government in providing for the people what they are unable to provide for themselves.

Historical forms of government—Monarchy, oligarchy, democracy

The essential requirement of government is, then, that it be effective, and that its authority should be accepted in the area entrusted to it. Many forms of government may fulfill these criteria, and many forms are known to history; human inventiveness may yet devise new combinations. But three main classifications are usually recognized—monarchy, or rule by one; oligarchy, or rule by a few; and democracy, or rule by the people. Each of these may exist in pure or mixed forms. Monarchy may consist of rule by a king or a single ruler under some other title and his chosen advisers, with the responsibility ultimately resting with the ruler, or it may be a rule limited by the legal or moral necessity for him to consult his advisers, by whom he may be overruled. The latter is a limited or constitutional monarchy, and within this classification there are many degrees of limitation, down to the point where the “advisers” rule, and the king is merely a respected figurehead and symbol of unity, as in England. An oligarchy may be elected, or it may be entitled to rule by hereditary right; and it may have to consult the people in certain matters and submit to being overruled on occasion. A democracy may be direct, as in Athens, or representative as in modern states, the representatives subject to re-election or recall. The form of government, then, is always subject to change and modification in accordance with the needs of the time and the wishes of the people governed; but, whatever the form, and whatever the label—some modern labels are devised purely with the aim of confusing—a government’s functions are those described in the preceding section.

THE “CULTURE” OF A SOCIETY

The common elements of all cultures—The accumulated heritage from the past

In every society it is the free activity of men—their thoughts, their feelings, and their actions—which molds its characteristic institutions, and gives it its characteristic way of looking at life. Together the social organization, political institutions, economic activities, law, science, art, religion, and thought are called the culture of a society. The cave paintings of the Old Stone Age and the mass-production economic technique of the twentieth century are equally an expression of the cultural creativeness of these particular societies. They are the work of men living in the society, making use of the physical environment provided for them by nature. Their creativeness is limited by the natural conditions, but not determined by them. The men of the Old Stone Age could hardly have progressed at a single leap to the mass-production technique of the twentieth century or to its representative political government, since the thoughts of men had first to traverse all the intermediate stages, and the institutions of their society had to be modified in accordance with these newer thoughts. Men had first to live in settled communities, and develop institutions fit for such communities; they had to make the necessary technical inventions, means of communication, transportation, and production, and again slowly develop social institutions which could release and take advantage of natural human inventiveness.

But it is not necessary for each society to start again from scratch, inventing its techniques from the beginning. It can take advantage of the achievements of its predecessors. Once the Neolithic Revolution had taken place and agriculture was seen to be an improvement over the ancient food gathering, this fundamental invention became a part of the permanent possession of mankind, and any new society could build on the foundations laid by Neolithic man. Cultural progress, therefore, is cumulative. The
thoughts of mankind have been, as it were, built into the world—and the world has been changed by them, forever. Only if every literate human being were suddenly killed, and all knowledge of human deeds in the last seven thousand years were lost, would it be necessary for mankind to return to the conditions of the Old Stone Age and start again.

The uniqueness of each culture

Yet, although each society does build on the foundations laid by its predecessors and exploits its cultural heritage, it is also, in a sense, unique. The men of ancient Egypt developed a political institution, the divine kingship, which they were unwilling to abandon, yet which was not copied by other societies; they developed an art which had little influence on subsequent art in other countries, and yet has been considered by many to be a perfect expression of the Egyptian attitude toward life. This attitude toward life seems to be the unique element in every society, which gives it its characteristic form. While the ancient Egyptians denied the fact of change, regarding it as illusory, and had therefore no interest in progress, we in the twentieth century not only recognize the fact of change, but try to take advantage of it and help it on by our own efforts. We set ourselves goals which we try to achieve; then, having achieved them, we set ourselves ever more distant goals and strive toward them. We make our ideas into ideals, into the achieving of which we put the whole strength of our wills.

But no society before ours had any such conception of progress. Many societies looked back to a Golden Age in the past which they longed to recapture, and even the Greeks, whose ideas in so many ways were similar to ours, lacked that sense of the importance of building for the future which is characteristic of modern Western civilization. It is necessary, therefore, in studying civilization as it was manifested in a particular society, to try to discover its own characteristic attitude toward life and to view its cultural achievements in the light of this attitude, while at the same time noting those cultural advances which it made and passed on to its successors as part of the total cultural heritage of mankind.

The diffusion of culture

Cultural advances first made within a particular society may be taken up by other societies and spread throughout the entire world. But they must be able to find their proper place in the receiving society, they must find a fertile ground for reception and propagation. The divine kingship of Egypt would not have fitted into the existing contemporary society in Mesopotamia, and even if the Mesopotamian peoples had known of it, they would hardly have tried to graft it onto their existing native institutions. On the other hand, the Christian and other religions have been diffused through many countries where they supplied answers to the problems which the inhabitants of those countries had been trying to solve and where they fitted in with the psychological predisposition of those peoples. The system of representative government first developed in medieval England was gradually diffused throughout Europe and, especially since World War I, has spread into many countries of the world which desired to accept a form of government that had apparently proved itself to be effective in the war itself. But in other places it has so far failed to take root because of the tenacity of existing institutions.

Technical inventions do not, as a rule, meet with the same opposition as religious or political innovations, and can be passed from one society to another with less disturbance. There are thousands of examples of such diffusion of inventions from the earliest times to the present. Probably the idea of food growing and the domestication of animals spread throughout the world from some center in the Near East, though the possibility of the separate invention of such a fundamental idea cannot be ruled out. The invention of writing was almost certainly diffused from the ancient land of Sumer, though the earliest receivers, the Egyptians, modified and improved upon the Sumerian
practice, using their own pictures and symbols, and developing new writing materials available to them but not to the Sumerians. It is not known by how many millennia the use of language preceded the written symbols, but the languages of peoples in historic times have many resemblances to each other which can only be explained by diffusion from one people to another. Linguists have classified several families of languages, which they have called by such names as Semitic, Hamitic, and Indo-European, and by examining them have even tried to reveal laws under which the changes take place between one language and another after diffusion, in accordance with certain well-defined principles. Other inventions, such as printing, gunpowder, and the cultivation of the silkworm can be traced in some detail by the historian from their first use in one country to their full development in another.

Each society, then, receives by diffusion some of its cultural heritage, and it adds to what it has received the characteristic products of its own genius. It may even invent unnecessarily for itself things which have already been developed elsewhere, unknown to it, which it could have received by diffusion if it had had wider cultural contacts. On the other hand, not all knowledge available to any one people has been preserved or transmitted to others. The ancient Sumerians knew all the basic forms of architecture, but the Egyptians and Greeks did not make use of them; medieval European technical knowledge—as, for instance, of the rotation of crops—was in many ways markedly inferior to that of several earlier peoples. The Renaissance Italians had to reinvent many commercial aids known to the Hellenistic world. Each civilization does not accept the entire cultural heritage of its predecessors and build on it; it accepts only what fits its own environment and its own way of living. Even our immense technical achievements, valuable as we may think them—and likely to bring great material benefits if adopted by the peoples we consider backward—may not be universally acceptable. History has yet to show to what extent Western technology will be accepted by a people like, say, the Hindus, who do not share our view of the relation between the material and the spiritual and the relative importance to be assigned to this world and the hereafter. To receive and use what we are willing to transmit to them, perhaps their whole scheme of values must be altered, and their civilization may fall into decay rather than adopt such an alien scheme of values as ours.

The rise and fall of civilizations

THEORIES OF HISTORY—MARX, SPENGLER, TOYNBEE

In recent centuries the attention of the historian has been especially concentrated on the rise and fall of the many civilizations that have been known in the past. Why, he asks, has a civilization or a society known some sudden period of great creativeness, and why, then, does life seem to have gone from it, and the cultural leadership of mankind, which it held for a brief season, to have passed from it into other hands? Many have been the answers propounded, but none has gained universal assent. It may indeed be that no answer can ever be given in material terms and that no explanation will ever be satisfactory because in fact there is no explanation of universal validity. Karl
Marx tried to show that the economic conditions of an epoch determine the cultural achievements of a civilization, but he failed to give sufficient attention to the diversity of human institutions and achievements in spite of very similar economic conditions at many different stages of history. Hence the Marxist historians have always suffered from the temptation to make the facts fit the theory, tending to neglect those facts which are not in conformity with it. In Marxian theory, then, the fall of a civilization is determined by changes in economic conditions. Oswald Spengler tried to show that the life of a society followed certain laws of growth and decay analogous to those to be found in the plant world.

Arnold Toynbee has tried to explain the arresting of progress as a failure to respond creatively to a challenge presented by certain difficulties which had to be faced by the society. Toynbee, of course, thus assumed that a society ought to evolve, and make progress; and that if it failed to do so, it was in some way not fulfilling its proper tasks. It is doubtful if this is a fair assumption, as there is no inherent reason why a society should wish to progress, and should not be simply content with its present way of life, as apparently the ancient Egyptians were. The desire to progress is a typically modern and Western ideal, and should not be assumed as part of the make-up of earlier peoples; though perhaps when we look back upon the history of mankind from our vantage point we are not unjustified in observing that they did not make progress, even if there is no reason why they should have wished to do so. The value of Toynbee's approach is a moral one. He wishes to remind us that change is always with us, whether we will it or not, and as human beings we have to learn how to deal with it by being willing and ready to change ourselves and our outlook in order to cope with the ever new situations that confront us. A few further remarks on Toynbee's theory of history will appear in Chapter 3, with special reference to the ancient civilizations that preceded the Greek.
The general form of this book has been designed to show the separate characteristics of each society and civilization considered, and also to reveal the cumulative heritage of mankind and how all the achievements of mankind in our society have their roots far back in the past; and how impossible it would have been for us to have reached our present heights if the slow tedious work of developing the intellectual and physical tools had not been done for us by those giants who went before us, who had so little to work with and such a long road to travel.

When we tend to neglect this debt and overestimate ourselves and our achievements, it is perhaps wise for us to stop for a moment, think, and remember once more that "we are the heirs of all the ages."

Suggestions for further reading

The three most famous modern interpretations of history are those of Toynbee, Spengler, and Marx, referred to in the text. The full six-volume edition of Toynbee's great work, Arnold J. Toynbee, A Study of History (2nd ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1935), should, in the opinion of this writer, be attempted, even by the beginning student, since the one-volume abridgment by D. C. Somervell, Arnold J. Toynbee, A Study of History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), necessarily appears to be dogmatic, and the conclusions are not invariably sustained by the condensed evidence. Most of the material concerning the beginnings of history and the general statement of the challenge and response theory appear in Volume 1 of the six-volume work. Spengler's cyclical theory of history is contained in his monumental work The Decline of the West (tr. C. F. Atkinson, special one-volume edition; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1939), but this book is very difficult to read and is not recommended for beginning students. It is probably better to use an effective digest of his theories, such as H. S. Hughes, Oswald Spengler: A Critical Estimate (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952).

The theories of Karl Marx are to be found scattered through many of his works, but not in easy or convenient form. An extremely interesting criticism of the historical theories of Toynbee, Spengler, and Marx, as well as those of other philosophers of history, is presented in Karl R. Popper, The Open Society and Its Enemies (rev. ed.; Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1950), and is well worth reading, though it is hardly less opinionated and dogmatic than the work of the men it criticizes.

Among other recent works on the meaning and purpose of history the following are highly recommended: H. J. Muller, The Uses of the Past (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), and Herbert Butterfield, History and Human Relations (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952). A stimulating little book on the way in which culture and ideas are diffused, with valuable and thought-provoking illustrations from all periods of history, is Gilbert Higget, The Migration of Ideas (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954).
Prehistoric Man

Difficulties of studying prehistory • The first beginnings of man • Paleoanthropic man • Lower Paleolithic period • Neanderthal man • Upper Paleolithic period • Neolithic Revolution • The beginnings of metallurgy

Difficulties of studying prehistory

It is now believed that a creature recognizable as man has walked the earth for more than half a million years. He has not always lived in the same areas of the earth, for at different times the movements of glaciers and changes of climate have made some regions uninhabitable. But at no time was the whole earth uninhabitable in the last half million years, and immense periods of time have separated the great glacial epochs from each other. Yet it is, at the most, ten thousand—probably not more than eight thousand—years ago that man first began to grow his own food and domesticate the useful animals.

This presents to us at once the great question—why so long? Could prehistoric man not have taken this supreme step earlier, and started on the road to civilization thousands, perhaps millions, of years before 8000 B.C.?²

To this fundamental question it is impossible to give an answer. The truth is that we know very little indeed about prehistoric man, and the unremitting labors of archaeologists and anthropologists, fruitful though these have been, have only scratched the surface of our almost total ignorance. Besides, no two experts are ever in agreement on all points in their interpretation of the meager data available.

It is necessary to stress this point because all that will be said in this chapter is still in the realm of opinion. It is possible that in two hundred years none of it will be acceptable to our less ignorant descendants. One of the most famous living anthropologists, A. L. Kroeber, brought out an edition in 1948 of a book he had first written in 1923.¹ The new edition was scarcely recognizable as the same book, so much had the information available changed during a short twenty-five years. No one should think that prehistory or even ancient history stands still. On the contrary, the older the history the more it can gain from archaeology, and from the discovery and reinterpretation of documents and inscriptions unknown or neglected before. Every discovery of a new fossil of early man is important, every discovery of a cave, or every excavation of an early camp site may alter in fundamental points some of our recon-


¹²
structured history of early man, whereas even the
discovery of a hitherto unknown manu-
script or a painting of Leonardo da Vinci
would not alter in any important respect our
knowledge of the general history of the
Italian Renaissance.

The first beginnings of man

THE EVOLUTION OF MAN AS A SPECIES

The evolutionary theory of the origin
of man has been greatly modified since Dar-
win first propounded it in crude form in the
middle of the nineteenth century. There
are still many inconvenient facts, especially
in the animal world, which seem very diffi-
cult to explain on the basis of natural selec-
tion. But, for the present, the total theory
is still widely accepted in the Western world,
outside of Russia, and it explains reasonably
well what we know of early man. Accord-
ing to this theory those species of living or-
ganisms which were best fitted to survive
in their environment did survive, and were
gradually modified in form by the process
of mutation, a process which can be observed
in the laboratory in the case of certain ani-
mals. The ancestors of man were not those
most specialized and suitable for a particular
environment. On the contrary, they were
more "generalized" and adaptable. From time
to time new mutations appeared in the
species, and those of them that could survive
best in a changed environment did so, and
propagated, while the older, less adaptable
species died out. The huge animals became
overspecialized and incapable of adaptation,
perhaps in a modified environment, and so
became extinct; while the smaller, unspecial-
ized creatures, forced to adapt themselves
or perish, developed mutations with survival
value. Thus, it is hypothesized, the ancestors
of man first came on to dry land from the
ocean, lived for countless aeons in trees, and
at last descended to the earth and began to
walk upright, in the process increasing their
brain capacity. And finally we had the first
real men, the protoanthropi, of whom the
oldest so far discovered is the so-called Java
man, or Pithecanthropus erectus.

THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE FOR THE
ACTIVITIES OF EARLY MAN

Before we deal with the early men
known to us from archaeology it should be
stated clearly that it is not permissible to use
evidence from people who are living today
under primitive conditions and assume at
once that they are living in the same way as
our ancestors of the Old Stone Age. It is not
impossible that these contemporary "primiti-
ve" men, though they now use tools recogni-
tably similar to those discovered in ancient
deposits, have lost certain knowledge their
ancestors once possessed, and so their culture
would then represent a decline from some
higher stage. On the other hand, they may
have made some slight progress in ten thou-
sand years, though not as much as civilized
man. We can only use our knowledge of
these contemporaries of ours to create an
imaginative picture of what Old Stone Age
men were like, and of the life they lived.
But it remains an imaginative picture, which
may or may not be true to reality, and can-
not be used as evidence in any way the equal
of the inferences we may make from the
actual remains discovered by archaeolo-
gists.

We have just said that the archaeol-
ogist has to make inferences. By this it is
meant that he unearths objects, not writ-
ten records; and the objects tell no clear
story by themselves. We have before us,
say, a dead body painted with ochre in a
corner of a cave, and there are tools beside
the body, and perhaps food. We infer some
kind of primitive religion from the juxta-
position of these objects, but we cannot be
certain of the existence of this religion. It
has been suggested that such finds prove that
a belief was held in a future life, in which
the soul is supposed to return to earth to
use the tools he used once in life and to eat
the food left for him; or alternatively he
needs these things for his use in a future
life. But such an inference as this can never
be proved true, and, as a result, archaeol-
ogists are frequently at odds with each other,
and wide agreement is rare. Perhaps the tools
## chronological chart
### Ages of Prehistory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Man</th>
<th>Cultural Epoch</th>
<th>Geological Epoch</th>
<th>Approximate Date (B.C.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pithecanthropus (Java man)</td>
<td>Lower Paleolithic (Food gathering)</td>
<td>Pleistocene Age</td>
<td>500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinanthropus (Peking man)</td>
<td>Lower Paleolithic (Food gathering)</td>
<td>Pleistocene Age</td>
<td>500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neanderthal</td>
<td>Lower Paleolithic (Food gathering)</td>
<td>Pleistocene Age</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neanderthaloid (Rhodesian and Palestinian)</td>
<td>Lower Paleolithic (Food gathering)</td>
<td>Pleistocene Age</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cro-Magnon Crimaldi</td>
<td>Upper Paleolithic (Cave paintings ca. 20,000 B.C.)</td>
<td>(Würm glaciation)</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mesolithic (Domestication of dog)</td>
<td>Holocene (recent age)</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neolithic Revolution (Food growing—Middle East and Europe)</td>
<td>Holocene (recent age)</td>
<td>8000-5500</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Followed by: Copper Age</td>
<td></td>
<td>ca. 4500</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ca. 3500</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ca. 1800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the above dates are in dispute, and no consensus is to be found among scholars. Only the authentically different and widely distributed early men have been included, as in the text.

were considered to be a part of the man's personality; perhaps they were believed to bring bad luck upon anyone who used them after he was dead. The food might be a simple remnant of a funeral feast partaken of by the survivors. The ochre may have been a primitive cosmetic, and the smearing of the corpse a ceremony of no more significance than the attentions lavished upon the American dead by "morticians" in the twentieth century. The objects alone tell us little beyond the fact that such or such objects were in use. All the rest is inference; and though we shall use it sparingly in this chapter we shall avoid drawing any analogies from present-day primitive men altogether, as likely to create possibly untrue impressions in the reader's mind, like the famous reconstructions of early men—Neanderthal looking like a not-too-distant cousin to the ape, Cro-Magnon man a handsome rugged type, and so on which were for many years very popular, especially as illustrations in textbooks. On this occasion the reader will be spared them by courtesy of author and publisher, and left to imagine them for himself.
THE PROTOANTHROPI, OR FIRST MEN, ca. 500,000 B.C.

It is one of the hazards of the profession of paleontology (the study of fossils) that the description "erectus" should have been given prematurely to the first Java man discovered, on the basis of a skull and thighbone found in the same deposit and supposed to belong to the same creature. Later scientists with impressive and unusual unanimity have doubted that these fossils belonged together, since the thighbone seems too delicate ever to have been attached to such a massive skull. Three more pithecanthropi have since been discovered in the same area, but, alas, not a thighbone. Scientists continue to believe that the pithecanthropi were indeed men; but the evidence on which the supposition was based has been dissipated, and his erect stature, like so much information on prehistoric men, is now based only upon an act of faith.

These four protoanthropi are dated on the best authority as about 500,000 B.C. Almost contemporary is a considerable series of "men" found in hills and caves in China, near Peking (Sinanthropi, or Peking men). There are only superficial differences between the China and Java protoanthropi, and thighbones have fortunately been found for the Chinese variety. From these we know that these Peking men did stand erect, and there is further interesting, if not quite conclusive, evidence that they were cannibals. Peking man seems also to have possessed fire and primitive "chopping tools" of stone and bone. Both Java and Peking men had brain cavities about twice as large as those of gorillas, very thick skulls, enormous eyebrow ridges, and no chins.

It is just possible, however, that the thick skulls of these creatures helped to preserve their remains through so many centuries, and that other less thick-skulled fossils perished. This is a hazard which cannot be eliminated. If any primitive men happened to have bones and skulls that were unusually soft, if indeed a whole species failed to develop the degree of hardness present in the fossils discovered, we should know nothing of them unless we found their artifacts instead of their bones.

After these two species of early men there is a long break. For a good many years it was believed that an English fossil known as Piltdown man was almost as ancient as Java and Peking men. British enthusiasts named him Eoanthropus Dawsoni (the "dawn-man" of Dawson) after his discoverer. But German experts, led by the noted anthropologist Weidenreich (perhaps jealous, and anxious to establish their own Heidelberg man as the earliest European), never accepted the claim for Piltdown man, and indeed Weidenreich demanded many years ago that he be "erased from the list of human fossils." "Piltdown man" consisted of a comparatively modern skull, and the most primitive jawbone and teeth yet claimed to be human. He was discovered in a shallow deposit in southern England. On the other hand, Heidelberg man consisted of a lower jaw found at Heidelberg in solitary human isolation among extinct mammoths. He was once thought to be a real protoanthropus; but, though undoubtedly genuine, opinion now inclines to place him as a specially rugged type of Neanderthal, the species next to be considered.

The fate of Piltdown man was decided in 1953, when it was finally revealed through chemical analysis that he was simply a fake. The skull was indeed comparatively modern, discolored by artificial means to look older than it was; while the jawbone and teeth were those of an ape, also modern and artificially aged. Detective work is still in progress to try to discover whose misplaced ingenuity was responsible for this astonishing attempt to deceive the world of archaeology, so far without official results. But we do now know for certain that Piltdown man should indeed be "erased from the list of human fossils." The illustration of "Piltdown man" included in the text should be looked upon therefore as a melancholy example of the fallibility of experts in this highly speculative field of human inquiry. These reconstructed heads, so familiar to readers of textbooks, may be
no more accurate resemblances to actual prehistoric men as they were known to their contemporaries than was "Piltdown man" himself.

> **Paleoanthropic man—Lower Paleolithic period—Neanderthal man (ca. 150,000 B.C.)**

Neanderthal is a paleoanthropic. He is not yet styled Homo as distinct from Anthropus because it is not believed that modern Homo sapiens (or thinking man) derives directly from him. He became extinct some time in the comparatively recent past after a long career dating from perhaps as long ago as 450,000 B.C. to about 70,000 B.C. The first Neanderthal fossil was found in a cave of the Neander Gorge near Dusseldorf in Germany in 1856, and thus received his name. But in the past century many specimens of his type have been found throughout Europe, and similar types, with only superficial differences, have been unearthed as far away as Rhodesia in South Africa. Very important finds have also been made in Palestine, together with blade tools of a kind superior to anything known to have been used by other Neanderthal men. It would seem, therefore, that Neanderthal man inhabited this planet for a far longer total period than any other type, and over the hundreds of thousands of years during which he was the chief representative of the human species he may well have wandered over the whole earth.

Physically, Neanderthal man was the owner of a brain already of a size not greatly inferior to our own. But at the same time he had a curvature of the thighbone even more marked than that of his predecessors, the protoanthropi. He used chipped bone, he flaked flint tools, and he used fire. A kind of all-purpose tool, something between a pick and an ax, and no doubt serving the purpose of both, was in use (called by the French a coup de poing, from the fact that it resembles a human fist). Many of the Neanderthal finds have been in caves, where these men lived for at least part of the year. Some of the skeletons seem to have been laid away with care, in the bottom of the caves, with food and implements beside them, suggesting formal burial practices, if not a belief in immortality.

The period when Neanderthal man roamed the earth is generally called the Lower Paleolithic Age—lower because in fossil deposits the lower remains are earlier, and Paleolithic (Old Stone) because all implements were made of either bone or stone. The classification by implements has become
conventional, but it is not satisfactory unless one wishes to speak only of the tools used. The development in tools from the Paleolithic to the Neolithic (New Stone) Age was far less important than the epoch-making change from food gathering to food producing which characterized these periods.

The whole of the Lower Paleolithic period is placed within the geological age known as the Pleistocene. During this time most authorities recognize four glaciations for Europe and America. The glaciers stretched down as far south as France, making the climate bitterly cold within their range. When they receded, the climate was as warm as, or perhaps even warmer than, now. It is possible that even at the present time we are in an interglacial period, since it is only about 50,000 years since the last glaciers (Würm glaciation) began to recede, not a long time for an interglacial period. They had perhaps not receded to their present position until almost the end of the Upper Paleolithic Age.

**Upper Paleolithic period**

**HOMO SAPIENS—CRO-MAGNON AND GRIMALDI**  
ca. 50,000 B.C.

We date the Upper Paleolithic period from about 50,000 B.C., with the beginning of *Homo sapiens*, or modern man (neoanthropi, as distinct from paleoanthropi and protoanthropi). There are many remains dating from this period which can be fairly accurately dated, and successive phases of Upper Paleolithic culture have been agreed upon. The people of this age in Europe, apparently
of Caucasian stock, are called Cro-Magnon. Contemporary with them are Grimaldi men found in Southern Europe, which had physical characteristics similar to those of present-day Negroes. Further south in North Africa are other remains of people with Caucasian features, as have the inhabitants of these areas today. It is considered unlikely that a full Negro race was present in Southern Europe in Upper Paleolithic times and then disappeared without a trace. Since naturally no hair or skin has survived, it is impossible to say whether Grimaldi man was actually a Negro.

Cro-Magnon man lacked the protruding eyebrow ridge of his predecessors, and, curiously enough, he had a larger brain than present-day man's. The average height of the specimens examined is five feet ten inches. It is, of course, again possible that only the finest specimens have survived. But the physical examination of Cro-Magnon man conclusively proves that the later advances of Neolithic man were not due to the evolution of a physically superior people. Nor can we say anything about the functioning of the brain from the mere measurement of the skull capacity. He would indeed be a hardy male who would dare to put forward such a hypothesis today when it is known that the average female skull capacity in our time is some 10 per cent smaller than the male's!

Cro-Magnon's experiments in improved living, however, are impressive by any standard. In toolmaking he began to make a more sophisticated use of bone. There were bone knives, pins, needles, fish hooks, and harpoons as well as sharp boneheads for spears. He made beads of bone for ornament, and later also used horn and ivory. The needles suggest that he (or his wife) sewed and stitched garments. But above all he used paints, not only for covering dead bodies, which are often smeared with red ocher, but for the first real art.

THE CAVE PAINTINGS OF CRO-MAGNON MAN

Cave paintings have been discovered in southern France and northern Spain which were undoubtedly made by men in Upper Paleolithic times. The paintings, in which several colors were used, are mostly of animals, though there are a few also of human beings. Controversy has raged fiercely about these paintings ever since they were discovered, and indeed there are many problems connected with them.

Paintings were sometimes superimposed upon one another; they are often on the walls near the roof of the caves. They obviously were not made to be admired by human beings. How did the artists obtain enough light to be able to make their paintings in such dim, almost inaccessible corners? No primitive torch could give our own artists enough light to duplicate them, even if they could manage, as these early artists manifestly could, to do without living models. There are paintings which are so far from the ground that elaborate scaffolding must have been erected, as the floor does not seem to have sunk since Paleolithic times.

The suggestion has been made that the paintings were superimposed one upon another and in an almost inaccessible position because the act of painting, rather than the contemplation of the finished work of art, was important. Since the animals are frequently shown transfixed with weapons, it has been suggested that the act of painting was an act of magic designed to ensure success in hunting expeditions above ground. Perhaps the paintings were made while the hunt was in progress. Other writers have insisted that the true artist paints for the joy the very act of painting gives him. It is possible that the paintings did not appeal to his sense of sight. But in drawing the movements of the animal—and these paintings all show animals in movement which is extremely vividly suggested—he himself experienced something of the life and movement of the animal he was picturing. At all events it seems necessary to assume that these early artists had a remarkable visual memory in that they could paint in this way without models. It also seems legitimate to suppose that their eyes were able, perhaps from long living in caves, to see in the dark,
or near dark. There seems little doubt that once the painting had been completed there was no need for anyone to look at it—it was not, therefore, for decoration. The magical explanation seems easier to believe, and it is in keeping with what we know of magical practices in present-day “primitive” tribes. But it is well to remember that we cannot know for certain. The strength, speed, and power of animals, so greatly revered in later times in Egypt, might well have been qualities envied by our cave men; and by drawing and painting these animals the artists may have been trying to identify themselves with, and absorb into themselves, some of these powerful qualities. The only conclusion that it is safe to draw is that the paintings were neither crudely utilitarian nor merely ornamental, but are indicative of some belief in what we should call “supernatural” powers. If they were only, as has been urged, the natural effort at self-expression by early artists and had no ulterior purpose whatsoever, it seems impossible to explain the inaccessible positions and the superimposition.

All Paleolithic men lived by hunting and

This photograph shows one of the cave paintings at Altamira, Spain, as it actually appears. Notice that the same portion of the wall is occupied by several animals, and that it is difficult to distinguish between them. The neat pictures of individual animals sometimes shown are copies made by modern artists who have separated the animals from their surroundings. At Altamira the pictures are made in color.

Charcoal drawings, not colored, from Cave of Las Monedas (also Spanish). The vast majority of the known examples of cave art are either drawn in charcoal or scratched with sharp stone implements.
food gathering. They were dependent for their subsistence on their manual skills and their observation. Living in caves or crude huts, they necessarily moved from place to place as hunting grounds became exhausted or as the climate changed. They lived in the same world as the animals, but had not yet learned to make use of them except for food.

**The Domestication of the Dog (Mesolithic Age), ca. 12,000 B.C.**

The first great advance to be observed in the archaeological record is the domestication of the dog. This occurs in the period conventionally known as the Mesolithic (Middle Stone) Age, a period arbitrarily intervening between the Paleolithic and the Neolithic. Geologists speak of the Mesolithic Age as the beginning of the geologically recent or Holocene Age. The glaciers were receding, pine, birch, and willow were gradually creeping northward. The older tundra gradually became more thickly forested and the larger animals moved away or became extinct. Smaller game had to be hunted, requiring a greater expenditure of labor. Cave art died away, and it seems that tools became smaller. But the dog came to live with man, perhaps even then as an aid to hunting the smaller game. The bow and arrow also are first authenticated in the Mesolithic.

> The Neolithic Revolution

**Transition to Food Growing.**

ca. 8000–5500 B.C.

This age of comparative quiet shades over into the age when occurred what is certainly man's greatest advance to this day—the advance that has made all later civilization possible. The Neolithic Revolution, as it has been called, was characterized by the domestication of several animals, but above all by the first conscious breeding of plants.

In earlier studies, when a classification by implements was adopted, the New Stone Age shaded off into the Bronze Age and then into the Iron Age. As has been indicated, the change of implements is by no means fundamental. Neolithic man polished his tools, and they were sharper than those of his predecessors, but it is not for his tools that he is remembered in history.

When man lived by food gathering and hunting, he was dependent upon his environment. His sole influence upon this environment consisted in his depredations. He could not repair any damage he did to it; his only remedy was to move away. In this respect his life was like that of the animals. If it were not for his art we should be tempted to say that he was still only one of the animals, less specialized and able to make use of tools beyond their capacity, but not yet fully able to use his superior mind to take control of his environment. This now became possible with the conscious growing of plants. It was a social and, as we shall show, an intellectual revolution rather than a technical one. Man could have continued, as certain tribes still existing today have continued, to make his living only by food gathering. But he did not. For hundreds of thousands of years he had lived in the same old way, never settling down permanently, building no cities, producing no surplus for a leisured population. Now all these activities became possible.

If we consider the matter, it is not obvious that a plant grows from a seed. It is possible that many of us would never notice the way in which plant life is propagated if we were not first shown. If we lived in a land where the only plants were perennials, or where the plants were naturally fertilized year by year by wind, birds, or bees, we should take these phenomena for granted. We should sow and reap, take what we needed each year, then when the soil from this constant self-seeding and monoculture became exhausted we should take this as a natural thing and pass on to new lands still unspoiled. It requires acute observation to see how a plant grows, to perceive the sequence of cause and effect between the seed and the plant. Then it requires experiment to take a seed, plant it in some other place, and predict that it will grow, and then at last to see the prediction fulfilled. This was the act of some great scientist. The observation and the experiment must have been
made by someone, one of the greatest heroes in history. The Persians claim in their holy books and legends that a great prophet Zarathustra was told by Ahura-Mazda, the sun-god, of the secrets of agriculture. We shall not quarrel with them. If it was not he, then it was someone else.

It is not yet certain when and where the revolution began, nor is it known whether it sprang from a single center and was diffused through other areas. Obviously such a fruitful idea, once it had been thought out, was capable of application by all other peoples in a similar stage of development. Planting sites have been uncovered in many different parts of the world, but opinion is divided on which had priority. Even the dates of the sites uncovered are in dispute, though it is hoped that the new technique of dating by measuring the radioactive carbon content of remains may be of service. At the present time conservative opinion would place the date of the earliest known finds at about 3500 B.C., while other authorities would prefer a date as early as 8000 B.C. There are farms and villages in Egypt of a very early date, but there are others in Mesopotamia and the Near East for which priority is claimed (one of the earliest is certainly the site of Sialk in Persia).

It is, however, fairly certain that the revolution first occurred in the Near East or possibly in Egypt; it was many centuries before it spread to Europe. Independent dis-

covery of food growing in several Near Eastern centers is possible. It is difficult to account for the American Indians' knowledge of agriculture by the theory that it was diffused from Europe or Asia, though it is possible and cannot be disproved. Within the Near East itself, similar agricultural tools suggest diffusion—they are not in all cases the obvious and only tools suitable for their purpose—but, above all, the long period during which there was only food gathering suggests it. Wanderers from a food-growing center would quite certainly inform their new hosts of the possibilities, and the latter would be quick to adopt the practice. This does not mean that the actual plants would be exported. Only the idea was necessary, and then local plants and animals would quickly be domesticated. Barley and wheat, olives, grapes, and flax were known in the Near East in the Neolithic period, while rice, cotton, and sugar cane derive from the Far East.

Domestication of farm animals and the cultivation of plants seem to have begun about the same time, and in the same countries. It is clear that, especially in lands where permanent pasture is not possible, the animals must be fed from the cultivated crops. However, domestication of animals and cultivation of plants need not necessarily have come into existence together, for Asiatic nomads, even in historical times, have grown no food, but merely moved their beasts to new pastures when necessary. The North American Indians, as a rule, even though they grew their own food, did not domesticate any animals except the dog. But there is no evidence to support the traditional belief, probably derived from the Bible, that all peoples passed through a stage of nomadic life with domesticated animals, and then turned to agriculture when they desired to settle down and cease their wanderings.

The obvious possibilities in food growing must have been realized early. All the excavations of Neolithic sites have been of villages or hamlets, small communities presumably living in cooperation. We know nothing about the system of landholding, but
Lake dwellings of Neolithic man (Switzerland)—a model constructed by the American Museum of Natural History. Refuse thrown to the ground from these houses constitutes an important source of information about the lives of Neolithic men in Europe. (COURTESY AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY)

certainly a more definite organization was necessary than there had been in the nomadic food-gathering times. In the periods of the year when the crops had been harvested or when they were in the ground, the family must nevertheless remain close to its fields. It could not leave for distant places, as in the past. Crops had to be stored and guarded, and the beasts had to be tended. So the result was that more permanent houses of wood and adobe were built. Man finally came up above ground, where he has lived ever since—even though occasionally he has had to go below ground for protection, and may be forced to again.

Actual grains have been found in Egypt, where the exceptionally dry climate has helped to preserve them, and even rather frail wooden objects have been kept intact in specially favorable areas. One of the best-preserved sites is in Europe, considerably later than the Near Eastern developments, but still Neolithic, giving us a fair picture of Neolithic culture as it probably also existed elsewhere. More than a hundred sites have been examined of Swiss lake dwellers who built their houses on piles above water, lakes, and rivers, as well as occasionally in the same style above dry land. The refuse from these houses, dropped into the water and so preserved for future generations, is of the utmost interest. Many different species of plants, vegetables, and fruits were in use, and there were several different kinds of stone tools with wooden handles. These Neolithic peoples who had learned to spin, used cloth. But by this time the Bronze Age was already in full swing in the Near East, and the first
large-scale settlements, the heralds of an urban civilization, had come into being, together with a host of superior inventions.

POTTERY

During the Neolithic period pottery first came into wide use. Almost all known Neolithic communities used it. This was a real invention, probably spread by diffusion from the community that invented it. It had to be discovered that potter’s clay can be made to hold its form indefinitely after it has been baked at a fairly high temperature (about 600°C). The ancient potter molded the clay to whatever shape he (or, as is generally believed, she) desired, then fired it, making this shape permanent. But before good vases or utensils could be made, the raw material had to be carefully selected, purged of impurities, and, in some cases, supplemented with sand or a similar substance. All these processes were rather complicated, and no doubt took many centuries to perfect. In Neolithic times there is no evidence of the use of the potter’s wheel which in later historic times must have revolutionized the ceramic industry, making possible large-scale production. Crude wheeled vehicles were known as early as 3500 B.C. in Mesopotamia, and it is at about this time that the first pieces of wheel-turned pottery are also known to have appeared. But whether the wheel was invented for use in ceramics or for transport is not yet known.

STONE MONUMENTS—MENHIRS, CROMLECHS, DOLMENS

One feature of the Late Neolithic Age in Europe has given rise to controversy at least since the twelfth century, A.D., though recent research with scientific techniques has given us new clues. Any visitor to Brittany, Wales, or Salisbury Plain in England is sure to have seen menhirs, large single pillars of stone, and the circles of such stones, which are called cromlechs. Stone slabs or blocks, with other slabs serving as a roof, making a kind of chamber of stones, are not uncommon; these are known as dolmens. The controversy has concerned the purpose of these monuments (which are collectively called megaliths, “large stones”), and most authorities agree that the stones are in some way connected with the very ancient and natural religion of sun worship.

One of the most impressive of these formations is in Brittany, at Carnac, which, curiously enough, is also the name of the burial place of kings in Egypt, a fact still awaiting explanation by linguists. At Carnac in Brittany there are long avenues of stones, often stretching for several hundred yards. Here it is supposed that the ancient priest stood at the head of the avenue to welcome the new day when the sun came up on the horizon. But it is also possible that what were so sacred to these ancient men were the shadows cast by these stones rather than

![Megaliths at Carnac (Brittany). Note the size of the stones in relation to the size of the man in the left foreground. (COURTESY AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY)](image-url)
the stones themselves. This may account for the forms taken by some of the stone groups which throw shadows making complex geometrical figures. Burial remains have been found near some of the megaliths, but this need mean no more than that the stones were sacred and burial was naturally carried out near them as in our times i.e. the churchyards of country churches.

Far the most impressive of all the Neolithic monuments is Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain in England. This is a circle of megaliths, and is clearly an ancient temple. Close to this temple are burial pits which probably antedate the stone circle itself. The bodies were cremated and the remains buried in these pits. These remains have been recently dated by the radioactive carbon method as about 1850 B.C. Many problems are connected with this famous circle, not all of which have yet been solved. Some of the smaller stones ("blue stones") used for the outer circle of the monument are of a kind not found locally, and it seems that Neolithic man transported them more than three hundred miles, presumably, for the most part, by sea and river. Why was this particular stone believed to be so sacred? The lintels (crosspieces) are secured with very great care onto the uprights by tenons and sockets, and to one another by mortise joints. How did Neolithic man attain such precision with his crude stone tools? Though the huge stones had to be dragged a shorter distance than the smaller "blue stones," the distance was still upward of fifty miles and through soft, pathless, uncleared country. How did they accomplish such a feat? But if we do not have the answers to these technical questions, at least we do know that the axis of the circle points to the spot where the sun would have risen at the summer solstice about 1700 B.C., and this seems to prove conclusively that the stones and temple were
connected with sun worship. But the Druids, with whom the monument has been traditionally associated, almost certainly did not build it, though the Druids could have used the temple built by their predecessors when the former came on the scene at a later date.¹

SIGNSIFICANCE OF THE NEOLITHIC REVOLUTION

It will by this time be clear that the Neolithic Revolution was perhaps the most important event in the history of man since he first began to live on dry land. The next great revolution of comparable importance took place only in the nineteenth century, when man first began to use extensively the power of machinery rather than the labor of his own hands and back. From Neolithic times to the Industrial Revolution a condition of universal plenty was never possible, even if men had been able to achieve the social organization required. Every human being can do only a limited amount of work himself in a day. He can produce only a limited surplus which cannot keep any very large number of people fed and clothed who are not themselves engaged in actual production. The leisure classes in such circumstances must always be strictly limited in number. Improvement in transportation and organization can distribute very widely the surplus of the many producers. But this total surplus can never be very great. This inconvenient fact has conditioned all civilizations between the Neolithic and Industrial revolutions. A small class of leisureed people, with their needs and even luxuries provided for, have been the leaders in civilization. In our own times, with the machine harnessed to provide almost unlimited power, plenty for all has at last, and for the first time, become theoretically possible.

Before the Neolithic Revolution man was condemned to live from hand to mouth. He had no means of preserving his food, which had to be killed and eaten as he needed it. He took whatever crops were provided for him by his environment. With the Neolithic Revolution it was possible for some favored people to be spared the manual labor of farming because each farmer could now produce a small surplus over and above his immediate needs. Moreover, it was possible even for the farmer himself to spend a part of his year without filling every hour of the day in manual labor. He could spend at least some of his time in thinking and in cultural activities not immediately connected with his bodily sustenance; and many producers could spare enough so that an occasional man need not work with his hands at all. All that was needed now was better organization of production, an improved social order, and the technological equipment and understanding for the production of a new range of materials and manufactures.

² The beginnings of metallurgy

THE BRONZE AGE, ca. 3500 B.C.

The earliest development of towns and cities will be considered in the next chapter. With these, and the development of the first written records, we shall have passed out of prehistory into the light of history. But the period that, according to convention, follows the Neolithic Revolution still antedates the first known cities and is characterized by the development of the first use of metals.

Metalworking presupposes a higher degree of social organization than a wholly agricultural hamlet or small village. We shall probably never know either who first thought of the use of bronze, or how the invention was made. Bronze, of course, does not appear in nature. It is composed of copper and tin, which must both be smelted to produce bronze. Copper ore can be used in its natural state and can be roughly molded by beating and by other Stone Age methods. It can thereafter be used without treatment by

¹ For an excellent account of recent research and findings on Stonehenge, see Jacquetta Hawkess, "Stonehenge," Scientific American, 188, No. 6 (June, 1953), 23-31.
heat. But copper is never found with tin in a natural state, and tin ore, in addition to being very rare, especially in the Near East where, as far as we know, it was first used, does not look as if it contained any metal at all. What kind of luck was necessary before the idea of bronze could be worked out is difficult to imagine. But the fact is undoubtedly there, awaiting explanation.

Copper tools were known before bronze, but not long before. Gold was known at the same time, but then, as now, it was primarily used for ornaments, and no doubt "placer-mined" out of river gravels. In some places, therefore, a Copper Age is recognized before the long-lived Bronze Age, which only slowly gave way to the Age of Iron. Tin ore must be treated with heat to produce the metal, copper must be treated with heat if it is to be made into efficient tools; impure copper ore must in any case be so treated if the copper is to be usable. This process must have been discovered at the end of the Neolithic period, ushering in the Age of Metals, it must be supposed, by accident. Then the early metallurgists, aware of the process, can only be supposed to have tried it out even on the most unpromising-looking rocks, and by accident happened upon tin ore. We can also only suppose that tin was discovered in some Near Eastern deposit where it is not known to exist in modern times. The chief sources for tin in the Bronze Age were Spain and Cornwall in England. But it has not yet been suggested that bronze was first produced in these countries, which were so far from the main stream of development. Once the process had been discovered, no doubt it also spread by diffusion, and new sources of supply were sought out.

Bronze was first known in the Near East before 3500 B.C. Daggers, swords, and certain high-grade tools and ornaments were made from it. No doubt the metal was much prized. We do know that exports from the Near East must have gone to Europe in fairly early times. It is almost certain that it was not discovered independently in Europe because the forms of European bronze imple-
ments are Oriental and not native, even when they were later manufactured in the West.

THE IRON AGE, ca. 1800 B.C.

It was at least 2,000 years after the Bronze Age that the Age of Iron began. By this time towns and cities and a considerable urban culture had existed for many hundreds of years. Iron in meteoric form had probably been occasionally molded and beaten into tools before this. Iron ornaments were known long before the first use of terrestrial iron, and their meteoric origin is to be recognized by the high component of nickel always found in this kind of iron. Although iron is so much more common than tin or copper, the process of making steel, the most usable form of the metal, is complex and was not discovered until wrought iron had been in use for many centuries. The processes of extracting tin and copper and bronze founding do not require the extremes of heat necessary for cast iron nor the long-continued hammering by the blacksmith necessary for wrought iron. There is no reason why a bronze caster should ever discover the use of iron, as his methods would not uncover it. Iron ore would seem quite useless to a bronze worker. Hence when iron ore was finally smelted and beaten into wrought iron by the muscular activity of the smith, the invention was probably made quite independently of the bronze workers, and made by a people who used or invented the bellows without which the heat necessary for ironworking could not be produced. The Greeks later attributed the invention to a people called the Chalybes in the region now called Armenia, later incorporated into the Hittite Empire. The Hittite kings' monopoly of the product excited the cupidity and envy of their neighbors, and there are records of occasional gifts of iron made by them to friendly potentates.

Once iron had been invented, however, its progress was assured. It was readily available, and could be used not only by kings, heroes, and nobles, but by common men. It could be used on farms as well as in palaces.
Derided as it no doubt was, it was destined to replace bronze for all but decorative purposes until this day.

Suggestions for further reading

One of the best short accounts of the present state of our knowledge of prehistoric man will be found in R. J. Braidwood, Prehistoric Man (2nd ed.; Chicago: Natural History Museum, 1951), a book which its publishers seem determined to keep up to date. A good popular work on the achievements of archaeologists is C. W. Ceram, Gods, Graves and Scholars (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1951), which is generally reliable. Two useful interpretations readily available are V. G. Childe, Man Makes Himself (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1951), and V. G. Childe, What Happened in History (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1946). Man Makes Himself was written as long ago as 1936 and is therefore seriously out of date in some respects. But it is still the most effective short treatment of the probable stages of development of prehistoric man, and of his transition to a settled life. Almost all writers on the subject owe a considerable debt to Childe, even though some of his theories are no longer acceptable. What Happened in History is a supplement to the earlier book and should be read in conjunction with it. Sir Leonard Woolley’s little book, Digging Up the Past (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1931), is a useful introduction to the work archaeologists actually do, by one of the leading pioneers in the field.

There is one outstanding book on cave art, which is unfortunately very expensive and not readily available except in good libraries. But it is well worth making the effort to find it and examine not only the interesting text but the hundreds of fine photographs taken in the caves themselves. This is H. Breuil, Four Hundred Centuries of Cave Art (tr. M. E. Boyle; Montignac, France: Centre d’études et de documentation préhistoriques, 1952).

II East of the Mediterranean—the Foundation of Civilization
A modern photograph of the pyramids at Gizeh at the time of the inundation of the Nile. From this picture it can be seen why the ancient Egyptians were likely to choose the period of the inundation for transporting the building materials required for the pyramids. (PHOTO BY FUZANI)
Egyptian Civilization

Reason for extended study • “River valley” civilizations: the meaning of the classification • Contrast between Egyptian and Mesopotamian river valleys: physiography, government, outlook on life • Prehistoric or predynastic Egypt • The Old Kingdom • First Intermediate Period • The Middle Kingdom • Second Intermediate Period • The New Kingdom: period of expansion • The New Kingdom: period of decline • General summary of Egyptian achievements

General considerations—Reason for extended study

Before coming to the history of ancient Egypt a few words of explanation should be given for the order in which this history is treated in this book and for the amount of space devoted to it. Egypt was probably not the “cradle of civilization”; that honor, as far as we know now, belongs to Mesopotamia. In a strictly chronological history of civilization, therefore, Mesopotamia ought to be studied first. Moreover, the Egyptians, of all great peoples, left fewest traces upon subsequent civilizations. The legacy of Egypt cannot, in our view, be in any way compared in depth or magnitude with the legacy of Mesopotamia and Israel. Why, then, should such a long chapter be devoted to Egypt?

This chapter has also followed a procedure different from that adopted in the rest of this book. Instead of treating the civilization as a whole and listing its contributions systematically under various topics, an attempt has been made to show the close connection between the political and economic events and the very slight changes to be observed in the attitude toward life on the part of the Egyptian people as expressed in their religion and art. This procedure has necessitated the mention of some historical facts which in themselves would have been of little interest to twentieth-century students but are of importance in their Egyptian context. An effort has been made to introduce only those historical facts which have a bearing on the changes in the Egyptian attitude toward life, while others, doubtless of equal importance to a professional historian or student of Egyptian history, have been omitted.

Egyptian civilization seems to the author to be unique in history for several reasons. It was a very long-lived civilization, lasting more than 2,500 years. It changed very slowly indeed during this span of time; but it did change, as we shall see. All the great discoveries made by the Egyptians were the result of work done during the first few cen-
turies of the existence of that civilization. Its forms and its art were evidently found satisfactory by the Egyptian people, who felt no need to change them. Thus it was a stable civilization, more stable than any other known to us, with the possible exception of China. This stability was reflected in Egyptian religion as well as in its art forms.

Western civilization has at no time been noted for its stability. It has at all times been a dynamic civilization, and in its latter centuries has been accompanied by an idea of eternal progress toward something new and better. This has meant constant disorder and constant wars. But it has also meant that the people, even while living in the midst of these uncertainties, have always had the hope that something better would come out of them—and indeed it cannot be said that we have been unsuccessful in our aims. We in America have produced for ourselves by our efforts a world in which we enjoy a far higher standard of material comfort than was known in, say, the Middle Ages in the early days of Western civilization.

But the Egyptians felt no urge toward progress. On the contrary, the constant rising and setting of the sun was the inspiration for their idea of human life. The sun rises and sets in almost the same quarter on the same day each year—it is no accident that the Egyptians did not discover the precession of the equinoxes. Change, to the Egyptians, was the same thing as disorder, and they did not enjoy it. Yet in spite of this, or more probably just because of this, the Egyptian civilization lasted longer than the civilization of the Greeks or the Romans, and longer than any Western civilization has lasted since. In this chapter, therefore, we shall make the effort to study this unique civilization as a whole, trying to show how everything in it contributed to the stability of the entire civilization, symbolized by the pyramids, which may well outlast any physical manifestation of our own era.

And yet, as we shall see, Egypt did change underneath. It was not possible to restore completely the old divinely ordained social order which the people believed was a reflection of the unchanging cosmic order. As the centuries passed it was increasingly difficult to deny the obvious fact of change, and it was found impossible really to restore the past. The last Pharaohs, diligently copying ancient inscriptions while barbarians threatened, and even at times ruled, their kingdom, are a pathetic reminder to us of the truth that there can be no standing still in history without falling back, and may serve to reconcile us to our world of disorder and progress. But the history of Egypt may also remind us that there was one great people which tried to hold back the clock, which developed and maintained a set of values altogether alien to ours, and yet survived for so long a time that we have difficulty in imagining it. If we count backward the time span of Egyptian civilization from the middle of the twentieth century A.D. we shall reach the dawn of Greek civilization. Solon had not yet been born, and Homer had not been long in his grave. How much of history and change have we encompassed in the 2,575 years since then, and how restricted a space do we give to the study of the history of Egypt from the First Dynasty to the last inglorious defeat by the Persians in 525 B.C.!

The Egyptian civilization is a working model of a truly homogeneous culture, affected very little indeed by other cultures. Yet, successful as it may have been from its own point of view, it bears almost no resemblance to ours, and its influence on the whole stream of civilization has been so slight that very little intensive study has been given to it except by specialists. The general student receives a vague impression of pyramids and tombs and otherworldliness; but it all seems so alien to him and so unworthy of serious attention in these modern days that he quickly passes on to Greece, whose people are recognizably like ourselves, and whose governments and philosophies have served as foundations for our own. Much of this misunderstanding, indeed, may be laid to the door of the Greeks themselves, who admired Egypt greatly because of its age and general impressiveness, but had little under-
standing of the Egyptian achievement, nor why the Egyptians had become as the Greek traveler and historian Herodotus described them.

Yet it is possible to gain some understanding of Egypt if the effort is made. And the effort, in the view of this writer, is eminently worth while because it may teach us that our own type of society and civilization is not the only possible one, that people can pass their lives satisfactorily without any idea of progress, without aggression upon their neighbors at least until the civilization was falling into decay, without those drives and urges which we have been led to consider as natural and inevitable for survival in a cruel and competitive world. It is not impossible that the human psyche has evolved since the days of the ancient Egyptian civilization; but, if so, it is surely worth while to consider at some length, before dealing with the main stream of civilization, the nature of man and his psyche as they were in those long-past days, if only to gain some perspective, and even some greater knowledge of ourselves by contrast with what we have evidently ceased to be.

In view of the fundamental differences between the Egyptian beliefs and way of life and our own, it is of the utmost importance for us to try to enter imaginatively into Egyptian beliefs and values, and not to contrast them with ours, except momentarily. It has therefore seemed to the author that it would be improper in this chapter to be content with listing Egyptian contributions to our civilization. Such a procedure would distort the facts and conceal their meaning. We should notice the period when any particular contribution was made, we should examine when a particular event took place and what its effect was upon the people. We are looking for real changes underneath an appearance of stability. The divine monarchy suffered a relapse at the end of the Old Kingdom, and it was restored during the Middle Kingdom; then again Egypt was ruled by foreigners during the so-called Second Intermediate Period, but the monarchy was restored for a new period of brilliance during the New Kingdom. But was Egypt fundamentally changed, in spite of the façade?

Thus a chronological framework is essential to the understanding of the process of change. The Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms must be distinguished from one another, and the so-called religious revolution of Akhnaton, the period most familiar to modern students by reason of the popular novels written about it (e.g., Mika Waltari's *The Egyptian*) will be dealt with in some detail as an important symptom of this process of change. The last part of Egyptian history, on the other hand, when there were no changes of consequence, will require very little space in comparison. The gradual sinking into a cultural coma can safely be taken for granted when the end is known.

"River-valley" civilizations—The meaning of the classification

Before proceeding to the history of Egyptian civilization proper it is necessary to say a few words about the conventional classification of ancient civilizations as "river-valley" or maritime or land-based. Three of the first civilizations known to us began in the valleys of great rivers where agriculture was comparatively easy, and a surplus of produce could be made available for those who did not themselves work on the land. By the Nile in Egypt, by the Tigris and Euphrates in Mesopotamia, and by the Indus in northwestern India, civilizations sprang up at an early date. There is still no agreement upon which of these was first, and it is quite possible that China, where archaeological investigation has lagged, holds a complete priority. Brief mention of the Indus civilization will be made in a later chapter; meanwhile the other river valleys will be discussed in some detail since their influence on Europe was more marked.

Slightly later than the river-valley civilizations are those which were from the first primarily dependent on the sea. These maritime civilizations lived by trade. The land available to them was limited, as in Phoeni-
cia; nevertheless some agriculture was indispensable to provide a basis for subsistence. These maritime civilizations have throughout history been in a dangerous economic position. They have been forced to protect their lines of commerce, and for this purpose to build navies or arm their merchantmen. Their livelihood has depended upon their ability to trade successfully; they have always imported more food than they exported and they have paid for these imports by the products of industry and by their services as distributors.

It is at once clear that it is not possible to classify all civilizations, even the very early ones, as river-valley or maritime. Mere geographical proximity to the sea does not necessarily mean that the people live by maritime trade. The Hebrew people usually had a fairly long coast line under their control, but they remained primarily a pastoral people. Lower Egypt and Crete had enough land available to make their economies a mixture of agriculture and maritime commerce. But for purposes of convenience, and because it has become conventional, we shall in this book retain these two broad classifications, and the Hebrews will be discussed as if all the peoples who lived in Palestine and Syria used the sea as their means of livelihood, and they were not a great exception to the rule.

Contrast between Egyptian and Mesopotamian river valleys—Physiography, government, outlook on life

Of all the river-valley civilizations, Egypt was the most clearly dependent upon its great river, the Nile. A glance at a conventionally colored map of Egypt will show the thin strip of green bordering the Nile Valley, with the uncultivable desert hemming it in on both sides. Egypt is an almost rainless land, and the annual inundations of the Nile provide it not only with all its usable moisture, but with great quantities of new fertile soil which are deposited in the fields. If the flood were allowed to run its natural course without any human interference, the area of land fertilized by it would be small indeed. In ancient times the uncivilized people of the south of Egypt made no effort to control the floods, and the areas bordering the Nile remained, for the most part, uncultivated. They were the home of waterfowl and animals and lush semitropical water plants rather than of industrious peasants; and we can infer from this natural condition what would have been the fate of Egypt if it had not been for the efforts of man.

The birth of Egyptian civilization, then, was the result of the labor of those unnamed men and women who first cleared and drained the land and then learned to understand and control the floods, building dikes to hold the water for a longer time than it would have been held in the course of nature, leading it by canals and projects of irrigation beyond the natural boundaries of the flood into adjoining areas of what had previously been a desert, but could be made to bear fruits by human labor and ingenuity.

We know nothing of these early human efforts but we know that they must have been made. Early pictures exist showing the abundant life of the marshes, and the tangle of reeds and brush that called forth the efforts of generations of prehistoric men. Once completed, the work did not need to be done again; and the valley of the Nile from that day to this has remained one of the great fertile regions of the earth. But it did require eternal vigilance and endless toil to make the most of the gift of the great river; and above all it needed cooperation between the peoples inhabiting the valley. The flood was not uniform; it did not always arrive at a given place on the same day each year, and the flood might be high or low, depositing a greater or lesser amount of water and soil. If the Nile was low one year, it might be high the next. Sooner or later there has always been a return to normal. But there might be years when marginal fields could not be cultivated and the dry desert winds would blow away the topsoil.
# chronological chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neolithic Age</td>
<td>ca. 6000–3000</td>
<td>Unification of Upper and Lower Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Kingdom: Dynasties Ⅰ–Ⅵ</td>
<td>ca. 3000–2200</td>
<td>&quot;Stepped&quot; pyramid of Zoser</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Great Pyramid of Khufu</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Memphite Theology</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Instructions of Ptah-hotep</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pyramid Texts</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Intermediate Period: Dynasties Ⅶ–Ⅺ</td>
<td>ca. 2200–2000</td>
<td>Prophecies of Ipuwer</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tale of the Eloquent Peasant</td>
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<td>Reconquest by Theban prince of north</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle Kingdom: Dynasty Ⅻ</td>
<td>ca. 2000–1792</td>
<td>Coffin Texts</td>
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<td>2150–1700</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Intermediate Period: Hyksos Invasion—Dynasties ⅩⅢ–ⅩⅥ</td>
<td>ca. 1800–1550</td>
<td>Reconquest of Egypt by Theban princes</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1580–1550</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Kingdom: Period of Empire—Dynasties ⅩⅦ–ⅩⅩ</td>
<td>1570–1090</td>
<td>Hatshepsut</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1486–1468</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thutmose Ⅲ (minor till death of Hatshepsut)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1490–1436</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Battle of Megiddo—Conquest of Syria and part of Mesopotamia</td>
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<td>1468</td>
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<td>Book of the Dead (present form)</td>
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<td>1400 onward</td>
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<td>Religious revolution of Akhnaton</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>1377–1360</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Restoration by Tutankhamon</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Horemhab</td>
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<td>1349–1319</td>
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<td>Rameses Ⅲ (captivity and exodus of Israelites?)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>1301–1234</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Battle of Kadesh and treaty with Hittites</td>
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<td>1297</td>
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<td>Rameses Ⅲ</td>
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<td>1195–1164</td>
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<td>Victory of Rameses over the &quot;Sea Peoples&quot;</td>
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<td>Tomb Robberies</td>
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<td>1120</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Kingdom: Post-imperial period—Dynasties ⅩⅢ–ⅩⅩⅩ</td>
<td>ca. 1090–525</td>
<td>Conquest by Assyria</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>670</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Conquest by Persia</td>
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<td>525</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Conquest by Alexander the Great</td>
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<td>332</td>
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All dates are before Christ.

These would be years of famine such as those described in the Bible when Joseph advised the Pharaoh to build granaries and store supplies.

All these dangers could be overcome by good government and organization. The approach of the inundation could be signaled all the way from the Fourth Cataract beyond the boundaries of Egypt right to the Delta. The labor of the peasants could be coordinated, manpower quickly transferred to the areas where it was most needed. The height of the flood, when it was known in advance, could be communicated to workers nearer to the mouth, and preparations made accordingly. The prosperity of Egypt was bound up with the efficiency of its governmental organization to a degree hardly equaled anywhere else in the world, and this fact, as we shall see, was appreciated by the ancient Egyptians themselves. If it would be too much to say that the form of government of ancient Egypt was determined by the river and the necessities connected with it, it is not too much to say that the extraordinary worship given to the Pharaoh and the prestige of his government can best be explained by the intimate connection between its efficiency and the prosperity of the Egyptian people.

In the river valleys of Western Asia all this was different. The Tigris and Euphrates overflowed, but less predictably than the Nile; there were torrential rains (the Egyptians said they had a "Nile in the sky") and hurricanes. There were terrible sandstorms as well as uncontrollable floods. The peoples of Mesopotamia could not look upon their rivers as the source of all life when they were as destructive as they were beneficent. Though irrigation was practiced, as in Egypt, it necessarily took on a different character; a strong government was not required with such urgency as in Egypt. The contrasts between Mesopotamia and Egypt are almost as great as the similarities, as we shall see; the kind of river is as important in the study of these civilizations as the mere fact of the river and its valley. If we are only studying the predominant manner of making a living, that is, by agriculture on irrigated land, then the classification is important and valid. If, however, we are studying the whole civilization and its accomplishments, then the contrasts must be equally examined. And at once the inadequacy of the geographical and environmental explanation becomes apparent.

It would be going too far in a work of this nature to try to produce a philosophy of history adequate to cover the vast material. Clearly no single factor or even complex of many factors determines history. The peoples of the upper Nile could have produced a civilization comparable to that of the Egyptians, but they did not; the Egyptians produced a certain kind of civilization because of their particular kind of river, but they need not have produced a civilization at all, and it could have taken different forms. It survived so long because the original ideas were found adequate for thousands of years, though, as we shall see, they were in important respects modified. The Mesopotamian peoples knew more different kinds of government than did the Egyptians, and none of them survived as long as the Egyptian. But what are we to say of the Hebrews? Could only a people such as this have given birth to monotheism and maintained it? Other peoples were in a similar position of insecurity, continually in danger of extinction from their neighbors, but they remained polytheists or "idol worshipers"; they did not conceive of themselves as specially chosen by God and protected by him.

These spiritual achievements were not determined by environment, though it may be true to say they were limited by it. If they had known a different environment the ideas might not have survived because they did not fit their experience. The Egyptian idea that the king, or Pharaoh, was a god manifest on earth, all-wise and all-powerful, could not survive the earthly experience that he was obviously not all-powerful because he was defeated by his enemies. This experience had to be explained away if the belief
was to be retained, or, if it could not be explained, the religion must be modified accordingly. The Hebrews explained their own defeats in spite of their position as the chosen people of God in different ways at different times, as we shall see. God was trying their faith, God did not value earthly victories as man did, God punished man for his sins. Ultimately, when all other explanations had failed, they thought that God would redress the balance of this world in the next. The Egyptians might say that their Pharaoh was not the true one, that his power had grown weak and needed reviving by magical means; or they could abandon interest in this life in favor of the next. The Mesopotamian peoples could and did give up all attempt at explanation of their misfortunes, regarding themselves as incapable of understanding what the gods wanted of them. The gods were arbitrary, perhaps unjust, and certainly not behaving in a rational manner toward them in accordance with any such contract as the Hebrews believed they possessed with their God. For all these beliefs one can see some justification in the life experience and environment of these peoples. But can one say that the beliefs were necessarily such as they were, and that no other was possible?

Mention has already been made in Chapter 1 of Toynbee’s theory of challenge and response. According to Toynbee, all peoples at all stages of their careers have certain challenges to meet. A people may meet such a challenge by accepting it and producing a response which will carry them one stage further in civilization, until another challenge is presented. If a people do not respond in a creative manner, then their civilization will decay; or they may respond in such a way as to use up all their creative energies without making further progress. In the latter case they respond continuously, but they cannot move onward. The study of history, in Toynbee’s view, consists in trying to determine the nature of the challenges and of peoples’ responses to them; and in trying to find lessons in history by discovering what are our own challenges, and whether we are responding or can respond in a creative manner.

There can be no question of the existence of these challenges and responses. At every moment in the life of a human being or a people there is some insistent problem that requires solution. This is so obviously true as to be hardly worth stating as a contribution to the understanding of history. But it has the supreme value of directing our attention to the human element in history as distinct from the environmental factors that shape it. History is the story of how human beings reacted to their environment and changed it; only human beings have history and only human beings make and record it. The story of the animal world, as of the earth itself, is an account of the external environment and its effects. But man has always had the choice of reacting creatively or being driven by forces beyond his control. For the thousands of years of prehistory dealt with in Chapter 2, man was like the animals insofar as he accepted his environment and lived as they did; he began to act like a human being when by thinking and planning and consciously willed action he changed that environment.

> Prehistoric or predynastic Egypt

The early Egyptians in the time called prehistoric or predynastic had already laid the foundation for their later civilization under the Pharaohs. There is no evidence of planned irrigation before the union of Upper and Lower Egypt, but the inhabitants had cleared and drained the areas adjacent to the Nile, they lived in villages, and they had learned agriculture and the domestication of animals. There was already fine pot-

1 A dynasty is the period of time during which one particular family held the throne of Egypt. Conventionally the First Dynasty of Egypt refers to the period immediately following the unification by Menes. The term “dynasty” or its equivalent, however, was unknown to the ancient Egyptians themselves, and the conventional division stems from the work of Manetho, a late Egyptian priest.
tery in predynastic times, though apparently without the use of the potter's wheel; this art, however, had reached a climax and deteriorated before the First Dynasty. The Neolithic settlements in Egypt show much the same characteristics as elsewhere. There were crude oval huts of mud followed by houses of shaped mud bricks with small windows. Since they knew the use of flax and cultivated it, the people wore clothes of linen. They had hoes made of wood and sickles with flint teeth. They were not cut off from the outside world, since there were already sailing ships on the Nile; indeed, Egyptian goods of the period have been found as far away as Persia. In the last centuries before the union of Upper and Lower Egypt and the great creative act of "Menes" the unifier, metal began to be used in Egypt and the copper mines to be exploited. Ivory, myrrh, lapis lazuli, and other foreign products were known and used.

Predynastic Egypt has left no writings, and we cannot know for certain about much of the religion and government of the people. Various figurines and symbolic objects have been found in graves dating back to this period, and from the considerable numbers of warlike implements we can assume that warfare was not unknown. It is probable that, until very late predynastic times, the basic governmental unit was the tribe, and that this unit gradually increased in size, containing different peoples not related by blood, until rather suddenly it became possible for local rulers to extend their authority by agreement and conquest, thus laying the basis for the remarkable unification of all Egypt that marks the beginning of Egyptian history proper.

It was believed until very recently that the Egyptians adopted a solar calendar and a year of 365 days as early as 4241 B.C. and therefore well within the predynastic period. This theory has now been abandoned and the adoption of this calendar placed within the period of the first three dynasties. But before it could be adopted there must have been many years of recorded observations. Probably these observations extended back into the predynastic times, though not necessarily very far into them. Writing appears also in a developed state early in the dynastic period, suggesting that its first elements were laid down before. Most modern opinion inclines to the view that in late predynastic Egypt there was quite extensive borrowing from Mesopotamian civilization, which in some respects was further developed at an earlier date. Monumental architecture, the cylinder seal, the potter's wheel, various artistic motifs, and, above all, writing, were known in Mesopotamia before there is any evidence for their use in Egypt. It is therefore probable that the last achievements of the predynastic age took place under foreign influence and provided the necessary stimulus for the great step forward which occurred.

Predynastic Egyptian jar, decorated with gazelles and ostriches. Note the considerable skill of the artist at this very early stage of Egyptian history. (Courtesy the Metropolitan Museum of Art)
as soon as the political conditions for further advance came into being.

Sources—Our Changing Knowledge of Egyptian History

It should be stated at once that the intensive study of Egyptian history is comparatively new. Until the early nineteenth century the Egyptian language was unknown to us. In 1798 the Rosetta Stone, bearing an inscription in Greek and two forms of Egyptian writing, was discovered by an officer in the army of Napoleon. Some thirty years afterward the French scholar Champollion had progressed so far in his comparison of the unknown language with the known Greek that he was able to produce an Egyptian grammar and dictionary. But great numbers of Egyptian texts are now known, and more are discovered every year. Even today it cannot be said that all the important ones have been read and analyzed. Moreover, in addition to the written texts, archaeologists have provided and are still providing us with an enormous mass of new material, all of which needs to be evaluated by modern criticism in the light of existing information. It is a far cry indeed now from the days when the information given by Greek tourists and historians, who themselves lived thousands of years after the Pyramid Age and obtained their information from priests often as ignorant as themselves, was regarded as accurate. Indeed it can be said definitely that we, with access to the contents of tombs unknown to the Greeks and with a knowledge of the Egyptian language not possessed by them, have a far greater and more accurate knowledge of ancient Egypt than they had, even though we are living more than two thousand years after the inquiries of Herodotus. And, to complete the paradox, we probably know more about the history of ancient Egypt than did the later Egyptians themselves, since they did not have access to the tombs, which have been entered and examined by modern archaeologists and evaluated by modern scholars with modern tools of research.

It was natural that histories of Egypt should be written in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on the basis of insufficient information, since the interest in ancient Egypt outstripped the research of early Egyptologists. It is not to be wondered at that much of what these pioneers wrote must be modified by later discoveries and more thorough criticism. Even the best translations made during the period prior to World War I must be used with great caution, so great has been the progress since that time in our understanding of the language. These older histories were the best available in their time, however, and served as a useful stimulus for further study. But, as in the field of anthropology discussed in the first chapter, even now there is little that can be taken for granted as unquestionably true, and the histories to be written a hundred years hence should be incomparably better than ours. There are still today very few competent Egyptologists, and the findings of each cannot be dissociated from his subjective prejudices. The most famous of American Egyptologists, the late Professor Breasted, with his Christian predilections, was too anxious to discover Hebrew thought in Egyptian documents to be completely objective; and, with our predominantly Christian and Jewish heritage, too many of us are inclined to use terms belonging to this heritage and apply them to ancient Egypt. Sin, evil, righteousness, and such terms all stem from this background, and a translator is hard put to it to discover neutral synonyms and often cannot do so. Perhaps, after all, there are some advantages in a picture language where the reader is free to clothe the symbols with whatever emotional content he pleases rather than try to extract the whole weight of his tradition from the finished words presented to him.

The Old Kingdom

The Creative Act of 'Menes'—Unification of Upper and Lower Egypt

Through the whole land of Egypt, as
has been said, flows the life-giving Nile. The fertile area is bounded on the east and the west by the desert, sparsely peopled by groups of nomads, who, for lack of numbers, are incapable at any time of conquering the settled groups in the valley. To the north is the sea, over which invaders could come, but were not likely to come in sufficient numbers to overpower a united people. To the northeast again is the desert of Sinai which could be crossed, but nevertheless constituted a formidable barrier to invasion. To the south are the six cataracts of the Nile, the first, at the usual boundaries of Egypt, easily navigated or by-passed in ancient times, while the remainder presented serious barriers to navigation, and thus to invasion by river. Potential enemies to the south, the Nubians and the Ethiopians, could be held in check by small frontier forces which needed only to patrol the narrow fertile area, since the desert was a sufficient protection on the flanks.

Egypt thus formed a compact and defensible unity against invaders from every direction. On the other hand, within itself it was not a unity. There was the sharpest distinction between the Delta, the mouth of the Nile in Lower Egypt, which faced the sea and maintained contact with foreigners, and Upper Egypt, which lived in natural isolation. In Lower Egypt also the fertile land of the Delta is many miles wide, while in Upper Egypt the desert hems the cultivable land within closely confined barriers. The whole life of Upper Egypt was the river and the small area watered by it.

Before the creative act of “Menes” the Upper and Lower areas were under separate jurisdiction, with the geographical advantages manifestly on the side of the north. But it was nevertheless a prince of Upper Egypt who united them, presumably by conquest, and established the capital of the new kingdom at Memphis in Lower Egypt. By the time of the Third Dynasty this kingship of the Two Lands was regarded as a peculiar gift of the gods to Egypt and the king himself (Pharaoh or Great House, as he was later called) was the god manifest on earth, which he remained throughout the whole of Egyptian history. Though the capital changed several times during the course of this history, it was a fixed dogma of the religion that the Pharaoh was always “Ruler of the Two Lands,” and he wore the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt, even though there was no longer any geographical or administrative distinction. At the coronation of the king, all rituals and ceremonies were performed for each land, and separate offices for each were maintained for the king’s use in spite of the fact that he performed no separate duties.

There is no mention in Egyptian documents of any armed conquest of Lower Egypt by “Menes.” The unification is always stated as a divine act performed by him; the natural divine order was manifested on earth.
by the deed of "Menes," though this essential unity had always existed even before it was made manifest. We are thus left in doubt as to the means employed; but in physical terms we are bound to assume that the unification did not take place without some struggle; indeed, the records give some signs of rebellion against the new rule. But it is certain that the consolidation was ultimately accepted by all, and endured essentially throughout all Egyptian history, in spite of the topographical differences between Upper and Lower Egypt. There can be no doubt that this union of Upper and Lower appealed to the Egyptian sense of symmetry so noticeable in both Egyptian art and religion—the conception of an underlying unity manifested in dual form. Egyptian gods always come in pairs, the right and left banks of the Nile balance each other, the eastern mountain range balances the western; so no doubt divine monarchy was a unity, but manifesting itself in rulership over the Two Lands.

THE DIVINE KINGSHP

The conception of the divine king is not peculiar to Egypt, and indeed is still to be found among certain African tribes, possibly a decadent survival of the once-great Egyptian civilization of that continent. But the god who appears on earth, as distinct from the king who becomes a god at death (as under the Roman Empire) or the representative of the gods on earth (the Mesopotamian notion), was, as far as we know, unique in that age. Since it had the most profound consequences for Egypt, and was indeed her key institution, it needs a more detailed treatment than is usually given in textbooks.

In our culture we are accustomed to think in monotheistic terms of a transcendent God who is apart from the world, however much he may have been responsible for its existence, and however great the interest he takes in it. Such a conception would have been completely alien to Egyptian thinking and feeling, as it is to most Oriental peoples today. The polytheism of the Egyptians is as natural a belief and even as intellectually respectable as monotheism, provided the conception is appraised not from our point of view but from theirs. At times the Egyptians thought of all their gods as manifestations of an underlying unity and thus approached closely to monotheism; at other times they laid more stress on the functions and powers of the gods, and then each function was represented by a personified god, or, in our terms, a natural force. The modern civilized man whose feelings are turned in awe toward the wonderful works of God thinks first of one divine power or attribute and then of another. He cannot encompass them all at the same moment. Where he thinks of the power of God as manifested in creation, the Egyptian might think of Hathor the cow-goddess; where he might think of death and resurrection the Egyptian would think of Osiris; where he might think of the first great creation by the divine mind the Egyptian would turn to Ptah, who created the world by giving utterance to the thought that was in his heart. An Egyptian would personify all these powers by the names of gods and goddesses; but these powers were experienced doubtless as powers in which the Egyptians saw the activities of the gods. It is a mistake to think of all polytheism as "idol worship" in the sense used by the Hebrews.

The ruler of Egypt was pre-eminently a Horus, the son of Osiris, who had been conceived by his mother Isis after the death of his father Osiris, who had been killed by his own brother Set, the power of darkness. The myth of the great struggle between Osiris and Set, the birth of Horus and his rise to manhood, and the drawn battle between him and his uncle in which Horus lost his eye—this fundamental myth is found in different forms at different periods in Egyptian history. But the basis remains the same. Osiris fought with Set and was killed; his sister-wife found him after a long search and either revived him sufficiently to enable her to bear Horus, or she conceived Horus after his resurrection. At all events, Osiris
thereafter reigned as king in the world of the dead and Horus was his successor on earth. Thus each new king of Egypt was a Horus, but by the proper ritual burial he became an Osiris after death. When the old king became an Osiris through burial, then a Horus could be born again upon earth.

But the king was not only a Horus, son of Osiris; he was also the son of Re, the great sun-god, and at times this is the emphasis given to his divinity. The point to be understood is that these titles are not mutually exclusive. The fact that he was the son of Re or of Amon did not mean that he was not also the son of Osiris. To us a son has only one father and one mother, and this is of course true in a physical sense. But a king may be a son of many gods, for all have their share in him, and the worshiper or subject may emphasize now one aspect of his divinity and now another. By giving him more titles the worshiper enhances the god’s dignity and his power, and enriches the conception of the king-god rather than detracts from it. The Egyptians had several different stories of creation and, to them, all were true; they were not alternative hypotheses only one of which could be true. The heavens were created by the action of a huge cow who stood up. The heavens were supported by four posts. Shu and Tefnut, air and moisture, gave birth to earth and sky and to Geb and Nut, the gods of earth and sky—and, as we have seen, all were created also by the mouth of Ptah. All of these conceptions were true, from their separate point of view, to the ancient Egyptian—not, as has sometimes been supposed, at different stages of Egyptian history, but at one and the same time. They were not hypotheses framed by the thinking mind to account for, to explain the how of creation, but an intuitive perception of the infinite depth and breadth of the creative process.

So the Pharaoh of Egypt partook of all the possible aspects of divinity; yet even he was not as great as the all-encompassing “total” deities; he had something of the nature of Osiris, something of Re, something of Atum and Amon and Ptah in him; but, being on earth, he was limited, and thus is usually spoken of as the son of Re or Amon rather than these great gods in their entirety. It was not until the limiting restrictions of the body had been cast off that he would become a true Osiris, and go around the heavens in the boat of the sun-god as himself now an aspect of the sun-god. But he was also not simply one of the gods, a minor god who was given charge over the land of Egypt, or a representative of God who had to make petition to higher gods. As a god he was possessed above all of three supreme powers, authoritative utterance or creative command (hu), perception or understanding (sia), and Ma’at, an untranslatable word which will be discussed more fully later. These powers enabled him to rule the land of Egypt with infallible judgment and unquestioned authority. His command was not limited to command over men. He was himself responsible by his divine powers for the inundation of the Nile. He made the Nile rise, and did not merely predict it; if the Nile overflow was insufficient or excessive, it was the Pharaoh who was responsible. When the king grew old and had been long on the throne, a special festival (the Sed festival) was celebrated for him, a kind of thirty-year jubilee for the renewal of his powers. Rameses II of the Nineteenth Dynasty celebrated the festival not only after thirty years of rule but at frequent intervals thereafter, perhaps because he felt his own life-forces to be in need of renewal.³

THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT ON EARTH—Ma’at

As a consequence of his position as a god, all Egypt was naturally subject to him, and all authority derived from him. His viziers and ministers only held office at his pleasure, and all spoke in his name. He owned all the land, though in most periods he did not exercise his right to ownership, and land was bought and sold as if it belonged to the “tenants.” In theory he could, however, always resume his ownership, and in the New Kingdom there is evidence that

³ Certain African tribes today perform a similar rite for their kings.
he did so, and had the land worked through nominees. In theory he even owned all that existed in foreign countries, so that an ordinary commercial transaction would have to be disguised as a "gift" or "tribute" even when the foreign country was in fact entirely independent and the goods were bought and paid for. The system was that the Pharaoh's servants would send gifts to the foreigner on behalf of their master, and the equivalent "gifts" from the foreigners would then be left for the Egyptians to collect and record on their monuments as "tribute." In an informal account of an expedition to the stone quarries, on one occasion when a remarkable incident occurred which revealed the presence of a fine block of granite, the incident was recorded as having "happened to his majesty," although the Pharaoh was hundreds of miles away at the time.—H. Frankfort, Ancient Egyptian Religion (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), p. 58.

priests opposed him they do not seem to have questioned his right to make the change. Even the records of victory are rarely fully individualized. They follow a certain type, and in some cases even the names of the conquered reappear in different inscriptions hundreds of years afterward. Pharaohs with but a few exceptions did not take pride in their personal exploits.

In all the sculptures of royal victories the contests to us appear unfair. The Pharaoh is depicted as of superhuman size, while his enemies are dwarfs cringing before him. And while it is true that the personal prowess of some Pharaohs is extolled by the sculptor, this is only because the latter wished to emphasize the Pharaoh's power and glory and the good fortune of Egypt that she had a powerful god to lead her to such smashing victories. Even Amenhotep III, who took such evident pride in his achievements as athlete and hunter, was clearly never in danger from man or beast; his prowess was only to be expected.

Such power carries truly awful responsibilities, and in all ages of Egyptian history we have no indication that they were not fully realized by the rulers. The king consulted his advisers but the decisions were all his. As a god he was expected to have the knowledge necessary to make them wisely. The records always speak merely of the offerings of opinion by the counselors, followed by the revelation of the king and the acclaim of the counselors. "The king took counsel in making disclosures," or "The king made his appearance [the same word is used as for the rising of the sun] with the double crown, and gave commands." The counselors answer, "Authoritative utterance is in thy mouth. Understanding follows thee . . . it is thy plans which come to pass."

The reason that the Pharaoh alone was able to make decisions, the reason that he "made disclosures" was that he alone knew the true nature of the universe. The order of the universe, the static perfected universe of the Egyptians, not subject to change and established from the beginnings of time, was called in the Egyptian language Ma'at. The
The New Kingdom Pharaoh Thutmose III destroying his enemies. Note the gigantic size of the Pharaoh and the conventional puniness of his enemies.

Amenhotep II (New Kingdom) was evidently very proud of his skill as a lion hunter. Here the convention is observed of showing the Pharaoh as far larger and more powerful than his enemies, animal and human alike. Hence the lion is rather a puny beast and, as in all Egyptian conventional art depicting the fighting of a Pharaoh, the hunt is strictly "no contest." (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)
Egyptians did not deny apparent change, the recognized recurrent change, the return to the starting point as of the eternal sequence of day and night. Such change was part of the established order. But no fundamental change was possible. The union of Upper and Lower Egypt had not taken place in time, but was a permanent fact. Only creation was a real change; but even at the time of creation divine monarchy had existed. Ma’at, then, in its original meaning was the divine order of creation, order created out of chaos. But this is only one kind of order. Falsehood is manifestly disorder; so is injustice. Ma’at can therefore mean also both truth and justice. When the Egyptians claimed that they lived by Ma’at, this only means that they were living in accordance with the divinely established order. A rebel against the Pharaoh would have ceased to live by Ma’at, as he wished to substitute chaos for order. When the Pharaoh made a decision, he made it by virtue of his knowledge of what the right order was—not for moral reasons, or because such an action was useful. Rather, because it was harmonious. As a god he also knew naturally what was just. It was not necessary for him to listen to evidence, and seek out where the truth lay; his decree was infallible for he was the source of justice. He could not of course decide upon every case throughout the land of Egypt, and thus his power devolved upon his representatives; but it was always clear that they only held their power, and indeed their knowledge, from him.

This conception of justice as known only by the Pharaoh effectively accounts for the complete absence in Egypt of any codified law. No doubt it was customary law that was administered in practice, as it has always been. But precedents, even cited from the decisions of the Pharaoh, could never be officially quoted since the decision could only naturally hold for the particular case. and, as far as we know, there was never any reference made to earlier cases or decisions rendered by earlier Pharaohs. As the sole possessor of Ma’at, the sole knower of what was just, orderly, and right, his word was law and against it there could be no appeal.

As god the Pharaoh was, of course, both head of the religion and the object of worship. But he was not high priest as has sometimes been stated. The high priest was theoretically subject to the Pharaoh and appointed by him, though in later times, at least, the office tended to remain semihereditary in certain families. In the later New Kingdom during the decline of the monarchy there is no doubt that the priesthood held tremendous power and was perhaps the real governing body of the country. Nevertheless it was possible for the autocrat Akhnaton to abolish the whole priesthood of the ruling god Amon for at least the duration of his reign without producing a rebellion. But in early times we hear little of the high priests and can only assume their effectively subordinate position.

Thus the king combined in himself enough functions to make him the most completely absolute monarch of any civilized people in history. He was the supreme ruler whose word was law beyond any questioning; he was the fount of all power in Egypt, natural and political; he owned all the land, appointed all officials, and was the source of justice. He acknowledged no authority whatsoever, not even that of the gods whose equal and partner he was. And in the Old Kingdom, as far as we can tell from the records, only he possessed certain immortality, and only he was able to ensure immortality for those of his subjects who served him to the end and were buried under his protection.

From all this it follows that the only danger for the people of Egypt was that the new king might not be a god as his predecessors were. He always did become a god at his coronation, when the old king was mumified and buried. But he had not been born as a god, and there was always a period
of uncertainty from the moment of the death of the old king to the coronation of the new. The new king came to the throne as the sun rose on the day following the death of the old. There was an impressive ceremony for this accession and a mystery play was performed. But at the accession of the new king, the dead king had not yet become an Osiris; consequently the new king was not yet a Horus. For the all-important coronation the appropriate season in nature had to be awaited, some decisive moment when there was a beginning in nature—either the beginning of the season of the inundation, or the beginning of what the Egyptians called the Season of Coming Forth when the crops were sown. Since the successful enthronement of the new king as a Horus depended on the successful transfiguration of the late king as an Osiris, tremendous importance was attached to the funerary rites of the old. In this understanding may lie the key to the great monuments of the Old Kingdom, the ever-impressive pyramids of this age.

THE PYRAMIDS—SYMBOL OF EQUILIBRIUM AND STABILITY

Not all the pyramids were built during the Old Kingdom, but all the more impressive ones, including the so-called Great Pyramid of Khufu (Cheops in Greek) at Gizeh. Although they have almost all been fully excavated and examined and measured, there is still no general agreement either on how they were built or their real purpose. Though later Egyptians built some smaller pyramids and there was another whole age of pyramid building far to the south by the Ethiopians who controlled Egypt during her last years, there have been few attempts to imitate them by other peoples. To our taste they are not particularly beautiful nor do they serve a useful function. With modern machines they could probably be built with only a tithe of the manpower used by the Egyptians, but we do not want to build them, although it is possible they will outlast any other buildings at present existing in our world. The Greeks, and even the Egyptians of the New Kingdom, visited them as tourists, and were given such information as the priests then possessed. But there is no reason to believe these priests knew even as much as we do about them, since they were without our scientific curiosity and, moreover, had no means of examining them as thoroughly as we have examined them. The descriptions of the Greek historian Herodotus are only valuable insofar as they give us the knowledge of what existed in his day and has disappeared since, and his explanations are only as valuable as the tradition from which they were taken. The Muslim Caliph Mamun in the ninth century A.D. authorized an expedition to examine the Great Pyramid in search of treasure. It was successfully broken open, but the treasure was missing if it had ever been there. There is no certain knowledge that there ever was enough to repay the labor of stealing it.

The kings of the First and Second Dynasties were buried in mastabas, a kind of better-built version of the contemporary house, and intended as the everlasting home of the in-

Model of a mastaba constructed by The Metropolitan Museum of Art. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)
The stepped pyramid of Zoser at Sakkara (IIIrd Dynasty). This shows the earliest form of a pyramid. (PHOTO BY LEKEGIAN)

Model of the Great Pyramid complex, constructed by The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Note the impressive mortuary temples leading up to the pyramid itself. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)
cumbent. It was not until the Third Dynasty that the first pyramid was built, and this was built in steps or layers. It is not now generally believed that the pyramid developed from the mastaba, but rather that the pyramidal form represented some change in the solar religion and the beliefs in the afterworld, so that the pyramid became a suitable form for the body of the dead king to inhabit. None stood by itself in lonely grandeur as the pyramids appear today. Each was part of a complex, including a mortuary temple where rites for the dead king were celebrated. More simple tombs for the queens, nobles, and officials, and women of the household were erected in the same area, presumably in order that they might continue to serve the king in the hereafter.

After the stepped pyramid of Zoser in the Third Dynasty began the erection of the great pyramids of the Fourth. These were true pyramids, made of huge granite blocks, all encased in limestone, so that the surface of the whole pyramid was smooth and regular. This surface has now been removed or worn off, exposing the granite blocks, and giving an appearance of irregularity unknown in ancient times.

The Great Pyramid of Khufu stands on a square base facing exactly the four points of the compass with a tiny margin of error. Out of a total of 755.8 feet, the longest line of this square is only 7.9 inches longer than the shortest. The east side is 5°30′ west of north, the greatest variation of the four sides. It is not known how this almost incredible jewelers' precision was attained with the instruments then known to the Egyptians, for it could not be achieved merely with the use of the North Star. The Egyptians, of course, did not have the magnetic compass. The height of the pyramid, when complete, rose to 481.4 feet and the area covered by its base was 13.1 acres. This, it has been estimated, would give room for the cathedrals of Milan, Florence, and St. Peter at Rome, as well as Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's Cathedral, and still leave some space to spare. There are more than two million separate blocks of granite in the structure, weighing two and a half tons each. Inside the pyramid, which is entered 55 feet above the ground, there is a great gallery leading upward to a spacious chamber called the King’s Chamber by the Muslims, while there is another gallery leading downward to what is certainly erroneously known as the Queen’s Chamber. There is no evidence whatsoever that a queen was buried there, but much evidence to the contrary.

The engineering and labor problems involved in the erection of these gigantic structures raise many questions, not all of which can be satisfactorily answered. Herodotus' statement of the hundred thousand men employed for three months for twenty years is only a nice round estimate given to tourists of his day by Egyptian priests and may not even represent the priestly tradition any more than do modern statements given to wide-eyed tourists by professional guides. We do know from quarry marks on stone transported to other pyramids that the laborers worked in gangs with popular names such as "Boat Gang," "Vigorous Gang," "Craftsmen Gang," and so on, and we know of the later use of ramps, along which the stones were propelled up a fairly gentle slope and then eased into position. The pulley principle was unknown in ancient Egypt. Presumably all the dressing for the stones was done by skilled craftsmen below. The stones were finished with incredible precision, fitting into position with but one hundredth of an inch out of alignment from the true square.

The quarrying of these quantities of granite must have presented problems almost as difficult as the problems of construction, though the river, which at full flood at Gizeh closely approached the base of the pyramids, could be used for transportation. The amount of labor expended was, of course, enormous, when the whole project is considered, though not necessarily as large as the estimate of Herodotus, since so much would depend upon intricate and careful planning and organization. That a state should have reached such an extraordinarily high degree of efficiency in organization still excites the admiration of our technical age.
There is no reason to suppose that the labor was provided by slaves. We are too often misled by the Biblical stories of the Children of Israel who, thousands of years later, labored for the Pharaoh. The monuments of the Ramessids of the Nineteenth Dynasty were far inferior to those of their great predecessors in the Pyramid Age. Little precision was used and most of these monuments rest on comparatively feeble foundations; on the other hand, everything connected with the Great Pyramid was carried out with the utmost honesty, clearly by true craftsmen who had a real feeling for the work they were doing, and strove to make it as perfect as possible. It is not only in the finish but in the unseen parts of the structure that this scrupulous honesty was observed. In the Old Kingdom of Egypt there were few foreign wars, and thus few opportunities to win slaves.

The building of the pyramids was done in the period of the year when work on the land was impossible. Probably, as in the case of the ancient Peruvian peasants working for the Incas, their king-gods, every Egyptian also had the obligation to spend part of each year in the service of his king-god, service which was given gladly or reluctantly according as he believed in the purpose of the work or did not.

There remains the question of the purpose of the monuments. Unfortunately inside the pyramids of the Fourth Dynasty there are no carved reliefs or texts of an explanatory nature. In those of the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties, however, there are numerous writings, mostly in the form of spells. There can be no doubt that some of them are very old and refer to conditions long before these later pyramids were built. So we are reasonably justified in regarding them as in some degree applicable to the pyramids of the Fourth Dynasty, those of Gizeh. It would seem from these spells, as also from the design of the pyramid, that a pyramid was regarded as a kind of ladder to the heavens, upon which the dead king might ascend to his final resting place. No more perfect symbol of equilibrium between heaven and earth has ever been devised than a pyramid whose summit—and there is some evidence to show that the Egyptians sometimes finished theirs in gold—catches the rays of the sun before they reach the earth beneath.

Yet we also know that the Egyptians, both before and after the Great Pyramid, believed that the afterlife was spent in the tomb. The ba (perhaps the nearest Egyptian equivalent to the soul, or principle animating the body) is shown in some pictures as hovering over the body, and descending the tomb shaft to visit it, presumably attracted back to its earthly habitation, preserved by the piety of its descendants. The blessed afterlife was indeed in all periods ensured by proper burial rites and mummification. The presence of a mortuary temple right against some pyramids, with its sanctuary adjoining it and a false door leading from the pyramid, suggests also that the dead king, like his subjects, could return to his tomb. It is possible also that two shafts leading from the king’s burial place in the pyramid to the outer air, the purpose of which is still unknown, might act as a passageway for the ba.

The foregoing considerations therefore suggest to the author that the pyramid had two functions to perform. One was to act as the means of ascent for the dead king so that he might join his colleagues and ancestors in the circumpolar stars, which was one of the greatest hopes of the Egyptian. This would account for the extreme precision used in the erection of the pyramid and its astronomical accuracy. But when he had ascended he had become an Osiris, superior to the rank he had attained on earth, and superior to the present incumbent of the throne. We know from other sources that it was hoped that the dead king would still be able to help his people after death. If, then, he had become as powerful as the pyramid spells tried to make him, then he might indeed be able to help them if he could be given some means of returning to earth. What above all did he need most, the one thing he had used in life but now no longer possessed in death? His body. If his
ba could be attracted back into the pyramid to anamite his mummy, and come into the sanctuary kept ready for him by his priests who were specially endowed for the purpose, what blessings would such a powerful being not be able to bestow upon the land of Egypt?

It must be admitted that there is no positive evidence in the texts that such a future was hoped for; indeed, the pyramid spells do not suggest it. On the other hand, the spells perhaps perform only one part of the process. Their purpose was to ensure the Pharaoh’s power in the next world as an Osiris, a prerequisite for his assistance in this. If it were well known at the time that the pyramid would ensure the continued presence of the Pharaoh, there would be no need to stress it in the texts. If such a hypothesis is tenable, then all the other facts fit into place. The people of Egypt would not be building the pyramids to satisfy a megalomaniac desire on the part of their king to force his way into immortality by sheer physical force, as Breasted suggested, nor would it even be an act of gratitude on the part of the people for the lifetime deeds of a great king. On the contrary, it would be for their own benefit, to ensure that his power, immensely enhanced by his presence among the gods, would remain with them during the lives of his successors. Then the labor would be, as Moret suggests, an “act of faith” indeed, but also an act of faith that looked for a reward in the present life, with which the people of the Old Kingdom were so well satisfied. It would be comparable to the devotion of the medieval men who built the great French cathedrals by an enormous cooperative effort, and no more a reluctant and forced labor than theirs.⁸

ASPECTS OF OLD KINGDOM CREATIVITY

Technical advances—Improvement in stoneworking, architecture, and sculpture

It has already been suggested that an extraordinary technical advance took place between the Third Dynasty pyramid of Zoser and the Great Pyramid of Khufu. This advance was not confined to technical accomplishment but found expression in all fields of Egyptian activity, and the people seem to have been aware of it. This period of less than a century seems to have been one of those rare, almost incredibly creative eras in the history of mankind comparable to fifth-century Athens. Unfortunately, for Egypt, we do not possess the roster of great names, and few besides those of the Pharaohs are known to us. There is no accounting for these eras by noting the presence of certain determining factors; the historian can only suggest conditions favorable to them. The union of Upper and Lower Egypt was by now thoroughly accepted, the belief in the king-god protecting Egypt gave her people an unprecedented sense of security, foreign enemies gave them no trouble, and the frontiers could be maintained with a minimum of effort, so that no standing armies were necessary; harvests were good, the bountiful land, aided by its beneficent river, gave three crops regularly every year—these no doubt were contributing factors. Responsible and creative leadership and patronage by the Pharaohs assured the artisan of a

⁸There are, of course, many other theories on the purpose of the pyramids, and the meaning of their symbolism. It is certain from the texts that the dead king did ascend from the pyramid to the sky, and there he was greeted by his divine colleagues. It is not known whether he returned to the pyramid after death, as other ba’s were believed to return in later times. It has been suggested that the pyramid is an enlarged version of the primeval hill on which the Creator-God stood when he made the world (H. Frankfort, Kingship and the Gods [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948], pp. 152–154), or that it was a simple copy of the solar symbol at Heliopolis (James H. Breasted, Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1912], p. 72). It used to be commonly held that the pyramid evolved naturally as a piece of funerary architecture from the earlier mastaba through the stepped pyramid to a true pyramid. For the whole problem see L. E. S. Edwards, The Pyramids of Egypt (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1947), pp. 232–241. It may be added that Osiris at this period was also the god of the Nile and of vegetation. The ascent of the Pharaoh and his reception as an Osiris may therefore have been regarded by the Egyptians as a means of enlisting heavenly assistance for the inundation of the Nile and the growth of crops.
Diorite statue of Khafre, with the Horus Falcon behind him. The statue depicts the Pharaoh with the majesty of a god and no sign of human failings. This statue should be contrasted with the statues of Middle Kingdom pharaohs which appear on the following pages.

market for his output and his worship called forth the highest efforts of his skill.

But not even the combination of these things can account for the tremendous outburst of energy, discovery, and advance in all fields that characterizes this age. The engineering and technical advances have already been described. In Zoser's time the stepped pyramid was certainly built in stone, unlike the earlier mastabas of brick. But the stone was cut up into small blocks, which were laid as if they were bricks. The potentialities of stone itself as a material in its own right were not realized until this age. The sculptured figures of the earlier dynasties were cylindrical, giving place in the Pyramid Age to the cubic; sculpture in the round and relief sculpture came into their own. The familiar flat planes skillfully twisted, with head and shoulders in full frontal view while the rest of the body was in profile, belong to this period of experimentation. The art forms in the earlier dynasties were to a large degree conditioned by their material, and the Egyptians before the Fourth Dynasty could not handle stone, though they were successful with ivory. Stone statues were merely massive. But the royal statues of Fourth Dynasty Khafre—whether in diorite or in softer stones—all alike give the desired impression of majesty as well as any in the whole period of Egyptian history. One statue, carved from diorite, a hard and difficult stone to work, was probably never equaled again for the monumental majesty it expresses and is the most reproduced of all Egyptian sculptures.

The relief carvings of this age show unbounded energy, life, and apparent optimism. The Egyptian is already preoccupied with death, but his death promises only, at this time, a fuller life. Harvest scenes, hunts, games, and festivals are abundant. The tomb scenes, so different from those of the New Kingdom, really show a denial of death and the future by projecting the present into the hereafter. It may seem unfortunate to us that Egypt gained a high degree of artistic mastery so early in her history, since nearly all later Egyptian art consists of elaborations of these earlier art forms. To us, therefore, Egyptian art lacks variety. The early establishment of basic art forms is a phenomenon to be found elsewhere in the ancient world; for instance, some observers have

\[1\] One might be tempted to say that the Egyptian at no time ever doubted his immortality itself. He hoped it would be better than this life in the sense of being more abundant and full, but essentially unchanged. We should beware of reading into Egyptian thought the idea that immortality must be won. In the Old Kingdom nobles were buried with the Pharaoh so that they might continue to serve him afterward. But this was the established order of things and it was good. They could not be supposed to desire immortality as lonely individuals, not integrated into any social system, when they had never been individuals in this sense in life. Likewise the masses of the people, unable to conceive of life without their lords, could equally not conceive of death without them. The kind of immortality to be won became of the greatest importance in later Egypt when the old peaceful static order had disappeared and the kingship had decayed and belief in the god-king was shaking—when, as the Egyptian said, Mo'at was no longer in the land. Then personal immortality, without assistance from the king, and outside the disintegrating social order, naturally became more important, and mummification and proper burial rites were emphasized.
noted it in China. But it is nowhere so striking as in Egypt. There may be more exquisite workmanship in the Middle Kingdom, as there is certainly a more finished literature; but the same general standards and forms, once having been found and approved, persisted. They became, in Egyptian terms, part of "the right order of the world established from the beginning," and so not to be changed. Only the heretic Akhnaton set a new standard, but his reforms did not survive his dynasty.

It might be argued that in a static society presided over by a king-god, from whom all authority stemmed, there would be a social rigidity that would be hard to endure. But it does not seem that such a rigidity ever existed in the Old Kingdom. We possess several autobiographies of self-made men, some of them reading like modern success stories. Even a peasant could rise to high position if he showed ability. Where all were equal under the king, it was within his power to raise anyone by his favor, as Joseph in the Biblical story was raised out of prison to be the chief steward of the realm. We know of one Uni, keeper of a modest government storehouse, who rose to be Governor of Upper Egypt and ultimately—an even higher post—royal Tutor. An architect tells how the king's favor raised him from the position of a common builder to be Royal Constructor and Architect. Though giving due credit to the Pharaoh, he nevertheless implies that it was his own ability which was justly rewarded. Within the framework of this completely unquestioned Pharaonic government a man might strive for his own wealth and fortune and succeed. In the extant documents of this age, no gloomy fears and no doubts were voiced. There was, on the contrary, everywhere an air of bustle and achievement, as if the people knew they were living in a great age and gloried in it. The book of Instructions written by Ptah-hotep, a vizier in the Old Kingdom, gives clear advice to his son on how to get on in the world by striving for personal improvement—and explains the rules which must be kept. In his words "Ma'at is great and its appropriateness is lasting; it has not been disturbed since the time of him who made it, whereas there is punishment for him who passes over its law." This was the eternal and unchanging social order within the framework of which a man should progress.9

Religious speculation—The "Memphite Theology"

Another aspect of the special creativity of the Pyramid Age is to be seen in the remarkable and original document commonly known as the Memphite Theology, which, though only known in a late copy, can be dated with certainty to the Old Kingdom. There is very little indeed in Egyptian religion that can be called speculative. As suggested earlier, the Egyptian was inclined to enrich his conceptions of the divine by the multiplication of symbols rather than by trying to understand the essential nature of divinity. He concentrated upon the multiplicity of divine manifestations rather than seeking to discover the underlying unity. But in the Memphite Theology the priestly writers really tried to come to grips with the problem of the nature of divinity as both cause and continuous effect. This account does not deny the other stories of creation, but goes much more deeply into the matter than do other extant Egyptian documents.


"Though all the teachings of Ptah-hotep and similar sages may be interpreted as simple advice on how to get on in the world, there can be little doubt that this interpretation does not exhaust their meaning. If this is all that they were, it would be hard to account for the great veneration in which they were held in later years. It would probably be more accurate to say that they were primarily useful as teachings concerning the established order, or Ma'at, and wherein it consisted. Hence their importance when Ma'at was no longer in the land, and it was the duty of teachers to try to restore it. On this point see, especially, Frankfort, Ancient Egyptian Religion, pp. 61-76."
Ptah, the Great One . . . gave birth to the gods. There came into being as the heart and there came into being as the tongue, something in the form of Atum. The mighty Great One is Ptah, who transmitted life to all gods. . . . Thus it happened that the heart and tongue gained control over every other member of the body, by teaching that he, Ptah (as heart and tongue), is in every body and in every mouth of all gods, all men, all cattle . . . by thinking and commanding everything that he wishes . . .

Thus all the gods were formed . . . all the Divine Order really came into being through what the heart thought and the tongue commanded . . . Thus were made all work and all crafts, the action of the arms, the movement of the legs, and the activity of every member, in conformance with this command which the heart thought, which came forth through the tongue, and which gives value to everything . . . Thus it happened that it was said of Ptah: "He who made all and brought the gods into being."10

**Medicine and surgery**

It is probable that the so-called Edwin Smith Surgical Papyrus, the finest Egyptian medical document, also describes medical knowledge from this period, although the document itself dates from the Middle Kingdom. In this papyrus there is a curious physiological parallel to the Memphite teaching about Ptah. Instead of the usual account of home remedies and herb lore which constitutes most Egyptian medical documents, this papyrus explains how the heart "speaks" in various parts of the body, and how the doctor may "measure for the heart" in these parts. Most of the treatise is concerned with how to set fractures, and which of them were curable. In the manner later used in the Greek Hippocratic Corpus the writer denies demoniacal force, "the breath of some outside god," as the reason for partial paralysis as a result of some fractures. No later Egyptian medical document adopts such a scientific attitude.

10 Pritchard, Ancient Near Eastern Texts, p. 5.

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**First Intermediate Period**

**Decline of Centralized Government**

It has already been remarked that the Fourth Dynasty pyramids are the largest, the most impressive, and the most solidly and accurately built of the pyramids. In the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties the pyramids are smaller, though the total pyramid complex reaches almost the same proportions, with more space devoted to the temple buildings than in the Fourth Dynasty. And the new pyramids possess the texts and spells which were presumably considered unnecessary by the Fourth Dynasty monarchs Khufu and Khafren. Was this already the beginning of a doubt? The realm was still prosperous, but it is usually suggested that its resources had been overtaxed by the immense labor expenditure and wastage of materials required for the pyramids, and even rich Egypt could not afford a pyramid for every king. At all events, during the long reign of Pepi II in the Sixth Dynasty, signs of decay began to appear, and suddenly after his death the Old Kingdom disintegrated.

The period that followed the collapse of the Old Kingdom used to be called the Feudal Age (Seventh to Eleventh Dynasties). It is now more usually given the name of the First Intermediate Period. There is no doubt that it possessed elements of feudalism in that the central government had broken down, and the nobles, for want of a better authority, usurped the local governments11 and refused to recognize the weak kings of Memphis who exercised jurisdiction only over small areas. When the capital was transferred for two dynasties to the city in central Egypt called Heracleopolis by the Greeks, the kings of this city expanded their sway until it embraced more than half of Egypt. But the land as a whole was still disunited, and local nobles were still the

11 Traditionally Egypt had been divided into forty-two nomes or provinces.
effective rulers in most of the country. With the breakdown of the central government, foreigners from the north penetrated into Lower Egypt and the Delta lands, and settled there, although there is no indication of any armed invasions. The trouble was of internal origin, and seems to have been altogether due to the breakdown of the old way of life and the security that went with it.

The texts of this period are of special interest in that they reveal so clearly the characteristically Egyptian way of reacting to such troubles. In the first place there is no sign whatever of any revolutionary attempts by the common people to obtain any share in the government. It is true that all social values were overturned, that the poor man now lived where his master lived before. But he did not seem to like it. What he gained was nothing in comparison with the loss of his physical and psychological security, or, as he put it, the fact that "ma'at has disappeared from the land." The prophet Ipuwer said: "Why, really, the land spins round as does a potter's wheel . . . all maidservants make free with their tongues; when the mistresses speak it is burdensome to the servants . . . the children of nobles are dashed against the walls . . . noble ladies are gleaners, and nobles are in the workhouse . . . He who never slept on a plank is now the owner of a bed . . . Behold the owners of robes are now in rags . . . he who never wove for himself is now the owner of fine linen." A harpist sang: "The gods who lived formerly rested in their pyramids; the beatified dead also, buried in their pyramids, and they who built houses—their places are no more. Foreign trade has ceased." Ipuwer again said: "No one really sails north to Byblos today. What shall we do for cedar for our mummies . . . ? How important it now seems when the oasis people come carrying nuts and plants and birds." And it is all due to the absence of kingship. "Where is he today? Does he sleep perchance? Behold his might is not seen." 12


There was no voice of triumph arising from the people whose day might seem to have come. And though this conclusion may simply be due to our lack of records from this side, it does not seem likely. There was certainly no organized attempt on the part of the people to gain more rights, and there was certainly great rejoicing when Upper and Lower Egypt were once more united in the Middle Kingdom. But from what we know of the importance of order and stability to the Egyptian, from the way in which these values were re-established and endured after this period, and from the complete dependence upon this order in the Old Kingdom, it seems impossible to believe that this people, with its lack of individual self-reliance, could have relished the change.

For the nobles it was a different matter. The great change for them was that they now appropriated for themselves the rituals and ceremonies hitherto reserved only for the king. The pyramid texts are now to be found, substantially unchanged, within the coffins of the nobles. They used the same spells and looked forward to the same future. Commoners who had the wealth also sought similar privileges. From this time onward their own life in the afterworld was ensured by their own funerary ceremonies, and this age marked the beginning of that extraordinary preoccupation with death that we associate with Egypt, and that attained its fullest expression in the relatively late New Kingdom compilation of spells that constitutes the Book of the Dead, and the ascendancy of the priesthood that resulted from that preoccupation. Egypt would never be quite the same carefree land again. Anxiety had entered into Egyptian psychology for the first time.

DAWN OF THE IDEA OF SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR ALL

But there is another side to this tale of the disintegration of old values. The loss of Ma'at is the responsibility of the Pharaoh, as it is his duty to restore it. Ipuwer, a commoner, stands up to the great Pharaoh himself and accuses him of misrule, and the
Pharaoh apologizes and excuses himself, almost humbly. "Authority, perception and Ma'at are with thee," Ipuwer tells him, "but it is confusion thou wouldst set throughout the land together with the noise of contention." And the Pharaoh answers that he had tried to protect the people but failed for lack of resources. One Pharaoh confesses to his son: "Behold, a misfortune happened in my time; the Thinite regions were hacked up. It really happened through what I had done, and I knew of it only after it was done." The king is no longer infallible and conscious of his relationship with the gods.

From this period also comes the famous Tale of the Eloquent Peasant, in which the peasant, despoiled of his goods by trickery, makes appeal to the king's steward for restitution, reminding him that he is the custodian of Ma'at, and it is his duty to see that justice is done, even to a poor peasant. Ma'at, from being merely "right order," has now become justice, for the poor man as well as for the rich. Though, of course, the earlier conception of Ma'at had included justice of this kind, it is not until the Intermediate Period that it is emphasized and insisted on from the point of view of the poor man who needs it. Under the earlier administration the king-god "listened to it with his heart," and spoke it forth in infallible pronouncements, and we hear nothing of the right of anyone else to receive it.

**FIRST IDEA OF A "LAST JUDGMENT"**

Finally we have the first suggestion of a judgment after death. Re, the sun-god, will "count up character" and "weigh Ma'at." He will see whether a man has lived in accordance with the right order of the universe. If so, that man will then be permitted to dwell in the Field of Rushes, or go round the earth in the boat of the sun-god or in some other way become integrated with the life of nature and the universe.

A word is necessary here on the difference between the Egyptian conception of wrongdoing and the Hebrew idea of sin, a distinction also important in our study of Mesopotamia. Sin, as moral misdeed, is a distinctive Hebrew and late Oriental idea and is not to be found in Egypt, as far as we can tell from studying the texts as they are written. Translations which use the words "evil" and "sin" are as misleading when they deal with Egyptian thinking as they are in Greek thought. Evil to the Egyptian seems to have been a failure to integrate himself with the harmonious workings of the universe. Like the Greek, he could lack restraint and so bring misfortune upon himself; or he could lack understanding, and thus make foolish mistakes which would draw down upon him the anger of the gods. As Ptahhotep says: "It is the heart that makes the owner into one that hears or one that hears not. His heart is a man's fortune... As for a fool that hears not he can do nothing at all. He regards knowledge as ignorance and good as bad. He lives on that of which one dies; his food is untruth."  

So at all stages of Egyptian history it is disharmony that is the only evil; and to be out of harmony with the universe is a long way from the Hebrew or Christian conception of sin and moral evil. But at least the relationship between a man's deeds on earth and a happy life in the next world is suggested at this period. This, to our way of thinking, is a distinct moral advance. The idea of a divine sanction for human misdeeds was, of course, to bear fruit in the later thinking of the Hebrews and Christians. When we bear in mind that the greatest hope of the Egyptian was to be permitted after death to join the stars or circle the earth with the sun-god, and when we think also that harmony with the divine order was the only true moral good for the Egyptian, then it is perceived that the Egyptian concep-

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14 Ibid., p. 414 (abbreviated).
15 The Greek idea of Hybris, discussed in the Greek section below, is closer to Egyptian thought than it is to Hebrew or Christian. It was primarily an error of judgment, in that man, through his excessive prosperity, came to believe it was his own doing, thus misunderstanding and underestimating what he owed to the gods.
tion possesses an inner logic. An understanding of this point will help also to show why the famous Declaration of Innocence or Negative Confession, so often quoted as evidence of Egyptian moral thinking, should not be taken as seriously as it has been by writers permeated by the Hebrew and Christian tradition of sin and punishment.12

The Middle Kingdom

RESTORATION OF THE DIVINE ORDER OF SOCIETY (Ma'at)

The First Intermediate Period was brought to an end by the conquest of the whole of Egypt, presumably largely by force of arms, by princes of Thebes in the Eleventh Dynasty; hence Thebes, hitherto an unimportant provincial town, now became the capital of the Two Lands. War, however, was resumed after the death of Eleventh Dynasty Mentu-hotep, and the real founder of the Middle Kingdom was Amenemhet 1, who had been a vizier under his predecessor.

THE COMING OF AGE OF EGYPTIAN CIVILIZATION

Mature idea of social justice

In many ways the Middle Kingdom was the period of Egypt's maturity. The divine monarchy was re-established, but all the lessons of this Intermediate Period had not been lost. We now hear of the king as the good shepherd of the people. He himself is now aware of his responsibilities even more than before. Amenemhet claims: "I gave to the destitute and brought up the orphan. I caused him who was nothing to reach his goal, like him who was somebody." It has frequently been pointed out in what a marked manner the portrait statues of these Middle Kingdom monarchs differ from the serene majesty of those of the Old Kingdom. We learn from the records about much of the unceasing activity on behalf of the people, the renewal of foreign trade and the cultural rather than military imperialism, of these Pharaohs—

12 See below, Chapter 5.

treaties made, records kept of the height of the Nile and its approach, even as high up the river as the Second Cataract. They adopted a strong frontier policy to the south against the penetration of the Nubians and erected fortresses. The conditions of the Old Kingdom seemed to have been restored. The documents of the time all show a renewed dependence upon the king-god. His favor was required for advancement and the people were happy and contented. For a while these Pharaohs even built pyramids again, though never of such size and magnificence as those of the Old Kingdom. Perhaps the Pharaohs themselves now thought of them as anachronism; if they knew of the original purpose of the pyramids, this purpose had patently not been fulfilled during the period of anarchy. They and their successors quietly turned to elaborate funeral rites and tombs, more sumptuous and magnificent than those of nobles or commoners as befitted their rank, but still of the same kind, and not unique, like the great pyramids.

Head of Amenemhet III (Middle Kingdom). Note the more humanized features as contrasted with the statue of Old Kingdom Khafre. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)
The Middle Kingdom was a beneficent despotism. It re-established ownership of all the land by the king; but the people within this framework seem to have had their rights more fully maintained. Peasant cultivators did not need to fear eviction from their lands or other arbitrary acts. The way of the scribe was a way that offered advancement to anyone who cared to learn, for once a scribe he could become a government official. The highest officials in the Old Kingdom had usually been members of the royal family; in the Middle Kingdom they were bureaucrats who had reached their position through merit.

"Democratization of the hereafter," equal rights in the next world.

But, probably even more important for the Egyptian, his rights in the next world were equalized. All classes of society from Pharaohs to peasants are found in the great Middle Kingdom necropolis of Abydos, though, of course, the wealthy and the notables can afford more elaborate funerals. This naturally meant the increase of the influence of the priesthood, even though it never attained at this time, as far as we know, any power to dictate to the king, as it did in late New Kingdom days. Amon, originally the special god of Thebes, was eminently fitted to become the supreme god of Egypt. His name meant "the Hidden One"; he was formless and invisible, immanent everywhere. With such a scope it was possible to graft him onto all other gods. In his form of Amon-Re, king of the gods, he became later the great imperial god of the Empire. As breath and wind he was the source of all life in man or beast. "He is too mysterious for his glory to be revealed, too great for questions to be asked of him, too powerful to be known... One hears his voice but he is not seen, while he lets all throats
breathe.” While there is doubtless a considerable element of political and religious imperialism in his rise to be god of all, and without the rise of Thebes he would never have received such a promotion, it is theoretically sound that it should be he and no other, and perhaps helps to explain the continued allegiance of the people to him even under the heretical Pharaoh Akhnaton.

Since the Pharaoh had ceased to be the sole user of funerary equipment and his subjects now sought to fill their tombs with as much magnificence as they could afford, the market for such objects naturally increased. And it was not unnatural that the high standards set for such materials in the Old Kingdom could no longer be maintained. The craftsmen still produced exquisite objects especially for the kings and rich nobles and they were greatly assisted by the new use of bronze, but it was no longer possible to devote so much time to their work as had their predecessors in the Old Kingdom, and the temple reliefs are never superior to, and
were frequently less conscientiously executed than, those of earlier times. There was no experimentation with new forms except insofar as the temple replaced the pyramid. It seems that the Egyptians were living on their heritage rather than trying to make progress toward new forms and experimenting creatively as in the great age of Khufu and Khafren. As has already been suggested, change was never looked upon as natural or desirable, but as a departure from the harmony of the established universe. But in the Middle Kingdom this idea had not yet become a dogma. There was as yet no conscious archaism as in the declining years of the civilization.

SECOND INTERMEDIATE PERIOD—CONQUEST BY THE HYKSOS

We know little of the last Pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom, but we can guess that the administration suffered from some complacency, as at most periods of prosperity. For it is clear from what happened that there must have been considerable laxity in the guarding of at least the northern frontiers. The Egyptians were always contemptuous of foreigners, and their dogma of the divine king bestowed only on Egypt supported their attitude. The “wretched Asiatic” was plagued with rain and storms, they said, unlike the favored land of Egypt, where everything was as it should be. It was all right to trade with barbarians, because Egypt could use their products; but it must always be remembered that Egypt was the one land protected by the gods, and all other peoples were naturally subject to it. Other countries, however, could not be expected to accept this viewpoint, and while Egypt was standing still the peoples to the north were making progress. They were no longer so small and disorganized as they had been in the old days. They had begun to use the horse and chariot, and had made other military improvements unknown to the Egyptians. And at the end of the long-lived Twelfth Dynasty there were signs that there were internal troubles in Egypt and disputed successions.

It has already been mentioned that even before the Middle Kingdom foreigners had infiltrated into the Delta lands. But now it seems that there were more organized expeditions, and the Egyptians were at last forced to take notice of them. Various documents “cursing” foreign enemies are extant from the late Middle Kingdom. So when there was internal trouble in Egypt and the foreign people called the Hyksos pressed in on the land from the north, they apparently met less resistance, and were in sufficient numbers not to become absorbed easily and at once into the superior Egyptian culture.17

17 No certain antecedents are known for the people called the Hyksos. Late tradition called them “Shepherd-Kings,” but they were more probably sea peoples and not people of the desert. The Egyptians called them merely “hikau khansu—rulers of foreign countries,” the corruption of which into “Hyksos” is evident.
The Hyksos, invading from the north with horse and chariot, first subdued Lower Egypt and built fortresses to keep it in subjection; then they gradually pushed south. Probably they never occupied the whole of Upper and Lower Egypt, though they did establish their leaders as Pharaohs, and the Fourteenth to Seventeenth Dynasties are credited to them. The native Egyptians always regarded them with abhorrence as barbarians "ruling without Re," and their national pride was deeply wounded. But the remains from this period do not show them in quite the same light as their victims regarded them. At least they used the Egyptian language and adopted Egyptian names and customs. But the Egyptians never accepted them, and gradually beyond the reach of their power the more defiant among the Egyptians learned to use their weapons and military technique against them. Again a prince of Thebes, who had been permitted some degree of independence, led the war of liberation, and his successor Ahmose I drove their remnants out of Egypt and founded the great Eighteenth Dynasty.

The New Kingdom—Period of expansion

Imperialism

The conquests

The first task of the new dynasty was the restoration of internal security. The expulsion of the Hyksos by princes of Thebes was a clear sign that Amon-Re was the chief of gods and these princes were his colleagues. So in the so-called New Kingdom the dogma of the king-god was reinforced more strongly than ever, though we suspect it needed centuries of success to make much impression on the people. All the old rituals were re-established. With the accession of imperial wealth from trading expeditions and conquests, these ceremonies could be and were more magnificent than ever. But this is also the age of the Book of the Dead, and of the great fear of the afterlife. Gone is the old security and isolationism, gone is the certainty of Egyptian superiority over all other peoples and cultures. Now Egypt's power rests at least as much on the sword as on divine right, and the king-god's position is dependent primarily upon his suc-
cess. Not all the magnificent temples of Thutmose III and his successors nor the great tombs of their nobles can conceal the evidence of internal decay. And the kingship had a competitor, potentially as strong as itself, in the priesthood of Amon.

Thutmose III was certainly a successful imperialist. In a series of victorious campaigns he penetrated as far as the Euphrates, pacifying Syria and maintaining it as a tributary province under his own governor, and breaking up at Megiddo the coalition of Asiatic peoples which was the only serious threat to Egypt. After the initial conquests he thoroughly reorganized his army on a professional basis and established military posts throughout the empire. At the first sign of rebellion he would send a lightning raid against the rebels with unvarying success. His power of retaliation was so greatly feared that ridiculously small garrisons were sufficient to keep prosperous cities in check and ensure the payment of the tribute, upon which the economy of Egypt was henceforth to be based. Thutmose III must indeed have seemed like an invincible god not only to his own people but to those far beyond the borders of Egypt.

Consequences of the conquests

Social cleavage between rich and poor—foreign slaves—The results of these conquests were momentous for Egyptian society. There could be no returning to the old cultural isolationism. As in the later Roman Empire, the Egyptians, like the Romans, preferred to avoid the hardships of army life, and the less civilized Asiatic peoples took their place. Asiatics rose to high position not only in the army but in the state. Foreign cultures, though less advanced than the Egyptian, nevertheless
made their influence felt, especially in the vulgarization of the old austere tradition. Foreign slaves, prisoners of war, became an essential part of the economy, and many of these, as in Rome, held positions superior to those of poor native peasants. But the latter, unlike the Roman proletariat, had no political rights, and were dependent upon the divine justice of the Pharaoh, who became clothed in an even greater majesty than before. The enormous public buildings of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties were, now in fact, as Herodotus believed they always had been, built by forced slave labor, driven by overseers. And even native Egyptians lost their freedom for various reasons, and were forced to work on these projects. The conditions described in the Book of Exodus were those of the New Kingdom.

A great cleavage became noticeable between rich and poor. Theoretically the Pharaohs continued to dispense impartial justice, and the country as a whole was wealthy. But this influx of wealth did not apparently penetrate down to the masses, who had lost their security but gained nothing comparable in return. Most of the land now in actuality as well as in theory belonged to the Pharaoh, who farmed it as his own estate, with the peasants as his serfs, or foreign slaves, working them. And again the result is to be seen in an increasing hope for a better future life, and its accompaniment—the fear of death and the unknown.

Religions—Rise of religious imperialism and early monotheism—Influence of the priesthood—The Book of the Dead—The priesthood gained from the empire in two directions. On the one hand the Pharaoh appears now less as an infallible and ever-
successful god in his own right than as a nominee of the gods, supported by Amon-Re but definitely subordinate to him. Amon-Re gives him his victories, Amon-Re dictates to him when to go to war and "lends him his sword," and in return the rewards of empire also go to Amon-Re. Extensive lands and all other forms of wealth are given to the priesthood on behalf of Amon, thus laying the foundation for its extraordinary wealth which it retained long after the decline of the empire. And from the opposite side we see the people more and more dependent upon the priesthood for their one hope of a blessed hereafter, and enriching it by purchasing spells and funeral services. The next world is no longer a beautiful repetition of life on earth, for life on earth is no longer so delightful to them. In the Book of the Dead, the great collection of spells and information concerning the next world, which no doubt incorporates beliefs already thousands of years old, we are given the final Egyptian thought on the nature of the hereafter, and we can see all the gross superstition that had been allowed to grow up—the means of cheating Osiris, the god of the netherworld, the means for overcoming all the monsters set in the path of the dead man. The originally austere Osirian religion, now the one hope of the masses, has itself become vulgarized. The trials and dangers of the dead man lost all dignity in this atmosphere, calm and beautiful though some of the descriptions remain. One of these trials was the passing before the forty-two judges; and the Declaration of Innocence, the weighing of the heart against Ma'at, which by this time had become the regular symbol for truth. Other trials of perhaps equal importance in this journey of the dead man were the encounters with monsters armed with knives, and with bullying porters and ferrymen; and his fear that he might forget his name, or that he might have to walk upside down, or eat dirt, or be forced to work. All such ene-

mies could be overcome by possessing the right spells written on a piece of papyrus, by having access to the right magic; and it was only the priests who could provide these.

THE RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL REVOLUTION OF AKHNATON

The new "teaching"—Supremacy of Aton, the sun-disk—Artistic naturalism

So the ground was laid for the revolt of the Pharaoh Akhnaton, who preached a new and purified religion, who defeated the priesthood for the duration of his reign, but whose work, un-Egyptian as it was in many respects, and necessarily unpopular, could not endure. In the reign of his father, Amenhotep III, the civilization of the New Kingdom reached its height, and betrayed at the same time its innate weaknesses. The reign of Amenhotep III was long, and the nobles and upper classes enjoyed many years of peace and prosperity. Like his predecessors, he built many imposing monuments, including the two great colossi which even in Roman days used to sound forth at the rising of the sun and attracted the curiosity and interest of Roman tourists. He gave costly gifts to foreigners, and he made an important marriage alliance with an Asiatic princess; he built immense temples at Karnak and Luxor. But toward the end of his reign he was faced with a rebellion in Syria, and Semitic nomads began to enter Palestine without hindrance. When he died all Palestine was in revolt, and appeals from the Egyptian governors had already begun to pour in upon the capital. But Akhnaton, when he succeeded to the throne, paid very little attention to his empire. His interests were concentrated elsewhere.

Egyptian culture and religion had already been greatly affected by the new imperial and international contacts. From the time of Thutmose III there had been a tendency to make Amon-Re no longer the exclusive god of Egypt but a god of the whole world. No doubt this was a form of religious

14 On this point see especially Frankfort, Ancient Egyptian Religion, pp. 118-119.
imperialism on the part of the Pharaoh and his god Amon.\textsuperscript{19} But there was also a tendency in the opposite direction to equate the native Egyptian gods with foreign gods found in the empire. Egyptian governors even erected temples to these under their foreign and Egyptian names. And for at least forty years before Akhnaton a hitherto unknown god, Aton, the disk of the sun, had been accorded worship. The Aton had fought on the side of Thutmose iv "to make the foreigners to be like the Egyptian people, in order to serve the Aton for ever." This Aton was now to become the center of a religious and political revolution unique in Egyptian history.

The new Pharaoh seems to have acted as co-regent during the last years of his father before coming to the throne as Amenhotep iv, and he had already built temples to the god Amon. Then suddenly he announced a new revelation, called himself Akhnaton—"He who is serviceable to the Aton"—and proposed to build himself a new capital, Akhetaton—"The place of the effic-

\textsuperscript{19} In one document Amon is greeted with these words: "Jubilation to thee from every foreign country, to the heights of heaven, to the width of earth, to the depth of the great green sea."—Quoted by Wilson, The Burden of Egypt, p. 211.

tive glory of the Aton" (now known as Tel-el-Amarna). We do not know the immediate reasons for this break, but no doubt the political and religious were closely intermingled. As Pharaoh, Akhnaton was a divine king and was entitled to receive a revelation. This the priests of Amon, whatever they may have thought privately about the divinity of the king, could not publicly deny. He must have realized the political and economic strangle hold of the priesthood of Amon on the resources of Egypt, and at the same time the gross superstitions of the Osirian cult of the dead. At all events he tried with all his power to overthrow both these religions and substitute the far purer worship of the Aton, the sun-disk, usually represented in Egyptian art as holding outstretched hands over the land of Egypt. It is a measure of the extraordinary power that a Pharaoh still exercised that he was able to accomplish this revolution apparently without bloodshed or armed protest. He was able to retire to his new capital and supervise its building without hindrance for many years, even though his empire itself and its sources of income were disintegrating through his neglect.

There will always be something appealing about this piece of "modernism," and in
our day we may prefer the extreme naturalism and vivacity of the art forms of the new movement above the static splendor of traditional religious art. The hymns to the Aton, who never seems to have been anything beyond the solar disk in all its splendor and simplicity giving life, as it does, to all creatures on the earth, are usually considered by modern taste as the most beautiful poems in Egyptian literature. Yet what a supreme certainty Akhnaton must have had in his revelation and his belief in his chosen mission that he should have attempted to overthrow the faith of almost all his people, and substitute, not a truly monotheistic ethical religion, but a kind of intellectual nature
worship. And the supremacy of the Aton by no means diminished his own position as god-king. On the contrary, the Aton was his own personal father, only to be worshiped by himself and his own immediate family. For all others the only approach to the Aton was through himself. His title always included the words “the good god.” The scenes in the tombs of the new city all show him serving the living sun-disk, while his courtiers bow in adoration before their Pharaoh, to whom they pray in such words as these:

"May I continue in the service of the good god (Akhnaton) until he assigns to me the burial that he gives. Let him remain here until the swan turns black, until the raven turns white, until the mountains stand up to walk, until the sea runs up the river." Another courtier prays that he may "hear thy sweet voice in the sanctuary when thou performest that which pleases thy father, the living Aton." And in one hymn Akhnaton himself says to the Aton: "Thou art in my heart and there is no other knows thee except
th thy son (Akhnaton) whom thou hast initiated into thy plans and into thy power.²⁶

All this, however, did not mean that the Pharaoh held himself in austere seclusion from his people. Though he made a vow that he would never leave his new city, and those who came to live there and built it were his own followers and owed their positions to his favor, he and his sister-wife showed themselves continuously to the workers, driving through the rising city in their chariot, with their daughters around them, showing their affection publicly—all in the highest possible degree repugnant to Egyptian tradition. His religion was naturalistic (in accordance with truth, if the Ma'at of Akhnaton can bear this meaning) as Amarna art is also naturalistic—both apparently foreign to Egyptian feeling and filling no great need in their lives. This is evidenced by the speed with which it was overthrown, and the failure in nearly another thousand years of history to revert to anything similar. The naturalistic art left its imprint upon later Egyptian art, it is true. But it was quietly absorbed as Egyptian artists returned to their old well-tried forms; later art was all slightly changed, a little more naturalistic than it probably would have become without the inspiration of the new revelation and the new city.

**Persecution of the priesthood of Amon—Lack of popular support**

But, however much we may sympathize with the reformer, it cannot be denied that the new religion offered to the Egyptian people even less than the religion of Amon and Osiris. If it were true, if Akhnaton had really received a new revelation of Ma'at, if the truth were as he declared it to be, then all the preparations they had made for the next world, all their hopes, were doomed; and everything they and their ancestors had spent was wasted. And, even theologically, it cannot be asserted categorically that the monotheism of Akhnaton was necessarily superior to contemporary polytheism. As suggested earlier, it depends on the way in which the many gods are accepted and viewed by the worshiper. And Amon was not just one imperial god among many; as Amon-Re he was immanent in all nature and the whole universe. The Aton could be incorporated into the pantheon of the Egyptian

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²⁶ Quoted by Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 223-224.

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Relief sculpture of the period of Akhnaton. Note the naturalism of the horse, and the strained appearance of the workers—unlike the usual conventional pose depicted in most Egyptian reliefs. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)
gods where there was room for him, for the sun-disk undoubtedly represents one manifestation of Amon-Re. But Akhnaton denied all other gods but the Aton, and this meant the abandonment of the whole manner of worship of the Egyptians. It is not surprising, then, that only a few intellectuals and courtiers could be found to support the Pharaoh. Only if there had been a deep ethical content in this religion—and no such ethical content is discernible in any of the extant writings—could it have sufficed to take the place of the comfortable secure world of Egyptian polytheism—and the whole story of the Old Testament is a commentary on the difficulties facing the reformer who wishes to introduce an ethical monotheism into such a world. If Egyptian polytheism had not been so decadent under the New Kingdom, even such a single-minded autocrat as Akhnaton would hardly have felt the necessity of trying to destroy it. 43

Restoration of Amon—Strengthened hold of priesthood

Probably political reasons primarily caused the downfall of the new religion. Though the army under Horemhab was still favorable to the Pharaoh and antagonistic to his priestly enemies, the whole monarchy had lost prestige from its failure to support the army in Syria. But there is evidence to show that a younger brother of Akhnaton returned to Thebes before the end of his reign, and Queen Nefertiti seems to have fallen into disfavor. Perhaps the Pharaoh realized that the power of the priesthood of Amon was too strong to break. At all events we know that his successor Tutankhamon, 44 it has sometimes been urged that Moses knew of the Akhnaton "monotheistic" worship. But not only had it died out as an official religion long before the earliest acceptable date for Moses' birth, but it is the ethical content of the Hebrew religion that is paramount and this could not have been gained from Akhnaton. The verbal similarity between some of the Psalms and the hymns of Akhnaton, which probably shows borrowing, reveals no connection with Akhnaton. The nature hymns were not exclusive to Aton and could well have remained part of Egyptian literature. For a fuller treatment of this problem, see Wilson, op. cit., pp. 224–228.

who had at first been a devotee of the new religion and had married a daughter of Akhnaton, made a full submission when he himself became Pharaoh. In restoring the worship of Amon he says: "The temples of the gods and goddesses ... had gone to pieces. Their shrines had become desolate, and had become overgrown mounds ... The land was topsy-turvy and the gods had turned their backs upon this land... If one prayed to a god to seek counsel from him, he would never come. If one made supplication to a goddess similarly she would never come at all. Their very hearts were hurt, so that they destroyed that which had been made." So Tutankhamon "expelled deceit throughout the Two Lands and Ma'at was set up, and lying was made an abomination as in its first time." 42

The revolution was over. The Pharaoh had been exhibited as one who had no longer the right to receive revelations and to decree Ma'at. He had become only the interpreter of the will of the gods, the head of the state, but to be guided by the priests. He had become almost what the kings in Mesopotamia had always been. And although he remained in appearance king-god, and the same age-old ceremonies were carried on throughout the rest of Egyptian history as if he had been a god, he had become a prisoner of the priests, except insofar as his power rested in his command of the army like any other absolute ruler. It was no accident that the restorer of order after the revolution was the army general Horemhab, and that he was recognized by the priesthood as the first legitimate Pharaoh since Amen-hotep III.

The New Kingdom—Period of decline

PARTIAL RESTORATION OF EMPIRE UNDER
HOREMHB AND EARLY RAMESE PHAROHS

The rest of Egyptian history is soon told. Horemhab restored internal order in the country and all vestige of the revolution was destroyed. The Nineteenth Dynasty

42 Quoted by Wilson, op. cit., p. 216.
The immense temple of Amon at Karnak was built over many years by pharaohs from the XVIIIth Dynasty to almost the end of Egyptian independence. Sometimes parts of the structure were used as a reservoir of building materials for others. The imposing entrance (above), with its avenue of sphinxes, was built by Rameses II; the lower picture shows part of the temple court, with the statues of the gods, built by Rameses III. The whole temple complex is in the process of being restored by the Service des Antiquités and the Egyptian government.
undertook to restore the empire and was partially successful. The smaller empire continued to pay enough taxes to Egypt to enable Rameses II to sustain the enormous building program, the results of which are so evident today to any visitor to Egypt.22

HUGE BUILDINGS OF KARNAK AND LUXOR

His buildings at Karraak and Luxor are large and impressive, colossal in size, and still today overpowering to the visitor. But he built too quickly, and his craftsmen were no longer what they had been in the past. The foundations of the magnificent buildings were too often only rubble, suggesting the commercial contractor rather than the conscientious religious builder. He built a new capital at Tanis in the Delta which was renamed Rameses and no doubt inspired the Biblical tradition of the forced labor of the exiled Children of Israel. In the lifetime of Rameses II there was peace, but new and distant tribes of peoples were beginning

22 A theory has recently been put forward by the late Alexandre Varille and others in France which is exciting great interest and some bitter controversy, especially in French archaeological circles. He has produced some evidence, and a closely knit theory based on observation and examination of the temples themselves, to the effect that the temples of Rameses and other late monumental structures have deliberately used materials from those of their predecessors for astronomical reasons. Into the temples had been built all the secret knowledge of the universe possessed by the Egyptian priests; they were not built casually to symbolize power and magnificence. As the heavens changed in the course of time, so new temples were required which would continue to be true pictures of the heavens in stone. Especially the highest parts of the old temples, representing the future movements of the heavens, were new the present, and so could be incorporated into the new temple, so that it would always be an accurate representation of the heavens. Even the old materials were used as the foundation out of which the new picture of the heavens could grow.

Head of Pharaoh Rameses II from his extant mummy. Rameses died at an advanced age after more than sixty years on the throne.

Their onsloughts into Asia Minor and Syria. Rameses III of the Twentieth Dynasty won the last great victory of Egypt in Palestine.

FOREIGN CONQUEST BY ETHIOPIANS, ASSYRIANS, PERSIANS

Thereafter the Pharaohs were content to retire within their own boundaries. There are indications of temporary interruptions in the kingship, and even usurpations by foreign officials. Later there was widespread anarchy, followed by invasions from the south by Ethiopians who took over the monarchy and called themselves Pharaohs and divine. It was only a question of time before the still rich but slowly disintegrating Egypt would fall prey to the rising empire of the invincible Assyrians. Esarhaddon of Assyria conquered Egypt in 670 B.C., but a few years later, with the aid of Greek mercenaries, she
recovered her independence. There was a brief renewal of life for a century, and she feebly tried to intrigue in Palestine, incidentally serving, by her alliance with the kingdom of Judah, to bring down the armies of Babylon upon Jerusalem. With the conquest by the Persian Cambyses in 525 B.C. her independence was over for almost twenty-five hundred years until our own twentieth century A.D. As Ezekiel had prophesied, "there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt."  

GRADUAL SENESCENCE OF EGYPTIAN CIVILIZATION—ANTIQUARIANISM

It was inevitable that the decline of national spirit should be reflected in all aspects of Egyptian life. Even up to the time of Rameses II, though there had been more fear and less emphasis on the joyous nature of the hereafter during the empire than in earlier days, there had been at least some emphasis on the continuance of the excellent life known on earth. But with the Twentieth Dynasty a great change is visible. Death suddenly became a welcome release. Autobiographies of the owners of the tombs, characteristic of earlier times, disappeared almost entirely. Their place is taken by hymns, rituals, and ever longer magical and religious texts used for protection against the dangers and terrors of the afterlife. There is an emphasis on humility and piety, and there are even confessions of inadequacy, closely resembling our Judaeo-Christian conception of sin, and mercy is sought from the gods: "Come to me, thou who protectest millions, and rescuest hundreds of thousands, the protector of the one who cries out to him."

There is an extraordinary return to the old documents of their ancestors as if these had known a truth hidden from themselves. Many of the important documents of the Old Kingdom are known to us only from copies made in the last centuries of Egyptian independence. There is apparent a gradual fossilization into the set forms described by Herodotus, including even the mummmifica-

22 Herodotus, Plutarch, and other Greeks were misled by Egyptian animal worship into believing that the Egyptians thought that human souls passed after death into animals. This idea, however, is certainly incorrect.

Two collars of beads. The one at the top dates from the XIth Dynasty, the one at the bottom from the XVIIIth. More than seven hundred years separate these two collars, yet the design is the same, suggesting something of Egyptian conservatism. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)
At the left is a fragment of an Egyptian legal document written in hieratic, the common official script. At the right is a fragment of an Egyptian papyrus of the Roman period written in demotic, the common Egyptian writing for everyday use. Contrast these two writings with the hieroglyphic used for sacred texts, as shown on the obelisk of Thutmose III, which appears earlier in this chapter. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)

General summary of Egyptian achievements

WRITING, MATHEMATICS, MEDICINE, ARCHITECTURE

The form of exposition adopted in this chapter has emphasized throughout the intimate connection between the social and religious history of Egypt and the political. In the course of recounting this history we necessarily have taken account of the changes in religion, in art, in science and technology in response to the social and political experience of the people. We believe that our procedure was necessitated by the fact that in ancient Egypt religion, art, and science were inseparable as they have not been in later civilizations. In Greece, science becomes emancipated from art, though art remains tied to religion. In the later Western civilization all three have become separate and can be treated separately. Art for art's sake in either Egypt or Greece was unthinkable. It only remains therefore here to summarize in a more convenient form the major discoveries and contributions to the history of civilization made by the Egyptians.

The Egyptians did not invent writing; so far as we know, this honor rests with the Sumerians. But very early the Egyptians developed a distinctive form known as hieroglyphic (sacred carving), with simplified forms known as hieratic and demotic. It is possible that at one time they used plain pictographs, each representing the object in question, and that these later became conventionalized and stylized, as in Mesopotamia. But, curiously enough, even the earliest Egyptian writing known to us had already adopted a syllabic system based on sounds. This so-called rebus principle (the classic English example is be-lief), the picture of a
bee combined with the picture of a leaf) was already in use in Mesopotamia before the earliest examples in Egypt. Though the Egyptians used Egyptian rather than Mesopotamian pictures, the borrowing would seem probable. It is still uncertain whether there was ever a true consonantal alphabet of twenty-four letters in Egypt, for although the determinative (the initial consonant) in a word was sometimes used for a particular sound, the Egyptians themselves did not develop this principle further and make an alphabet. For some reason they seem to have known the alphabetical principle without using it. Perhaps the best explanation for this failure is that the alphabet was used only for the spoken words when vowels could be inserted by the speaker, and that the absence of vowels was an insuperable obstacle to the use of the alphabet. It is not obvious that a vowel is also a letter. If the alphabetical phonetic system was in use in the spoken language, it is hardly surprising that one of the subject peoples of the Egyptians should have developed it into a written alphabet, using the Egyptian signs but their own Semitic names—alif, the ox, and bet, the house, becoming later the alpha and beta of the Greek system. It is not yet known for certain which people was the first to do this, though the Phoenicians usually receive the credit for it. The Egyptians also invented writing materials far superior in everything except permanence to the clay tablets of the Mesopotamian peoples; they used papyrus, from a reed found near the Nile, ink from various gums, and pens of pointed reed.

The Egyptian system of arithmetic seems clumsy to us, but it was used with modifications in certain parts of Eastern Europe and Asia until comparatively recently. Being unable to multiply or divide by more than two, they combined these two procedures in an ingenious manner in such a way that they were able to do a complicated multiplication slowly but quite accurately. The two numbers to be multiplied are written in separate columns; then one column is multiplied by 2 and the other divided by 2. Disregard all even numbers on the side divided, and add only those in the other column opposite the odd numbers. The answer will be the required number.

Example: To multiply 44 by 28.

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<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
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<td>22</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>112</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>224</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>448</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>896</td>
</tr>
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<td>1,232</td>
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The Egyptians could not use complex fractions, and, like all peoples before the last few centuries of Western civilization, were hampered by an inadequate system of notation. For fractions they reduced all the numerators to one, and then added.

This, of course, does not exhaust the mathematical, as distinct from the arithmetical, ability of the Egyptians, since, as we know, they were remarkably efficient at surveying, and could build such precisely calculated figures as pyramids. It has been pointed out by a mathematician that, to build the Great Pyramid, they must have known the G ratio, the formula for which was a nineteenth-century discovery, i.e., the ratio between the sides of a regular decagon and the radius of its circumscribed circle, and also the Golden Section, i.e., dividing a line segment into two unequal parts in such a manner that the smaller part has to the larger part the same ratio as the larger part to the total. The Great Pyramid has the G ratio between its triangles and the base.

As far as our present knowledge goes, the Egyptians had no theoretical knowledge of mathematics at all in the modern sense. Their notebooks are filled with practical examples, but the universality of a mathematical principle was unknown to them. They did not invent a single geometrical proposition, e.g., all triangles have such or such a property, whereas the first Greek mathematicians were able to abstract the universal principles from the particular examples, and thus could formulate valid theorems or propositions.

In medicine the Edwin Smith Surgical
Papyrus has already been mentioned as an example of the best Egyptian medical knowledge of the Old Kingdom. And we know from the developed Egyptian mortuary practices how skillful they were in preserving the human body after death. The Ebers Medical Papyrus, probably dating from the Middle Kingdom, possesses much herbal lore, too many magic formulas and strange magical medicines; but it also has a fairly accurate account of the workings of the human heart.

In architecture the Egyptians were the first people to make a really successful use of mass when dealing with stone. Their structures, it has been pointed out, imitate the solid mass of the desert cliffs and mountains, and they planned that their buildings, like these cliffs, would last for eternity. There can be little doubt that classical Greek architecture borrowed the idea of floral capitals from Egypt, but it is not as clear why the Egyptians themselves used them, as they are singularly inappropriate functionally. Why should a powerful stone column sprout flowers and buds? It has been suggested that they are a survival from the days when bundles of reeds with flowers or tufted heads would appear at the top of the pillar, being used as supports instead of timber which was lacking. The explanation, however, seems hardly convincing. The obelisk as well as the pyramid is a distinctive Egyptian form, copied self-consciously by other peoples for purposes of self-glorification. But they always seem native to, and at home only in, Egypt.

**NATURAL OF EGYPTIAN LITERATURE—ABSENCE OF MUCH NARRATIVE IN A CHANGELESS WORLD**

Egyptian thought and literature have been sufficiently dealt with in the main body of this chapter not to require much further mention here. It may only be pointed out that the Egyptian, at least in the written literature that survives, was only very slightly interested in narrative. In such a tale as The Eloquent Peasant, the bulk of the story is taken up with what we consider tedious and repetitive teachings and platitudes. Yet these were what gained it its popularity; not the brief story of the loss of the peasant’s goods and their eventual restitution, which is what we should relish. Modern digests of this tale too often give the wrong impression by omitting all but the few lines of “story.” It would seem probable that this lack of interest in mere events is connected with the Egyptian sense of time and eternity. The “platitudes” were timeless truths, while the events were ripples in the ocean of eternity. For the same reason, the Egyptian lacked a sense of history and too often did not bother to record it, or record it accurately. As we know, the same deeds are repeated of different monarchs, and interest is directed away from these mere details to the—to us—monotonous record of victories which were only to be expected of a divine monarch and recurred whenever he took the field. There is nothing that can possibly be called an epic in the whole of Egyptian literature.
THE VALUES OF EGYPT—HER LEGACY TO LATER CIVILIZATIONS

The Greeks considered Egypt the repository of all ancient wisdom, and they accorded to her a respect which was perhaps undeserved. While we may now admire the civilization of the Egyptians, it sometimes makes us impatient that they made so little progress, that the great achievements of the Old Kingdom were not treated as the beginning of an ascending path, a fine start to be built upon rather than a Golden Age of glory to be looked back upon and forever imitated.

What we have tried to present in this chapter is a picture of a civilization that looked backward and decayed, as distinct from the picture familiar to us of a Western civilization that looks forward and strives forward, but is chaotic and unstable, and is even now able to destroy itself and all its works by the destructive use of a science which was brought to its present perfection through that very desire to progress which is the essential feature of this civilization. If we assume that it is an inborn characteristic of man to wish to advance, it is perhaps as well to realize that it was not a characteristic of the ancient Egyptians. Toynbee, in studying Egyptian civilization, was hard put to it to discover his challenges and responses and succeeded in devising a pattern satisfactory to him only by doing grave violence to the facts of Egyptian history, as has already been pointed out by many historians. The Marxian interpretation of history finds little confirmation in Egypt, as was pointed out in the early pages of this chapter. We are thus left with a phenomenon which seems ultimately to be explained only in terms of itself—that the Egyptians, unlike ourselves, neither wished to advance nor succeeded in doing so after a brilliant start. Yet their civilization did not die until twenty-five centuries had elapsed.

We wish to point no moral and to draw no conclusions. We have merely presented the phenomenon. To study it should be an exercise in that historical imagination spoken of in the introductory chapter, without which there is neither understanding nor appreciation of history; and it may serve to help us view our own civilization in perspective. We, like the Greeks, must respect the Egyptians for what they accomplished in the light of their own ideals and their own aims, with so little, and so early in the world's history. And even though we may not share their ideals nor respect their aims, we can hardly deny that it was one of the few great civilizations of the world.

Suggestions for further reading

There are no first-rate, up-to-date histories of ancient Egypt in English. In spite of certain deficiencies, the best are still J. H. Breasted, _A History of Egypt_ (2nd ed.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), and A. Baikie, _A History of Egypt from the Earliest Times to the End of the XVIIIth Dynasty_ (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929). The first-name of these works was an outstanding pioneer effort in its day, but it has never been revised in the light of modern discoveries, although the older edition is still kept in print. Baikie's book was a painstaking work and made use of the best sources, but it was written by one who was not himself an expert in the field. A notable attempt to bring Breasted up to date for the period of the Egyptian Empire was Georg Steindorff and K. C. Steele, _When Egypt Ruled the East_ (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1942). This work is especially valuable for its first-rate illustrations, which really do illustrate the text and are not mere decorative appendages.

As indicated in the chapter above, various efforts have been made to interpret Egyptian civilization as a whole, especially by the scholars attached to the Oriental Institute in Chicago. Since this chapter has made extensive use of these researches and interpretations, the student is advised to consult the original works published by The University of Chicago Press. The most complete is by the former director of the Institute, J. A. Wilson, _The Burden of Egypt_ (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951). Egyptian kingship is studied in the first half of Henri Frankfort, _Kingship and the Gods_ (Chi-
Egyptian religion is studied by the same author in a little book which offers many stimulating insights, Henri Frankfort, *Ancient Egyptian Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press; 1948). Various scholars of the Oriental Institute collaborated in a pioneer work, Henri Frankfort et al., *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1946), but the chapter on Egypt, written by J. A. Wilson, is greatly inferior to this author’s later complete book, *The Burden of Egypt*. However, the 1946 symposium is reprinted in convenient form in a Pelican book, Henri Frankfort et al., *Before Philosophy* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1951), and it should certainly be read if *The Burden of Egypt* is not available.


By far the best collection of easily available source material in translation is J. B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1950). Though the size of the collection is limited by the requirements of the subject matter, the editor has interpreted his mandate generously, and most of the best-known and interesting Egyptian documents are included, in spite of a rather remote connection with the Old Testament.
General characteristics of Mesopotamian civilization

Throughout the country today known as Iraq two great rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, flow southeastward to the Persian Gulf. To the north and east of these rivers are mountains, to the south is the great Arabian desert. The fertile valleys of the Tigris and the Euphrates form the eastern arc of what is usually called the Fertile Crescent, the western arc of that crescent stretching down through Syria and Palestine to the borders of Egypt. In both these areas of fertility civilizations sprang up in ancient times, but the Tigris-Euphrates valleys hold priority. For here, in all probability, is the real cradle of western civilization.

Though there are still some scholars who argue for Egypt, the weight of the evidence seems almost conclusive that any early borrowing of cultural elements was by Egypt and not vice versa.

There is no one name which can be applied to the whole area drained by the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers. The word “Mesopotamia” really refers to the northern area only, while “Babylonia” refers to the southern part. But neither of these is an exact term, though during the long period of Babylonian supremacy the whole southern part of these valleys was under the control of Babylon. The ancient land of Sumer and Sumerian civilization, which was the parent of all other civilizations in this area, were absorbed, and even the Sumerian language died out. Our only justification, then, for using the word “Mesopotamia” to cover all the area in question is that its use has become conventional. The word itself means “the land between the rivers” and this is the general meaning we wish to convey.

The area, unlike Egypt, does not form a natural entity, and the boundaries are not clearly defined. No warrior could ever say he had conquered Mesopotamia; he would never be able to boast that he had reached its natural frontiers and was prepared to defend them, as an Egyptian could say of his country. Yet the continuity of culture in this area is remarkable. All the conquerors and successors of the Sumerians adopted the main features of the original Sumerian culture, their gods, their festivals, their writing, their art
and architecture. The late Assyrian was in all respects far closer to his Sumerian forebears than to his Egyptian contemporaries. This total civilization, in fact, stands out in marked contrast to that of the Egyptians. The Egyptian civilization was grand and magnificent; but, as was shown in the last chapter, it was isolated, and it was totally alien to us. It was therefore studied as a whole for itself, rather than for its "contributions" to world civilization. Mesopotamian civilization, on the contrary, seems far closer to ours. The line of descent from ancient Sumer to ourselves is clear. Though the Children of Israel were in bondage in Egypt, their Egyptian heritage was small. And though they were not taken into captivity in Babylon until their civilization had flourished for hundreds of years and had taken on its most characteristic forms, there can be little doubt that it was influenced by Mesopotamian ideas and institutions. Even Hebrew religion itself is concerned with questions raised by the Mesopotamian peoples, and in its own special way gives answers to them. The Egyptian idea of a static universe found no adherents in Mesopotamia, nor was its supreme self-confidence or its king-god found acceptable.

In this chapter, therefore, it will be possible to adopt a more conventional treatment of the material than was suitable for Egypt. The rise and fall of Mesopotamian culture does not present a similar object lesson to us, for it merged insensibly into the whole cultural stream of mankind, and never collapsed with its foundations undermined, as happened in Egypt. For in Mesopotamia there never were any fixed foundations, there never was any psychological security to be destroyed. The Mesopotamians had no great expectations of good to be obtained in life; they expected change on earth and were prepared to endure it. They had no expectation of a blessed hereafter. The Mesopotamian view of life was more in keeping with our own view of life than with the Egyptian view. Their relatively pessimistic attitude toward life was certainly more appropriate for them than the naive optimism of the Egyptians. At all events, their view of life as a vale of tears has almost always prevailed since their time.

It has already been pointed out that the kind of river rather than the mere fact of a river should be considered when attempting to trace the effect of a river valley upon its civilization. Both the Tigris and the Euphrates rise in flood each year in the spring, but the floods are unpredictable and vary greatly from year to year. Sometimes they are very severe and break the dikes, wreaking havoc upon the lands and submerging the crops and villages. At other times they are insufficient to ward off drought. Famines due both to flood and to drought are therefore not uncommon. There are scorching winds and smothering dust storms which wrack the throat and may even suffocate. There are occasional torrential rains which turn the ground into mud, making travel impossible. The sun in summer has no appearance of being a beneficent force giving life to the crops. It is savage, fierce, and blistering, and the land often lies parched under it, or blows away in dust. The sublime, life-giving sun of cloudless Egypt could never have become the all-pervasive god of Mesopotamia, however strongly the people might be impressed with its power and force. In addition to these doubtfully benevolent forces of nature, the land was militarily indefensible as an entity, and time and again was conquered, either by outside invaders or by one or another of the Mesopotamian peoples. At any time a city might be destroyed in war if it did not take care of its defenses; or if, as the Mesopotamians themselves put it, the gods were for any reason angry with them and wished to destroy it. This complex of forces, as we shall see, tended to breed in these peoples a deep sense of insecurity and inadequacy, which found expression in a pessimistic view of life utterly at variance with the Egyptian optimism, and in a religion which stressed man's helplessness against the arbitrariness and unpredictable wrath of the gods. But it did not prevent them from creating an earthly civili-
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neolithic Age</td>
<td>ca. 6000–4500</td>
</tr>
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<td>Early Copper Age</td>
<td>ca. 4500–3000</td>
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<td>Invention of writing</td>
<td>ca. 3500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primitive Democracy</td>
<td>?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early Sumerian cities (Bronze Age)</td>
<td>3000–2400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semitic conquests of Mesopotamia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akkadians (Sargon)</td>
<td>2400–2200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guti</td>
<td>2200–2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence of Sumerian Cities</td>
<td>2300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gudea of Lagash</td>
<td>2300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dungi of Ur</td>
<td>2275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amorites</td>
<td>2000–1750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammurabi Code</td>
<td>1800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kassites</td>
<td>1750–910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assyrian Empire</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Conquest of Babylon</td>
<td>910</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conquest of Samaria and deportation of Ten Tribes</td>
<td>721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conquest of Egypt by Esar-Haddon</td>
<td>670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library of Assurbanipal</td>
<td>660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall of Nineveh to Medes, Chaldeans, and Scythians</td>
<td>612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battle of Carchemish—End of Assyrian Empire and</td>
<td>606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>annihilation of Assyrians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaldeans and New Babylonians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar</td>
<td>586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reign of Nabonidus</td>
<td>555–538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall of Babylon to Persians</td>
<td>538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian Empire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoroaster the Prophet</td>
<td>ca. 600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyrus of Persia accepted as king by Medes</td>
<td>549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conquest of Lydia by Cyrus</td>
<td>547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conquest of Babylon</td>
<td>538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conquest of Egypt (Cambyses)</td>
<td>525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reorganization of Persia by Darius I</td>
<td>522–486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Persian expedition to Greece (Darius)</td>
<td>490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Persian expedition to Greece (Xerxes)</td>
<td>480–479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian influence in Greece</td>
<td>410–338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dates are before Christ. Earlier dates are disputed; others may be a year out.

zation which, from our point of view, compares in many respects favorably with that of the Egyptians.

- The Sumerians

**Earliest Government—Primitive Democracy**

Mesopotamia, as has been said, was indefensible against invaders. In discussing the Mesopotamian civilization we shall therefore be dealing with several distinct peoples who ruled the territory, though without necessarily displacing those who had settled there before. The first of these are the Sumerians, followed in succession by Akkadians, Guti, Amorites, Kassites, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Medes, and Persians. For details of the chronology of these periods the chart on page 77 should be consulted.

There is still difference of opinion as to the origin of the Sumerians. It is now generally believed that they were not the original inhabitants of the land, but migrated into the area of Mesopotamia nearest the Persian Gulf from Central Asia. Many elements in their culture are similar to those of the Indus civilization to the southeast, though the borrowing appears to have been done by the Indians and not by the Sumerians. In the fourth millennium B.C. the Persian Gulf came much further inland than it does today, for the rivers carry deposits of silt to the sea every year, thus increasing the area of land. The seaports of the Sumerians are now as much as 150 miles inland. It is certain, however, that their language was not Semitic, so we can state safely that they were not Semites (we have already said that the term "Semitic" is primarily a language differentiation). The unknown earlier inhabitants of the area are supposed to have been Semites.

From the beginning of the present century there have been many archaeological investigations in Sumer, and we now have a considerable amount of information about the great Sumerian "city-states" of Ur, Lagash, Uruk, and others, though the evaluation of this information is still very far from complete. Few of the theories of the original investigator, Sir Leonard Woolley, are now accepted, and it is possible that much of what is said here will still require reconsideration in the future in the light of new finds.

As in the case of Egypt, we lack information on the transitional stage from primitive village life to the civilized life of the larger villages and cities, and to the organized government that knew how to direct the large-scale irrigation. For in these early days in the first cities of Ur there already were irrigation and canals, together with fine art work and craftsmanship, facts which presuppose a previous period of technical development of which we know little. But it is now believed by many that the earliest government in the independent "city-states" characteristic of the Sumerians was a kind of democracy. Kings and central governments came later only when imperative need arose for them. These democracies do not seem to have evolved from the family or clan, for
the democratic institutions were based on locality rather than on family. The heads of families, however, were of importance in the assemblies and councils, and were always called the "fathers," as in the later Roman Senate. It is possible that the Sumerians brought these institutions with them from their original homes; at all events it is certain that they were of considerable antiquity and had considerable prestige. The councils of the Sumerian gods functioned in this democratic manner long after there were kings in the cities of men.

In this Primitive Democracy there were a general assembly of all adult men and a council of elders. In time of danger a king was chosen by the assembly who was to rule for only a limited time. When the danger passed he became a private citizen again, much like the election of a dictator under the early Roman Republic. All decisions were reached after discussion, "asking one another," as it was called, and decisions had to be reached unanimously before action could be taken. Hence the need for an overriding authority when immediate action was needed. Majority rule and voting were unknown at this early stage of society. It is not known at what time Primitive Democracy in its pure form was in existence, since in historic times there were already leaders of a more or less permanent nature. If we are to judge from the councils of the gods as they appear in Sumerian mythology, the prestige of certain elders was the deciding factor in reaching decisions, for the seven great gods who "determine destinies" were the ultimate arbiters in heavenly affairs. This very early stage of government developed into the temple community discussed in a later section.*

**LANGUAGE AND WRITING**

In these early days so-called cuneiform writing had already been invented; at the same time were developed the characteristic Mesopotamian art and architectural forms which persisted throughout the whole civilization. The evolution of writing from the original pictures can easily be traced in Mesopotamia, these pictures becoming more and more conventionalized and stylized as time progressed. So it is impossible to determine from the later writing the earlier forms, as in the case of our own writing, without first examining the intermediate between the picture and the conventional sign. Thus, although we are ignorant of the exact period and the details of this epoch-making invention, it can in all probability be assigned to the Sumerians as perhaps the greatest of their many achievements.

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*The details given in the last two paragraphs have not been accepted by all scholars, and it must be admitted that the evidence is not of a kind that commends itself to all types of historians. The evidence is summarized in Thorkild Jacobsen's chapters in Henri Frankfort, et al., *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948).
Cuneiform tablet recording expenditure and distribution of grain and animals. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)

The writing was not done by scratching some form of pen over a paperlike material, as in Egypt, but was made by impressing soft clay with a square-tipped reed, and then baking the clay into a kind of brick. This made a permanent record of considerable bulk. This method of writing determined the form, as it was impossible to use much artistry with such tools. The writing is called cuneiform (“wedge-shaped”), from the form of the finished characters. Enormous quantities of these tablets have been found in the ruins of Mesopotamian cities, not all of which have even now been read. The language was phonetic, each of the 350 or so signs representing either a syllable or an entire word. The rebus principle described in the chapter on Egypt was first developed by the Sumerians. There was, however, never at any time a cuneiform alphabet, as far as we know.

The language was not deciphered until the middle of the nineteenth century. A huge rock inscription at Behistun in western Iran, written in three cuneiform scripts—Old Persian, Elamite, and Assyrian—had long been known; but the ascent to this rock was difficult, and would have been useless until some progress had been made at the ground level in the knowledge of what to look for in the inscription. When Sir Henry Rawlinson, an Englishman, had discovered three names of kings in the simplest of these writings, the Old Persian script, and thus identified fourteen Persian characters, he climbed the Behistun rock and made copies of the inscription. On his descent to the ground he was able to complete his Persian investigations and turn to the more complex Mesopotamian writings. With the aid of other investigators who were able to note the similarity to the later Hebrew and Arabic languages, he was at last able to complete the knowledge of Assyrian. With this tool it was possible to read the records of the Sumerian civilization when these records were unearthed at the end of the century.1

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

The characteristic form of monumental architecture in Mesopotamia is the ziggurat, built of brick, unlike the Egyptian temples. All architecture, domestic and monumental, was limited in this region by the nature of the only available building material, mud and clay, baked into bricks. Since this material is not permanent and is easily damaged and made shapeless by the elements, nothing has survived to our time in its original form; in fact, in ancient times there was constant replacement of buildings. Cities are found superimposed upon one another, and Mesopotamian cities have to be carefully excavated to see the traces of each successive city. Before excavation a buried city is nothing but a sand-covered mound in the desert.

A ziggurat was usually built on an artificial mountain of sun-dried bricks rising out of the plain. Upon this base was erected the temple itself, a kind of tower with several stories, or terraces, each stepped back and smaller than the one on which it rested.

1 The Assyrian language is an offshoot of the Akkadian which itself is the direct successor of the Sumerian.
A great stairway led to the summit. On the shrine itself all the resources of the country could be used. As early as the First Dynasty of Ur—a city now far inland, but then close to the Persian Gulf—there were fine friezes in relief and inlay work of the highest craftsmanship. The brick columns were overlaid with copper and mother of pearl. The architects used their ingenuity not only in solving the technical problems of building in sun-dried brick, but in suggesting the central nature of the temple by making all the lines lead up to the shrine at the top. It was not possible to use the post and lintel, as in Egypt, with this material; when trying to span large openings with small pieces of material they developed the arch with its

These two pictures show the mound of Tepe Gawra in Assyria at different stages of excavation. Tepe Gawra, in the words of Dr. Speiser, the director of the excavation project, "furnishes the longest continuous record of superimposed occupations known to science." The latest of the settlements was abandoned at least 3,500 years ago, and the great majority of the settlements date from the third and fourth millennia B.C.; over half are demonstrably prehistoric. (COURTESY OF E. A. SPEISER)
Model of the City of Ur about 2000 B.C.; constructed by the American Museum of Natural History. (COURTESY AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY)

Ruins of the Ziggurat of Assur from the south.
Jewelry from the graves of two ladies-in-waiting of the Queen of Ur, 3500–2500 B.C. Made of gold, carnelian, and lapis lazuli, this jewelry is the oldest known in the world up to the present time, but the skill shown presupposes long development in craftsmanship from prehistoric times. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)

Steatite (soapstone) vase carved in relief. Sumerian, about 3000 B.C. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)

White gypsum figure from a Sumerian temple, about 3000 B.C. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)
blocks of different shapes to take the stress. The vault and dome were also used by the Sumerians, but in their private architecture rather than in the conventional ziggurats.

The craftsmen of ancient Sumer must have been far the most skilled in the world of their day. They carved gems, and understood a great deal more about alloys and the casting of metals than did any of their contemporaries. The graves at Ur, excavated by Woolley, are full of finely sculptured ornaments, usually in precious metals, and stone. These are imaginative and varied, excelling especially in the representation of human and animal life.

PRACTICAL INVENTIONS AND THE ECONOMY—MATHEMATICS

The Sumerians seem to have been an eminently practical people, and they developed many useful devices for use in their economy and daily life. Their calendar suffered from the disadvantage of all lunar calendars in that it needed to be adjusted to the solar year at irregular intervals by intercalating an extra month when necessary. In this practice, too, they influenced later peoples. The Hebrews and the Muslims later adopted a lunar calendar rather than the more effective Egyptian one. At an early date the Sumerians had already achieved skill in practical mathematics, adopting a positional notation for the use of large numbers which influenced indirectly even our own system. They used 60 as their basic number, instead of 10 (the decimal system). Since 60 has more factors than 10, especially 3, which presents so much difficulty in our decimal system, this had some practical advantages. To use this system one must remember that each position counts for 60 and not for 10. Thus 123 in our system = $1 \times 10^2$ plus $2 \times 10^1$ plus 3. A similar notation in Mesopotamia * would give $60^2$ plus $2 \times 60^1$ plus 3 = 3,723, while 123 would be written in two positions as $1 \times 60^2$ or $2 \times 60^1$ plus 3. For numbers under 60, however, the notation is clumsy, as a dividing line had to be used for the tens and integers:

\[ \ldots \ldots = 26. \]

Fractions, however, could be handled by the use of another sign, it being understood that the denominator in each case would be 60:

\[ \ldots \ldots \ldots = 1 \text{ plus } \frac{2}{60} \text{ plus } \frac{1}{60^2}. \]

Later Mesopotamian civilizations, using the same method, divided the circle into $6 \times 60$ degrees, which has remained the standard to this day. The unit of weight was the mina (or pound) which was divided into 60 shekels.

A flourishing trade exchanging the surplus agricultural and industrial produce of this usually fertile area especially for metals not found in Mesopotamia was the basis of the prosperity of the Sumerian cities. Almost all the simple methods of transacting business known today were already in use—bills, receipts, notes, and letters of credit. Such large quantities of this commercial material have been preserved that much of it has never been read. The investigator can at once see that a tablet concerns a business transaction of a familiar kind, and he needs to go no further. For a comparatively small sum the private collector can buy such a tablet, thousands of years old, knowing that, even if he could read it, it would change nothing of our knowledge of this ancient civilization.

Extensive regulations for international and domestic trade were early developed, and there is no doubt that the famous Hammurabi Code, to be discussed later, had its basis in Sumerian law, and was issued as a new code by Hammurabi only because his dynasty had conquered Babylon and Sumer, and he wished to establish a common law for all his dominions. This fact, of course, accounts for the extraordinary unevenness of the code; as will be seen, its ancient customs and, in some instances, its more enlightened provisions are all inextricably woven together.
RELATION BETWEEN SUMERIAN RELIGION AND THE SOCIAL ORDER

As noted earlier, the first form of government known to us in Mesopotamia is a Primitive Democracy, details for which are largely lacking, but whose existence is inferred from later material, especially from extant accounts of the behavior of the gods in council. The first historical records tell of simple temple communities, ruled by a *sangu*, or steward of the gods. Larger communities, with several temples, are ruled by an *ensi*, who is also a steward of the gods, but he is responsible to the god of the whole community, whereas the earlier *sangu* was responsible only to the god of his particular temple. The last form of this development is the emergence of a king or *lugal*, who was usually the ruler of many cities, or at least of a considerable number of temple communities. The *lugal* ruled a fairly advanced type of community which may, not improperly, be called a town or a city. It is no longer merely an agricultural community; and though the temple may be the principal building, the whole life of the community no longer centers around it, as in the more primitive society. But the *lugal*, like the earlier rulers, remains only the chief representative on earth of the gods, who are the theoretical owners of all the land. There is therefore no such thing as a secular state, nor does a truly secular state at any time develop in any Mesopotamian country. So it becomes necessary, if Mesopotamian government is to be understood, to study the religion of the Mesopotamian peoples in some detail in order to see how the rulers came to occupy such an unusual position.

It has already been suggested that the Mesopotamian peoples feared their gods, while they worshiped them as beings commanding respect and submission. They did not love them, as the Hebrews in later times were taught to love their God, and they did not regard them as just and powerful protectors, looking after their land and seeing that it was prosperous, as did the Egyptians. The reason for this Mesopotamian view has already been hinted at. The gods of the Mesopotamians in fact did not protect their land, nor could the people think their gods behaved justly to them. Instead, these deities made demands upon them, while giving them little in return, and this little was given quite arbitrarily. The bounty of the gods depended upon the sacrifices given to them by the people and the duties performed in their behalf. Yet the gods did not tell man unequivocally just what they wanted of him; man had to find out for himself and he might be wrong. Herein lies the profound difference between the Sumerian and the Hebrew conceptions of the divinity. Both required man to perform certain duties; but the Hebrew God told his people in no uncertain manner what these duties were. He gave them the Law, and thus provided the Hebrews with a sense of security always lacking in Mesopotamia.

Moreover, the Mesopotamian gods not only omitted to tell their people what was required of them but punished them for their ignorance. This was the arbitrary act of an unpredictable and unjust master—in short, the behavior of a human master to his slave. This master-slave relationship was the central feature of the theology in Mesopotamia, and was adopted first by the Sumerians, and then by all the peoples who followed them in the Land of the Two Rivers. Man was born to be the slave of the gods. This conception permeates not only the religion and myths of these peoples, but their whole social order.

The Mesopotamian peoples, unlike the Egyptians, did not have many different stories of creation, all giving a different point of view. Creation was not to them the one supremely important fact, the only thing in history which could properly be called an event, as it was in Egypt with its static conception of time. It was certainly not a theme for religious meditation. There is, in fact, nothing really religious in the Mesopotamian
story of creation; it did not inspire awe or reverence, but was merely true, something to be accepted and taken into consideration by man in all his earthly actions. Like all Mesopotamian religious stories, it represented conditions in heaven as being the exact counterpart of what occurred on earth, a conception which, as we shall see, permeated Mesopotamian thinking and ultimately gave birth to the great Chaldean science of astrology.

We have a fairly complete account of creation dating from the period of Babylonian supremacy, and we have others from Assyrian records. The Babylonian god Marduk is the hero in the Babylonian story and Assur in the Assyrian. But both these gods perform the same function in the myth that the young god Enlil, god of wind and storm, the executive of the heavenly powers, performs in Sumerian mythology. We should therefore be justified in assuming that the myth existed also in Sumerian times even if we did not possess fragments dating from that period. And these Assyrian and Babylonian hero-gods also possess the natural powers always ascribed to Enlil by the Sumerians.

This story, known as the Enuma Elish (When Above), tells how Marduk, or Assur, supplanted the older gods by conquering Tiamat, the goddess of primeval chaos. The earthly position corresponding to this is clear. As soon as a conqueror took over a new city, his conquest was in a very real sense the victory of his god as well as of himself. When Babylon extended its rule over the Sumerian cities, this was the supplanting of the older gods of Sumer by Marduk of Babylon. As we shall see, the city-god was entirely responsible for the welfare of his city, and his power rose and fell with the success or failure of his city.

In the beginning there is primeval chaos, Tiamat, says the story; with her is Apsu her consort (the sweet waters) and attendant hosts. They beget the earliest gods, and in two generations the sky, Anu, comes into being, the supreme lord of the world above. And Anu engenders En-ki, or Ea, the earth, the most cunning and skilled of the gods. But the gods have to work with pick and shovel on this small piece of earth because as yet there is no man, and no place for man to live. The movement of the gods, however, upon the belly of Tiamat disturbs her and Apsu, so that she proposes to destroy them “that peace may reign and we may sleep.”

It is clear that the begetting of these gods is also a nature myth explaining how land is indeed created in Mesopotamia “upon the bosom of the deep” by the meeting of the sweet waters (Apsu) and the salt water (Tiamat) and the formation of silt. But this aspect need not be treated in detail here.

So Tiamat prepares for war, and the gods, disturbed, send En-ki down to forestall trouble. He is successful in killing Apsu by a word of command (the sweet waters now held immobile forever afterward). Tiamat is furious, but temporarily quiescent until her attendants rouse her again to action. Meanwhile she marries a new consort, Kingu. The gods again send En-ki down to deal with Tiamat, but this time he is impotent. Even the great Anu finds he can do nothing against her. The gods are now in despair until En-ki proposes that his son Marduk (in the Babylonian version) be authorized to do battle with her. The gods are at first doubtful but, having tested Marduk’s power, are willing to concede him authority on his own terms, namely, that thereafter he shall be the executive power of the gods.

Marduk, thus fortified, then marches against Tiamat, and encompasses her and her hosts in a net. When Tiamat, pictured as a great sea monster, opens her mouth to swallow him, he sends in the force of the winds, preventing her from closing her mouth while he shoots an arrow which pierces her heart and kills her. Her followers are held in the net and taken captive. Marduk returns to the upper world and claims his position, which is conceded. Then he takes the body

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8 There are variations known of the creation myth given here, but basically they are the same, though the particular gods responsible for the creation vary according to the place and period.
of the dead Tiamat, cuts it in two, and lifts half of it up to form the sky, making sure that the waters above the earth are guarded by locks to prevent its escape. The lower part of her body exactly corresponds to the upper, and on it Marduk makes his own dwelling. He sets stars in the sky to determine the days and months of the year and special openings for the daily entrance and departure of the sun, moon, and planets.

Finally comes his last task, how to relieve the gods of their toil "that they may freely breathe," and he says: "Arteries will I knot, and bring bones into being. I will make a savage, 'Man' be his name. I will form a savage-man. Let him be burdened with the toil of the gods." So Kingu, the defeated consort of the dead Tiamat, is executed, and "they condemned him, severed his arteries, and from his blood they formed mankind." And Marduk divides the gods, assigning some to heaven under the direction of Anu and assigning others to earth. The gods take pick and shovel in hand for the last time to build Marduk a city; then they confirm his titles and status, and the poem ends by a recounting of his many names.

So mankind was created out of the blood of the defeated consort of the forces of chaos, than which there was nothing lower in the universe; and he was created as a slave to perform the menial tasks of the gods, relieving them of their work. This conception of the place of man in the universe permeates Mesopotamian thought. The king is the chief human representative of the gods upon earth, but even he is a slave of the gods. He may be all-powerful in earthly things, but he is not himself a god, and his titles in early days mean steward or governor. He is a viceroy rather than a true king. He is the head of an underprivileged group in the cosmic state, rather than the giver of rights to the people.

The temple-community

In theory, then, it is clear that the gods were the owners of all the land, with the king or ensi their steward or bailiff. In practice we find that the temple had the first call upon the services of all the people, but those services were strictly defined by law and custom. And the temple had a large portion of the land under its direct control. Nevertheless the king was not subordinate to the priestly power as he was in later Egypt, except in matters considered purely religious, and these matters were carefully defined according to a prescribed set of rules. The kings appointed the high priests and not vice versa, though in some Sumerian cities the high priest is, in the absence of an ensi or steward of the gods, himself the chief secular authority also. From Assyrian documents to be discussed later it is clear that the religious knowledge of the priesthood could have lent itself to considerable abuse. But there was always the safeguard that the king also knew the rules to be observed in determining the will of the gods, and the priests had to point to specific omens which required a certain line of conduct from the king before he would agree to abide by their decisions. This was one of the great advantages of a written law in curbing the power even of those who administered and executed it.

The temple estates in the Sumerian cities were really conceived of as the estates of the gods who owned them, who themselves had subordinate gods under them, even to the divine bailiffs in charge of operations, divine inspectors of fisheries, and divine gamekeepers. Only the menial labor was done by human beings, organized under the chief human overseer, the ensi. His position was that of a steward in relation to the god. He was supposed, like an earthly steward, to consult the god on all important and
ties of man seems to have been the ruling thought of Mesopotamian culture at all times. What happened in heaven was the counterpart of what happened on earth. The heavens and natural events could be consulted to see what must happen on earth, and, if possible, human beings might try to avert dangers and disasters foretold there. Nothing in nature happened casually. Any movement of birds or animals, any eclipse or conjunction between one star and another—these did not happen by chance, but by design of the gods, as the earth itself was created as the direct counterpart of the heavens. When astrology largely took the place of divination by omens, the conception was in no way changed. Chaldean astronomy and astrology belonged to the same view of the world, and were just as natural. It is clear that astronomy was an incidental by-product of astrology and must have been so, for astrology itself was only a more scientific method of discovering the will of the gods and coming events on earth than the earlier techniques. The dream was the least effective of these methods because it could not be compelled, and there could be no interpretation until there was a dream to interpret. But when every natural event could be read as an omen, and every movement of the heavens portended some event on earth, it is clear there was no lack of information on the will of the gods for their earthly slaves to carry out.

The chief figure, then, in the Sumerian city was the god, and his chief human attendant was the ensi. In human terms title to the greater part of the land would be vested in the temple of the city-god. If the city were a large one there might be several estates belonging to different local gods and their families, together with the larger estate of the chief city-god, which would exercise some jurisdiction over the estates of minor gods. In the case of administrative units of two or three towns and villages, the chief god of the chief city, and his ensi, would be the paramount authority of the unit. Each temple had its own serfs and tenants working on a sharecropping basis, with the lion's
share of the produce going to the temple-landowner. The temple also had its own servants, the priests and their assistants, who were devoted to the strict service of the god. The work of a temple community might be directed either by the ensi if there was one, or by the high priest of the particular god in person as the chief local temple authority. In practical terms this seems to have meant that the land was owned by the community and that everyone within the city-god’s estate had a definite position with definite duties to perform for the community. The serfs had no rights except that they were protected by their master, in this case the temple, and the tenants had a certain amount of land whose produce they could keep for themselves. The rest they cultivated on behalf of the temple-community. Other land seems to have been rented out by the temple-community for money. Everyone, whatever his status, was liable for certain community services, e.g., for building temples, public works, roads, and irrigation projects.

In larger communities, in addition to the ensi there was a real king, a lugal. As servant of the god of the city or groups of cities, he had an overriding authority over both minor ensis and the high priests. But his position, in theory and apparently, at least in the early days, in practice, was only temporary. If the gods gave a sign that he should be replaced or that kingship should cease in the area, then it was his duty to retire or submit to being deposed; or as a last resort, in the Sumerian phrase, he could be “smitten by weapons.” No doubt this deposition would be carried out if the king had lost the support of the community; or, if the religion had sufficient hold on the minds of the people, this loss of support by the community would result from his having been abandoned by the gods.

Attitude of the people to the gods

These gods of the Sumerians were so closely identified with the civil administration that they must have commanded little worship from their adherents beyond formal obedience and submission. They could not be approached by individuals for help. So the individuals also had personal gods, usually some minor deities who were believed to have shown personal interest in the worshiper by some special mark of distinction. Believing as deeply in his own powerlessness to change events as the Sumerian did, he could only hope that his personal god would be influential enough to achieve something in his behalf in his own field of activity. There are many examples of letters written to these personal gods by their adherents, asking for their assistance in ordinary worldly affairs. And these gods are even threatened with desertion by their worshipers if they do not lend their aid. Naturally the great gods would be chosen as helpers if they were available. But the Sumerian was only too well aware of the remoteness of such deities. So it was safer to choose some minor god and try to persuade him to use his influence with those higher up. Unhappily, in spite of law codes and the paraphernalia of justice, it seems probable that this practice also reflects contemporary experience. For it is often only elementary justice that the worshiper petitions from his god; and if he needed a god to influence other gods to obtain it, and this god could be bribed, threatened, or cajoled into exercising it, the inference is clear!

Once the basic premise has been grasped, it is not too difficult to understand this world of the Sumerians. If we abandon the belief that heavenly affairs are the counterpart of earthly—a belief abandoned by the Hebrews with their conception of a righteous and transcendent god—we shall readily find the substrata of our Judeo-Christian heritage, especially the powerlessness of man in the face of God. The Mesopotamian religion certainly offered few grounds for optimism. If the gods are arbitrary and man is created only to do their will, everything in life is made to hinge upon the knowledge of what the gods want from man; they do not instruct man in this, so that at any time he is liable to make a mistake. Disagreements in heaven are decided solely on the basis of rank; and man has to pay the
price for it. When the city of Ur was destroyed by foreign invaders, it was because the gods in council had so decreed it; and the protective goddess of Ur had herself been forced to acquiesce in the decision. In the description of the destruction of Ur the goddess mourned, but was unable to save it; and the decree is carried out by Enlil, the executive of the heavenly state. Nowhere is the crime imputed to the actual invading armies, who were only the earthly tools of the gods. Had the gods not decreed it, these tools would have been powerless. The Hebrews also looked upon their enemies in this manner. The Babylonians could not have destroyed Jerusalem if God had not so decreed it. But the Hebrews had a consolation denied to the Sumerians. They knew that the reason for the destruction was that they had committed sins, and were being punished for them. The Sumerian had no such faith. The best he could hope to do was to discover in advance that the gods were contemplating destruction; and then try his utmost to appease them, and so prevent it. But there was never any certainty that he had correctly diagnosed the situation or understood what the gods required of him to avert it.

The position of the Mesopotamian kings as representatives of gods

This uncertainty affected the position of the king in a remarkable manner at all stages of Mesopotamian history. We have evidence on this point from the middle of the third millennium B.C. right down to the age of the Assyrian conquerors. Being the chief representative of the gods on earth, he had also the chief responsibility. When Lagash was defeated, the responsibility was at once placed on the personal god of the king who had proved too weak to protect it. It was the king's duty above all to discover what the gods wanted and then do it, at whatever personal cost and inconvenience to himself. No one but the king could stay the anger of the gods, though there is evidence that his mantle, and even a substitute king, could function for him on occasions. King Gudea of Lagash, when the gods had indicated that

a new temple should be built, had to look in all directions for a sign as to where it should be built and the exact moment for it. An extant cylinder seal records the extraordinary precautions taken by the king before he could be certain that he had correctly understood the message. Then at last he had to purify himself thoroughly and then mold the first brick with infinite care. Correspondence exists from the Assyrian kings to their priests, in which a powerful king complains that the gods' demands seem unreasonable, and requests them to examine the omens again. He is made to undergo ritual shaving, a considerable ordeal for men who had beards such as are shown in the Assyrian reliefs and paintings. On another occasion he was made to live in a reed hut in the desert for several days in order to avert a threatened disaster to his people. When an eclipse took place he prayed: "In the evil eclipse of the moon which took place in the month of Kislimu, on the tenth day, in the evil of the powers, of the signs, evil and not good, which are in my palace and my country, I fear, I tremble, and I am cast down in fear!... At thy exalted command let me live, let me be perfect, and let me behold thy
divinity. Whenever I plan, let me succeed!
Cause truth to dwell in my mouth."
When the Assyrian King Sennacherib impiously
destroyed rebellious Babylon, he forgot that he
was destroying a city of his empire, for which
he was responsible to the gods. His suc-
cessor, realizing the fact, humbly rebuilt the
city and built new shrines for the god of the
city, hoping to appease him. In all the great
festivals of the year the king had to be pre-
sent, performing his ritual part, especially in
the great spring festival of the New Year,
which begins with the special Day of Atone-
ment for the king, and is followed by his
ritual humiliation. It was clearly no light
burden to be a king in Mesopotamia.

GENERAL PESSIMISM OF SUMERIAN AND
MESOPOTAMIAN PEOPLES—EPIC OF
GILGAMESH

We have no evidence that the Sumeri-
ans were disturbed by the arbitrary nature
of their gods to the extent of repudiating
them or criticizing them. But their later suc-
cessors within Mesopotamia have left sev-
eral documents in which the gods are shown
as unjust, oppressing man on earth, demand-
ing service, and giving nothing in return.
And when man dies there is no hereafter to
compensate. All go alike to Aralu, the abode
of shades. Why must this be? Although
the two best examples of this thought are
not Sumerian, they are of interest as reveal-
ing the insoluble nature of the problem
within the framework of Mesopotamian reli-
gion, and so will be discussed here. But it
should not be thought that such ethical em-
phasis as appears in these texts is as early
as the Sumerian civilization.

In one dialogue, which may have been
the prototype for the later Hebrew Book of
Job, a sufferer is afflicted by the gods, but
can see no reason for it. He has sacrificed,
prayed, and worshiped; he has performed
his duties for the king, and looked after the
prescribed ritual. Yet he is suffering from a
loathsome disease, he has been whipped with
a lash, and his enemies rejoice over him.
There should be a reason, he feels, but in
typical Mesopotamian fashion he is simply
bewildered, until, without any explanation,
Marduk heals him and all is well again. So
he praises the Lord of Wisdom, but has
gained no understanding of why it happened
in the first place. However, it is clear that
this thinker believed that there should have
been some clear connection between his
suffering and his life on earth, during which
he had always correctly performed his duties
to the gods.

The Epic of Gilgamesh undoubtedly
dates back in some form to the Sumerian
times, though our copies are of a later date;
the ethical form in which this version is cast
is probably a product of later thinking. This
famous epic is the first known to deal with
the adventures and trials of a great hero,
though it has had many successors, from the
Odyssey to Parzival. The quest of Gilgamesh
in this version is for the plant of immortality,
which he seeks because his friend has died
without apparent reason and the hero refuses
to be comforted. The problem, thus insis-
tently posed, is why man does not have
immortality.

Gilgamesh hears of an ancestor of his
who did indeed have eternal life, one Ut-
apishtim, who now lives beyond the waters of
death. So he sets out on his quest, wanders
through the mountains, goes where the sun
travels at night. But everyone tells him of
the uselessness of his journey. He will never
find Utapishtim, for he lives beyond the
waters of death; he might as well abandon
the quest. But at last Gilgamesh gains pas-
sage over these waters and finds his ancestor.
But Utapishtim has no hope for him. The
only reason he himself lives on is because
he had saved himself, his wife, and pairs of
all living things when Enlil decided to de-
stroy the earth by flood. Then Enlil had
repented of his act and, though angry with
Utapishtim at first, granted him immortality
for his deed. After the conversation Gilga-
mesh falls into a magic sleep, which would
have turned into death had not Utapishtim's wife awakened him just in time. She

*Quoted by H. Frankfort, Kingship and the
Gods (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press,
then persuades her husband to give him a parting gift. This gift turns out to be information about a plant which grows on the bottom of the sea, and would bring renewed youth to anyone who should eat it. With the aid of Utnapishtim’s boatman Gilgamesh discovers the whereabouts of the plant, dives down beneath the sea, and brings it up. Without eating it himself he makes haste back to the city of Uruk. But, as he nears it, he sees a pool, and, being tired, he goes for a swim, leaving the plant on the bank. There a snake smells it, and snatches it away, thus winning the power of everlasting renewal by shedding his old body and growing a new one. There is, however, no happy ending for Gilgamesh. He bewails his loss and all the trials he has undertaken. He has found no answer; and man cannot gain immortality.

Fundamentally this is the mood of Mesopotamian civilization. There is no answer. Man is the plaything of the gods; there is no reason in anything. Man’s duty is only obedience and submission in this life, and there is nothing beyond the grave.

Semitic conquests of Mesopotamia

Some time in the third millennium B.C., the independent city-states of Sumer fell victims to the first conqueror from the north, Sargon of Agade. This is usually described as a Semitic conquest, and there is no doubt that the conquest meant the gradual absorption of the non-Semitic Sumerian language by the Semitic Akkadian. But it is strange that there is as yet no evidence that the Sumerians realized they were being conquered by an alien people. To the Sumerians it was a conquest like all others. The Akkadians absorbed the culture and religion of the Sumerians, giving them only a more effective administration than the separate regimes of the city-states had ever afforded. Sargon then proceeded to conquer the Elamites and northern Syria, thus establishing the first great empire of historic times. However, after his death the Sumerian cities revolted, and within a few generations the empire passed under the domination of a northern barbarian tribe, the Gutu, with local administration resting in the hands of the Sumerians, until about 2300 B.C., when the city of Ur was able to throw off their yoke altogether. Ur then became the chief city of Sumer and kept the other states under its control. The greatest of the rulers of Ur was Dungi, who issued a law code which was the precursor of, and the foundation for, the more famous Code of Hammurabi, though later discoveries have unearthed even earlier codes than that of Dungi. About 2000 B.C. the whole country was conquered and pacified by the rulers of a desert tribe, the Amorites (Amurru), who captured the village of Babylon and made it into a great city. Then they extended its rule over the whole of Sumer, and elevated the Babylonian city-god Marduk into the ruler and supplanter of the old gods as already described. Hammurabi was the sixth king of the Amorites to rule in Babylon, and it was he who finally consolidated the whole country.

From this time the independence of the Sumerian city-states was permanently lost, and henceforward “Semitic” Babylon was the center of Mesopotamian civilization. The original Sumerian language died out altogether, to be replaced by the Akkadian of Babylon.

Shortly after the death of Hammurabi, about 1750 B.C., Babylon came under the control of the barbarian Kassites, who ruled it and the greater part of Babylonia, with occasional lapses from power, for over eight hundred years, but made few further advances in civilization beyond the introduction of the horse. During this time the Hittites, to be dealt with in the next chapter, were the predominant power in Asia Minor, though they do not seem to have tried to extend their power as far east as Babylonia, contenting themselves with sporadic raids. Not until the rise of Assyria to the domination of the entire Near East were the Kassites finally overthrown, and Babylon captured in 910 B.C.
Mesopotamia under Hammurabi—The Hammurabi Code

The rule of Hammurabi in Babylonia and the elevation of Marduk, the god of Babylon, to the chief position in the celestial universe were marked by no great cultural advances. But we are well informed about the life of the times, and the political and economic administration of the period, through our possession of the great Hammurabi Code and some of the official correspondence of the great king.

The code was given to him by Shamash, the god of the sun and of justice. It was therefore this god who inspired him; but Shamash is not given credit for the authority to execute the laws, which is specifically ascribed to the old Sumerian gods Anu and Enlil, and to Marduk, who has just replaced the latter. "When lofty Anu... and Enlil... determined for Marduk, the first born of En-ki, the Enlil functions over all mankind... called Babylon by its exalted name, made it supreme in the world... at that time Anu and Enlil named me to promote the welfare of the people, me, Hammurabi, the god-fearing prince, to cause justice to prevail in the land, to destroy the wicked and the evil, that the strong might not oppress the weak..."  

If we translate these theological terms into earthly conceptions, we shall find that this is a very accurate description of the nature of the code, which is a mixture of old barbarous custom and more modern attempts at administering an evenhanded justice. The old arbitrary gods were still accepted, but Marduk and Hammurabi were anxious to establish themselves as supreme overlords.

of the country, and to give justice to the people, as far as was compatible with sanctified custom. No doubt the new ruler recognized the value for his dynasty of having justice enforced by the state rather than by private vengeance; but it was not possible to abolish this latter at one blow in the face of the conservative customs of the people. It is also noteworthy that Hammurabi at least acknowledged that the laws ought to be just, in response to the wishes of the gods. He was still the representative of the gods on earth.

Any selection from this famous code is likely to give a false impression. Only by judicial but unfair selection would it be possible to produce any general theory of the nature of law in the early part of the second millennium B.C. But the composite nature of the code does at least suggest that a serious attempt was being made to improve it. And a knowledge of how the law was administered is lacking. We do not know if the older and more barbarous parts were ever put into effect. These, however, would appear in any codification carried out without respect to usage. It must always be remembered that the Hammurabi Code is a codification and not a new series of laws, and suffers from all the defects of codifications.

One barbarous survival is the so-called lex talionis, applied in a manner which hardly seems to accord with any abstract conception of justice. If a man kill another man's son, his son shall be put to death. If this provision is not merely repeated because it was in the old law, then it would show an extreme sense of property in a family, the children belonging like chattels to the father. But this is at variance with other more humane provisions of the same code.

Capital punishment in the code is very common, especially for offenses against property. But we do not know whether it was frequently inflicted or was intended to act as a deterrent to theft and misappropriation. The code of the Twelve Tables with its barbarous penalties remained the basic law code of the Romans. But we know that Roman citizens for hundreds of years were always permitted to choose exile instead of death, and that when Julius Caesar as high priest tried to revive some of the old laws and their strange penalties, it outraged the feelings of even the most conservative senators. In the early nineteenth century in England, capital punishment could be inflicted for the theft of property worth more than a shilling. But we also know that juries refused to convict when the law made such a penalty mandatory.

But certain features of Babylonian society do emerge clearly from the code. Justice was unequal. The population was divided into three classes, nobles, free commoners, and serfs and slaves. Crimes against nobles were dealt with more severely than those against the lower classes; but nobles themselves were also in many cases dealt with more severely if it was they who committed the crime. Property seems to have
been rated above human life—crimes against property being usually treated more severely. Even accidental homicide was regarded as a crime against the victim’s family and compensated accordingly. Murder was not a crime against the state but against the person. Aliens were treated liberally, women held a relatively high position, and there were extensive regulations for industry and trade, as might be expected in a commercial civilization. Noteworthy is the fact that private tenure of land seems to have been the rule, unlike the system described for the Sumerian city-states. Peasants were sharecroppers or serfs as before; but, in addition to the priests, the government and nobles now owned the land. This probably reflects the changed conditions under a conquering house of invaders who would not necessarily respect the arrangements made by deities for their sustenance, even while they accepted the general divine order decreed by them. The sharecroppers were protected by law against eviction before the end of the contract year—as before under the regime of the gods—and against obligation to pay full rent if the crop failed.

There are many provisions governing marriage in the code. Evidently it was a legal contract in Babylonia. Though the wife was the legal property of her husband and brought a marriage gift to him, she had some rights, being permitted to return to her father if ill treated by her husband. Although marriage was ordinarily for life, divorce was permissible; the bridal gift would be returned with her, and she would keep the custody of the children. Women were allowed to engage in business, and had as many business rights as the men. However, if the husband fell into debt the wife could be sold as payment for it. There are severe penalties for adultery and other sexual offenses.

If we knew more about the earlier law codes and, as said earlier, if we knew how it was administered, we could comment with more confidence upon the significance of this code and how far it represented an advance upon earlier thinking. But the correspondence of Hammurabi shows at least that he took his duties very seriously. Quite trivial disputes he investigated himself, and there are several instances of his sending back cases for retrial, as well as handing down decisions himself. There can be little doubt that the parts of the code which stem from Hammurabi and Babylon represent a codification of existing practices in the commercial civilization of Babylonia. It cannot, however, be described truly as the first secular legislation. It is significant that it was represented as having divine sanction and as being unalterable, and that it was enforced by the authority both of the ruler and the gods. Legislation that was truly secular, and subject to change by duly authorized legislators, did not arise until the time of the Romans. Even the Greeks entrusted their basic legislation to individuals, and those who proposed to modify these laws ran the risk of severe penalties if the proposals were turned down.

It is certain that both the Hammurabi Code and the whole Mesopotamian legal tradition had a marked influence upon the Hebrew law of a far later epoch, especially upon those parts of the Hebrew codes which seem to be the most ancient. Here no fewer than thirty-five provisions out of fifty are similar. Even the language in both has marked resemblances. The probable explanation is the influence the legal tradition had upon Canaanites and other peoples of Palestine rather than any direct borrowing by the Hebrews. The Hebrews would naturally adopt some of the customs of the Canaanites; and if, as seems probable, there were already Israelites in Palestine before the exodus of the captives from Egypt, during the reunion of the two branches of the people after the exodus each would absorb customs and laws from the other.

The Empire of the Assyrians

The Rise of the Assyrians to Power in the Near East and in Egypt

When Babylon fell about 910 B.C. to the Assyrians, the conquerors were not a newly
established people, but had been settled in northern Mesopotamia as early as 3000 B.C. During the period of Sumerian and Babylonian ascendancy they had been a pastoral, and then a trading, people, but had always been in danger from their neighbors. We know of wars they fought against Babylonians, Hittites, and Mitanni, as well as against mountaineers and Aramaeans who overran their defenseless frontiers.

The whole history of Assyria is relatively well documented from the records of the great library of Assurbanipal at Nineveh, and inscriptions which have been excavated since the middle of the nineteenth century in other Assyrian cities. From these records we can see the gradual turning of a peaceful people into a nation of warriors, sudden periods of domination over their neighbors followed by periods of quiescence when their enemies were too strong for them. Then, at last, the building of the greatest empire the world had yet seen by the use of methods that have made the Assyrians the byword in later times for ruthless and unprogressive militarism and imperialism. In the Assyrian records there is no attempt to hide the ruthlessness of the conquerors. On the contrary, they boast of it, evidently considering it to be the most effective imperial policy.

We also have the records of the Hebrew prophets and chroniclers, who seem to have looked upon Assyria as the necessary scourge of God, and with a kind of horrible fascination at their wickedness. The delirious delight of Nahum at the destruction of Nineveh, unmatched anywhere else in the Bible, gives some measure of the hatred it had inspired: “Woe to the city, bloody throughout, full of lies and booty. I will strip off your skirts to your face. . . . I will throw vile things at you. And treat you with contempt and make you a horror; so that everyone that sees you will flee from you.”

Once the Assyrians had embarked on their aggressive policy they went into it thoroughly. By devoting all their capacities to military invention they far surpassed the technical abilities of their opponents. Few as they were in numbers, they were never defeated in battle until the very end, when their resources were too thin to permit defense on all fronts. Conquered countries were made to pay tribute; if the tribute was not forthcoming at the proper time a lightning expedition would be made against the defaulters, who would pay dearly, as an example to other would-be offenders. All rebellions were crushed ruthlessly, Sennacherib razing the great city of Babylon to the ground and turning the waters of the Euphrates over the site. In the Assyrian records there is mention of wholesale massacres, terrible tortures, public exhibition of the bloody heads of corpses on the battlements of conquered cities, even by those kings, like Assurbanipal, who devoted themselves also to peaceful pursuits. They used iron on an extensive scale for weapons, the first nation to do so; they made use of a mounted cavalry, they invented the battering ram and special siege machinery capable of overcoming the brick cities of Mesopotamia and Palestine without too much difficulty. They conquered the whole of Mesopotamia and most of Palestine, deporting the inhabitants of Samaria and sending in immigrants from elsewhere so that there would be no further disturbance—a policy used by them frequently elsewhere. They did not conquer Judah, however, the deliverance being ascribed to the angel of the Lord who destroyed the Assyrian army of Sennacherib. Judah did, nevertheless, become tributary to Assyria, as the records show. Esarhaddon also conquered Egypt, as already related, but the Assyrians could not rule such a vast land with so few men, and they had to abandon it soon afterward.

ORGANIZATION OF THE EMPIRE

The rule of the Assyrians was not, however, entirely without its compensations for the conquered peoples so long as they sub-
mitted and continued to pay tribute. Local wars between their subjects came to an end, an efficient provincial administration was developed to keep a close watch on governors and subject kings, who had to keep in continuous correspondence with the capital. Roads were built, and a regular royal postal service was inaugurated. A considerable amount of self-government was permitted to the subject cities, and, in particular, trade, in which the native Assyrian of imperial times took little interest, flourished, mainly in the hands of the Aramaeans, a people who will be briefly discussed in the next chapter.

CULTURAL ACHIEVEMENTS

The Assyrian kings were great builders, living in fine palaces with pleasure gardens, and constantly building and rebuilding temples. There was little original in their work, and they did not make much use of stone although it was abundant in their empire. Their whole culture and religion was, as already mentioned, Babylonian, and, through Babylon, Sumerian in its basis. In fact, toward the end of the Assyrian imperial age Marduk seems to have been almost as important as their native god Assur. They made use of Babylonian science and patronized it, altering the cuneiform script by the addition of more symbols. Their many reliefs
in their monumental architecture were well executed but Sumerian in inspiration.

It would seem that the Assyrian rulers were more conscious of the past of the Mesopotamian peoples than were the Babylonians whom they supplanted. It has already been mentioned how many of the old stories are known to us only through Assyrian versions, and how frequently the Assyrians copied them. The Babylonian kings of the Hammurabi Age were far less attached to the idea of the king as the representative of the gods on earth and responsible to them than were these even more powerful monarchs. Never were the temples in Mesopotamia so prosperous as under the Assyrian despots. Perhaps the more civilized of their kings may have felt the hatred of the conquered peoples and realized the weak foundations of their empire, and desperately tried to ward off the evil day. Military conquerors in all ages, not excluding the twentieth century A.D., have been superstitious, playing their luck and looking to omens and astrologers for reassurance.

**FALL OF THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE**

However this may be, the final destruction of the Assyrians was sudden and merciless. It was believed impossible to defeat them in battle if the numbers were at all equal. An exiled prince from Babylonia tried to raise a coalition against them but failed repeatedly. Nevertheless the peoples to the east of Mesopotamia were able to advance slowly and relentlessly, Medes and Chaldeans, and Scythians from the north—all sure of the support of the conquered peoples if the Assyrian hold should weaken. The Assyrians fought back, still winning every local engagement, until suddenly the coalition took Nineveh and razed it to the ground, thus destroying the basis of the state. Still the Assyrian remnants fought on from the old
capital of Assur until Nebuchadnezzar, son of the new Chaldean king of Babylon, defeated them and their Egyptian allies decisively in 606 B.C. at the battle of Carchemish. The Assyrians received no mercy as they had shown none. The very people disappeared from history, killed or absorbed into the population of their conquerors.

Subsequent peoples from that day to this have pointed to the fate of the Assyrians as an object lesson for imperialists, and as a people they have had few admirers. Nevertheless they did prepare the way for a great flowering of civilization in Mesopotamia, first under the Chaldeans, then the Medes, and finally the Persians. The East had moved into an era of great empires, and the civilization thus built up was absorbed into the heritage of the West when Alexander the Macedonian three hundred years later conquered the last feeble Persians and founded the Greco-Oriental civilization which exercised such a profound influence on the Romans, and through them and through Christianity upon ourselves. By uniting the Mesopotamian people after a long period of disunity the Assyrians blazed the way for their more constructive successors.

The Chaldeans and New Babylonia

FIET, ANTIQUARIANISM—ASTROLOGY

The new empire of the Chaldeans at Babylon quickly showed signs of wishing to inherit the mantle of Assyria. Nebuchadnezzar tried to take Tyre and failed, but he succeeded in defeating Egypt severely in several battles, though he did not conquer it. He was at first content with installing a tributary king in Jerusalem; but after repeated rebellions he took the leading Jews captive to Babylon, and Judah was incorporated into his empire. Thus he became overlord of almost all Palestine, and for the rest of his reign retired to his capital of Babylon, which was then enjoying a cultural renaissance, in many respects the most brilliant of all.

The people who controlled Babylonia at that time were called Chaldeans, both by
the Hebrews and by the Greek historian Herodotus. In Mesopotamian records the name appears only toward the end of the Assyrian Empire. As far as can be judged they do not seem to have been a people different from the Semitic Babylonians of earlier times, though it is possible that exiles from the Assyrian domination now returned to Babylonia from regions to the East, bearing with them astronomical knowledge which gave a new impetus to the study of the stars, which increased greatly in this period of Chaldean rule. The Chaldean kings made every effort to restore the ancient Mesopotamian heritage, and there was a pronounced trend toward antiquarianism. The Chaldean attitude toward religion bears a strong resemblance to the piety of the later Egyptians. It was as if all life had left it, and the only thing that remained was to try to blow upon the old fires and hope to revive them. The result, as in Egypt, was formalism—the revival of the form without the living substance.

Submission to the gods had always been a characteristic of Mesopotamian religion. But now it became a simple matter of resignation and humility before the unalterable decrees of fate. It was still not an ethical religion such as the one the Hebrews developed; sin, as before, was the failure to behave in the manner prescribed by the gods, and had no relation to moral behavior on the earth. As explained earlier, the study of astrology would fit in naturally with the Mesopotamian world-conception; but it was even further removed from the reach of the people, since no one could understand the star lore without instruction. In earlier days they could at least recognize omens. But with the enthronement of astrology as the supreme science the ordinary people were too far removed from the gods to do more than offer humble submission to their decrees. So arose the conception of fate and destiny which was to play such a large part in Oriental thought thereafter.

Chaldean interest in astrology, however, did give rise to the science of astronomy, which reached heights far beyond anything previously achieved by the Mesopotamian peoples. They charted the entire heavens, they worked out a system for the recording of time which was the best so far achieved, and they calculated the length of the year with an error of only twenty-six minutes. All celestial occurrences were recorded with meticulous care. The planets were equated with the old Babylonian gods, and given their names. All this work was continued under the Persians, Greeks, and Romans; from the ancient Chaldean astrologers has come not only all subsequent astrology, especially as developed by the Muslims; but also our own astronomy.

THE CITY OF NEW BABYLON

The absence of a living religion did not prevent the building of great temples in the new Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar. The great temple of Marduk excited the enthusiasm of Herodotus, the Greek tourist and historian, and his description of the ziggurat in the temple and the whole city corresponds very exactly to the results of modern archaeological investigation. It was probably the largest ziggurat ever built. Nebuchadnezzar’s palace, with its Hanging Gardens, was for the Greek one of the seven wonders of the world. The famous gardens were a terraced roof garden high above the ground with tropical plants growing in it in great profusion. The city of this king, devoted to peaceful arts and a thriving trade, was one of the greatest, perhaps the greatest city in the world of the day, larger by far than any previous Mesopotamian city. This was the city where the final ethical religion of the Jews was developed, the city whose luxuries tempted them so sorely, the city whose inhabitants to the more puritan among them seemed to symbolize everything they must avoid, the very essence of wickedness and worldly vice. “Daughter of Babylon who art to be destroyed, happy shall he be thateward thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.”

10 Psalms 137:8.
The great Persian Empire

CONQUEST OF BABYLONIA

To the northeast of the new Babylonia a warlike power was gathering strength. The Medes, a people of an Indo-European and not Semitic language, had already joined forces with the Chaldeans in the destruction of Assyria. But thereafter friendly relations had not been maintained, and the Medes extended their empire further east, bringing another Indo-European people, the Persians, under their rule. The Persians, however, under a young and adventurous prince who went down in history as Cyrus the Great, revolted from the Medes in 549 B.C., and the Medes, apparently without serious opposition, accepted him as king. Thus was formed a strong imperial power, a potential threat to the rapidly weakening Chaldean regime. The story of the "conquest" of Babylon by Cyrus is told in the book of Daniel—how Belshazzar the king was feasting when he saw the writing on the wall which told him that his kingdom was to be divided and given to the Medes and Persians; and "the same night" Cyrus entered the city and fulfilled the prophecy. However this may be, Cyrus in his own records declared that he took Babylon "without a battle and without fighting" and there can be no doubt that he experienced little opposition from the Chaldeans. The incorporation of Babylonia into his empire made it the greatest that the world had yet seen, stretching as far east as the borders of Turkestan and India, and west to the Aegean Sea. For before proceeding against Babylon Cyrus had conquered Lydia, the chief power in Asia Minor, and expanded his power equally in Central Asia.

In Babylon Cyrus was hailed as a deliverer by the influential classes as well as by the Jews, who were permitted to return to Jerusalem and build their temple. Although his religion was quite different from the one he encountered in Babylon, he had the political good sense to proclaim himself the servant of Marduk and accepted the throne as a gift from Marduk and his priests.

The city became henceforth one of the capitals of the Persian Empire. It had to pay taxes to the Great King (as the Persian emperor was always called) like all the conquered lands; but in return the whole of Mesopotamia for the first time enjoyed the benefits of a comparatively enlightened administration and an internal peace which endured until the conquests of Alexander the Great. These benefits, however, were not; for the most part, the work of the great conqueror Cyrus, who was killed in battle while still a fairly young man, nor of his successor Cambyses, who conquered Egypt, but of Darius the Great who usurped the throne when Cambyses died on the way home from Egypt.

GOVERNMENT AND PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION

The problem of organizing this vast empire presented many great difficulties. Sardis, the capital of Lydia, an outpost of the empire, was fifteen hundred miles from Susa, the chief imperial capital—a tremendous distance when the difficulty of communication is considered. And though the Persians did not attempt to interfere with local customs, they were still a conquering people and regarded as such. A show of force was necessary to ensure obedience and payment of the taxes required from their subjects. Persians, moreover, had special privileges in the matter of taxation and officeholding in the imperial administration. Nevertheless, the organization set up by Darius did endure for two hundred years in spite of local rebellions by dissatisfied subjects and disobedient governors.

For administrative purposes the country was divided into provinces, each under an official called a satrap. He was head of the civil administration and led the king's armies in the province in the event of war. But the military establishment in other respects remained under the direct authority of the king. The satraps also had to submit to inspection by other officials who were appointed by, and were directly responsible to, the king and who were supposed to keep him informed on the efficiency and loyalty
of the satrap. The satrap was responsible for collecting the taxes of the province, which were realistically set at a figure which enabled the satrap to remit to the monarch less than he collected. The system, therefore, was a mixture of local and centralized government like the republican provincial administration of Rome. The chief difference, however—and it is perhaps in favor of the Persian system—was that the satrap could remain in office only as long as he performed his duties capably, and he was always liable to dismissal by the king; whereas the Roman official was restrained only by the threat of legal proceedings by the provincials after he had laid down his office, when he had the proceeds of his tenure at his disposal to bribe the juries.

**THE ARMY**

The army commanded by the Persian king was formidable in size, but motley in its composition, and of doubtful loyalty outside the famous band of Immortals—a picked body of Persian nobles—and the standing army of native Persians who formed the personal bodyguard of the Great King. The difficulty experienced by the Persians in their wars with Greece, especially when attacked by Alexander the Great, was that the levies liable for service belonged to all the subject peoples of the empire, with different military customs and different traditions. Moreover, they could not be assembled at a moment’s notice, but required time both for assembly and for training together. It was possible for Xerxes to recruit a mighty army when he was the aggressor and could choose the moment for his expedition; but even so the army was seldom a match for the smaller numbers of well-trained, disciplined, and patriotic Greeks. But it was not possible for the later Darius who had to face Alexander to assemble his army all together at one time when he was on the defensive against the vastly smaller Macedonian forces. So Alexander was able to defeat him piecemeal. One thing, however, the Persians always possessed—money; and with this they could afford to hire Greek and other foreign mercenaries, and could intrigue, as the later Persian kings did, to prevent the union of Greek city-states in a possible offensive alliance against themselves. They were also able to mobilize a large fleet, manned for the most part by Greeks and Phoenicians, some of whom were in the empire and some of whom were hired as mercenaries. With this fleet the Persians explored the southern Asiatic coast to the borders of India, and restored the canal, newly built by one of the last Egyptian Pharaohs, between the Nile and the Red Sea.

Darius also restored and greatly improved the postal system of the Assyrians. He built new roads to connect with the imperial capital, and along these he stationed relays of fast horsemen to carry messages. By this means the time for news to travel from Sardis to Susa was cut from three months to less than two weeks. The new roads were also a great assistance to trade and general intercourse within the empire. In spite, therefore, of the local variations within this empire the culture became authentically Persian over the centuries, though the dominant language in its western half was Aramaean, with its alphabet from which a new Persian alphabet of thirty-nine letters was formed. The cuneiform languages gradually died out under this competition.

**RELIGION.**

**Zoroaster and the traditions of the Avesta**

While for the most part the Persians adopted and developed the culture of their predecessors, as was to be expected of a people only recently emerged from barbarism, and while in Mesopotamia and Palestine they did not interfere with local religions, adapting their religious policies as required, they brought with them an entirely new religion of their own, many features of which were in the course of time to supplant the older ones, and to exercise a profound influence upon all later religions, including Christianity and Islam.

The origins of what is called Zoroastrianism lie far back in the remote past, and it is impossible to determine how much of the
Persian religion was of recent origin, how much was due to the influence of the prophet Zoroaster or Zarathustra, who lived perhaps as late as the sixth or seventh century B.C., and how much came from remote antiquity. The prophet himself was always a mysterious figure, and the teachings of his religion, as propounded by himself and enlarged by the Magian priests of the Persian religion, were not collected in one book, the Zend-Avesta, until the early Christian Era. As with the religion of India, there was a considerable religious tradition handed down by word of mouth for centuries before it was found necessary to record it in writing. Even in the Zend-Avesta itself there is so much that is mysterious and difficult to comprehend that it cannot be used directly as a book of religious teachings without a key which is missing and will probably never be known. The very century of the prophet’s birth—whether in fact he ever lived at all—is not known for certain, in spite of many studies by Westerners. And the apparent teaching that Zarathustra was to return again in nine thousand years to bring about a new age in the history of mankind, and that his appearance was to be a constantly recurring phenomenon, has led some students to believe that the “historical” Zarathustra assumed the name only because of some earlier Zarathustra who lived thousands of years earlier and was the traditional founder of Persian civilization. Persian tradition claims that a prophet Zarathustra initiated the Neolithic Revolution, and the many references to agriculture and its importance in the Zend-Avesta are adduced as support for the tradition.

However all this may be, and however little we may be able to use the cryptic writings of the Zend-Avesta as historical source material, it is clear that Zoroastrianism in the form in which we find it during the Persian Empire and in its many important successors, was a religion which was well suited to supplant the older Mesopotamian religions which, as has been seen, were already in their death throes. For this reason alone, if for no other, the existence of a comparatively late prophet, who at the very least refounded and reinterpreted the traditional religion, would seem probable. For
Zoroastrianism was clearly an ethical religion, one that appealed to the developing spiritual capacities of mankind, and fitted to command the faith and allegiance of individuals rather than the devotion of the state, and the people as members of the state. It was deeply concerned, as the older religions were not, with the problem of good and evil, ethical good and evil, and not merely with the failure to observe prescribed ritual practices or to understand what the gods required of man and his integration within the order of the universe.

Dualism—The spirit of light and the spirit of darkness

The world had been created by Ahura-Mazda, the god of light. But though he would ultimately triumph, he was not omnipotent, and was engaged in a constant struggle with the god of darkness, Ahriman, who was the embodiment of all wickedness, treachery, and deceit and possessed of almost equal powers. Each of these gods had his attendant host of spirits ceaselessly working for him. It was man's duty—within limits he had free choice—to aid the god of light in his struggle with the god of darkness and help to overcome him. The Persian kings all claimed their position by the grace of Ahura-Mazda and conceived it as their duty to support the rule of light upon earth, administer justice, and rule according to righteousness. Darius expressed this ideal in the Behistun inscription referred to earlier. The priests of Zarathustra, usually called the Magi, kept alive the sacred fire, the symbol of Ahura-Mazda in their temples.

Ethical system and the belief in immortality

Zoroastrianism contained a definite and clear belief in a future life. In the process of time the good powers would overcome the evil, and then a messiah would be born to prepare the end of the world. The last great day would then come when Ahriman would be finally vanquished, and the souls of the dead would be judged according to their deeds, the justified would at once enter Paradise, while the wicked would be cast into Hell with their master Ahriman. There they would serve him until they too would be redeemed in a far distant future. There can be little doubt that the Christian story of the Wise Men of the East who visited the infant Jesus in Bethlehem to worship him was intended to show that the priests of Zarathustra had recognized in him the Messiah whom they awaited.

The sins which lead to damnation are catalogued—pride, gluttony, sloth, and other of the Christians' "deadly sins,"—as are also the virtues—keeping contracts, obeying rulers, tilling the soil, showing mercy, giving alms, and not doing to others what one did not wish done to one's self. Early Zoroastrianism, unlike the later religions which developed from it and stressed the evil nature of the material world, did not approve of asceticism, self-inflicted suffering, and excessive fasting or grief.

Successors of Zoroastrianism—Mithraism, Manichaeism, medieval heresies

The elements of this new revealed religion which affected later Judaism and Christianity are obvious; and it may be said that many of its best features found their fruition elsewhere than in those religions which developed directly from it. In Mithraism, which in the Roman Empire presented such competition to Christianity during the first centuries of the Christian era, there is far more stress laid on Mithras the Redeemer, as also upon the evil nature of the world, than in Zoroastrianism, with the resultant emphasis on the corrupt nature of mankind and the means of overcoming it in self-mortification. By the time of the rise of Manichaeism in the third century A.D. the world has been altogether corrupted by the god of darkness, with all its terrible consequences; and matter itself is conceived of as evil. From this teaching came the beliefs of the Cathari and Albigensians in medieval Europe. But these religions and their influence upon Christianity will be kept for a brief discussion in a later chapter.
Conclusion—The influence of Mesopotamia

We have now traced the history of Mesopotamia until the coming of the Greeks. The greatest direct contribution of these peoples to Western civilization was probably their science, which became mingled with Greek science and so was passed on to the West after the conquests of Alexander. The art of writing was discovered by them, they did important work in mathematics, and they laid the foundations of astronomy. Indirectly their work was of the greatest importance for the Hebrews, since they gave them their basic law, and from them sprang the whole tradition of submission and obedience to the gods who ruled the universe. The Persians added an ethical emphasis which affected both later Hebrew thought and Christianity, with their conception of the Last Judgment and rewards and punishments in the next world, and new thoughts on the nature of good and evil. The Assyrians provided a great object lesson on the dangers of undiluted imperialism which was appreciated and profited from by the Persians and Greeks who followed them.

In bulk the contribution of Mesopotamia does not begin to compare with the legacy to the West of the Greeks and Romans, though it probably surpasses the legacy of Egypt; but in the depth of its influence it is surpassed by few civilizations. Without the pioneer work of the Mesopotamian peoples in science and religion the lives of all later peoples would have been substantially different. And Mesopotamia itself did not cease to be a center of civilization, but again rose to power and influence under the Parthians, the Sassanid Persians, and the Muslim Abbasids. But by this time the independent civilizations of the West were growing up and the civilizations of the Near East had only a minor influence upon them. When Harun-al-Rashid of Baghdad and Charlemagne of Aachen exchanged courtesies in the eighth century A.D., each knew almost nothing of the other. The East and West had embarked on their independent journeys.

Suggestions for further reading

For the interpretation of Mesopotamian life used in this chapter the author is again indebted to the work of the Oriental Institute in Chicago. The Mesopotamian chapters written by Thorkild Jacobsen in Henri Frankfort et al., The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), present the evidence for the general pessimistic outlook of the various Mesopotamian peoples, while the position of the Mesopotamian kings is studied in greater detail in Henri Frankfort, Kingship and the Gods (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948). The first-mentioned of these two books is reprinted, as far as the material on Mesopotamia is concerned, in Henri Frankfort et al., Before Philosophy (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1951). Many of the original documents showing the relationship between the Assyrian kings and their priests are printed in R. H. Pfeiffer, State Letters of Assyria (New Haven, Conn.: American Oriental Society, 1935). An up-to-date account of the daily life in Mesopotamia, excellently illustrated, based on the latest archaeological investigations, is contained in G. Contenau, Everyday Life in Babylon and Assyria (tr. K. R. and A. R. Maxwell-Hyslop: New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1954).

There are, however, no really satisfactory histories of Mesopotamia in ancient times. Perhaps the best for a beginning student, and sufficient to give him a general orientation in the subject, is G. S. Goodspeed, A History of the Babylonians and Assyrians (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1921). Better histories of Assyria and Persia are, however, available. The standard work on Assyrian history is A. T. Olmstead, History of Assyria (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1923), which may appear to some to be too favorable to imperialism, though the author defends his thesis by claiming that other empires have been just as bloody if more hypocritical. The book is very well written, and the author’s enthusiasm for his subject is visible on every page. A suitable antidote may be found for his point of view in the brilliant attack of Arnold J. Toynbee on Assyrian imperialism in A Study of History (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), IV, 468–488. Here Toynbee offers the thesis that Assyrian specialization in militarism
brought about the utter destruction of the state, and cites its downfall as a horrible example of suicidal warfare unredeemed by any success in the creative arts of civilization. Albert Olmstead's posthumously published *History of the Persian Empire* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948) takes into account modern archaeological investigations, and is as brilliantly written as his *History of Assyria*. But it has several important defects, which would probably have been remedied if he had lived to revise it himself. Especially is he not sufficiently critical of his sources in dealing with Zoroastrianism. Curiously enough, a high priest of modern Parseeism has written a much more convincing and critical account of Zoroastrianism, which is probably the best work on the subject up to the present time, M. N. Dalla, *History of Zoroastrianism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938). The most readable and analytical account of the organization of the Persian Empire is Clément Huart, *Ancient Persian and Iranian Civilization* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1927), though modern archaeological investigation will probably need to add important details to this work, and change it in some particulars.


Books on the various special achievements of the Mesopotamian peoples which may prove useful are L. J. Gelb, *A Study of Writing* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1952); Howard Eves, *An Introduction to the History of Mathematics* (New York: Rinehart & Co., Inc., 1953); and Otto Neugebauer, *The Exact Sciences in Antiquity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1952). The last-named book contains an entire re-evaluation of the contribution of the Babylonians to science, which is difficult and technical, but very well worth while for any student who has the required technical ability to understand it and is interested in the Mesopotamian origins of many of the scientific achievements credited to the Greeks.
Maritime and Other Civilizations of the Ancient World

General characteristics of the minor civilizations of the Near East

It has already been pointed out in an earlier chapter that the conventional classification of early civilizations into river-valley and maritime is not altogether an accurate one. Nevertheless, the civilizations to be discussed in this chapter all made a large part of their means of subsistence through foreign trade and industry, though the basis of the economy in most cases remained agricultural. The people known as the Aramaeans were independent only for a short time, with a state based on Damascus; thereafter they continued to be an important people acting as land traders under various masters, spreading their language until it became the predominant spoken tongue far beyond the original borders of their country and influencing every country in the Near East. The Phoenicians also knew only short periods of independence and power, but remained active as sea traders under their masters, performing a similar service for the greater empires that the Aramaeans performed on land. The Hittites and the Lydians, on the other hand, were strong states in Asia Minor and owned considerable territory; but both lost their independence, and to a large degree their national identity, after their empires fell.

The Hebrews, after building with great difficulty a strong state covering a fairly extensive territory, split into two parts, one of which lost its national identity after conquest by the Assyrians. The other, a tiny upland state with a hinterland of sparsely inhabited desert and based on the city of Jerusalem, but situated in a strategic position on an important trade route, maintained a precarious independence for a century and a half longer before being itself overthrown. The national identity of the Hebrews was preserved only because of the strong religious cohesion. Without this it could hardly have survived the destruction of the state, since the people as a whole had not developed a distinctive activity sufficient to keep that identity through so many misfortunes.

Finally, the Aegean civilization, unlike any of the others in this chapter, not only built up a powerful and distinctive culture, based securely on the island of Crete, but maintained independence for nearly two thousand years, thanks to the mixed economy of a balanced agriculture and industry combined with command of trade routes through a powerful navy. When it finally fell it had
extended its influence through the mainland of Greece and the coast towns of Asia Minor, and its heritage was absorbed by the younger barbaric people who conquered it. This is the only civilization to be discussed in this chapter which can be considered great in its own right; though individual contributions of the other peoples have been of importance in the history of civilization, and the religious heritage of the Hebrews exercised an inestimable influence on all religious thought thereafter.

- The civilizations of Asia Minor

THE HITTITES

It has just been said that the Hittites built a strong state in Asia Minor and held much territory under their control. Yet little was known about them until the twentieth century; and a hundred years ago no one considered them to be of any account. They were mentioned occasionally in the Old Testament; but always as if they were a minor people. The reason for this is that their great empire had already fallen into decay before any of the Hebrew records were committed to writing.

The first indication of their importance came from a few chance finds in Syria in an unknown language, in 1870, which excited the interest of archaeologists and stimulated the search for more. By 1907, when a great Hittite city was discovered near Boghaz-Keui in Anatolia, there was enough information available to show something of the scope of this Hittite Empire; and with the excavation of the city and the finding of extensive documents in the ruins the stage was set for an archaeological development as promising as that of Crete, which was in the same years being unearthed for the first time.

The great obstacle in both cases was the decipherment of the writing, which in the case of the Hittites was both cuneiform and hieroglyphic. The cuneiform was successfully deciphered in the second decade of this century but the hieroglyphic still remains unread. It is now virtually established that the Hittite language is Indo-European in origin, though superimposed upon an earlier Semitic language.

On the whole, the Hittite discoveries were disappointing, except insofar as they served to fill in the serious gaps in our knowledge of the period. The people seem to have entered Asia Minor from northern highlands late in the third millennium B.C. By 1900 B.C. they had built an empire extending east from Asia Minor into the upper reaches of the Euphrates. At one time they were one of the conquerors of the early Assyrians, and they joined the Kassites in the conquest of Babylon, though it was the Kassites who inherited the kingdom of Babylonia. The Hittite Empire seems to have contracted for two centuries or so, then expanded again southward into Syria, competing with Egypt for the control of all Palestine until definite spheres of influence were arranged by the treaty of Kadesh in 1297 B.C. Perhaps its long wars with Egypt had exhausted the country, for about 1200 B.C. the Hittite Empire was suddenly overwhelmed by hordes of northern barbarians. The remnant of the Hittites retired to Carchemish on the Euphrates, where it maintained a commercial rather than an imperial independence until it was finally

\[1\] A recently discovered bilingual inscription may provide the long-awaited key.
### Hittite Empire

- Migration into Asia
- Minor ca. 2200 B.C.
- Largest extent of Empire 1900

### Aramaeans

- In Palestine: 1500 B.C.

### Phoenicians

- In Palestine: before 2000 B.C.
- Conquest by Egypt (Thutmose III) 1447

### Lydian Empire

- 950-547 B.C.
- Fall of Sardis to Cyrus the Persian 547

- Kingdom of Damascus ca. 1000-732
- Fall of Damascus to Assyrians (Tiglath-Pileser III) 732
- Leadership of Tyre—maritime supremacy of Phoenicians ca. 1000-774
- Phoenicians tribute to Assyria 774-625
- Phoenicians tribute to Persia 538-332
- Conquest of Phoenician cities by Alexander the Great 332

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**Hebrews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wanderings of Hebrew patriarchs (?)</td>
<td>2000–1700 B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family of Jacob migrates to Egypt (?)</td>
<td>1700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exodus of Hebrews from Egypt (?)</td>
<td>1260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period of Judges in Israel</td>
<td>1225–1020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saul, king of Israel</td>
<td>1020–1004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>1004–965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solomon</td>
<td>965–926</td>
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<tr>
<td>Division of kingdom of Israel</td>
<td>926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall of Samaria to Assyrians</td>
<td>721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall of Jerusalem; Exile in Babylon</td>
<td>586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return of Jews to Jerusalem</td>
<td>538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building of the new temple</td>
<td>520–516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conquest of Palestine by Alexander the Great (part of Ptolemy I's domain)</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine conquered by Antiochus III of Syria</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revolt of Maccabees against Antiochus IV</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conquest by Romans under Pompey, ruled by family of Herods; clients of Romans</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct rule by Romans A.D. 6–41</td>
<td>6–41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish revolt against Romans</td>
<td>66–70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Destruction of Jerusalem by Titus</td>
<td>70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jerusalem rebuilt under name of Aelian Capitolina; Jews not permitted to live in it; Judaea remains Roman province</td>
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**Aegean Civilization**

<table>
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<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Early Bronze Age in Crete</td>
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<td>Minoan civilizations in Crete</td>
<td>3000–1400</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mycenaean civilization on mainland</td>
<td>before 1600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conquest of Crete by Achaeans (?)</td>
<td>ca. 1400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conquest of Crete by Dori ans</td>
<td>ca. 1200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall of Troy to Achaeans and others</td>
<td>ca. 1184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dark Age in Crete and on mainland</td>
<td>1100–800</td>
</tr>
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</table>
absorbed by the Assyrians and neighboring peoples.

There is still not enough evidence from the excavations, and from such of the Hittite writings as have been deciphered, to make any just estimate of the Hittite civilization. The Hittites are usually credited with the development of iron, which they obtained from Armenia or, in the opinion of some authorities, from Europe, where deposits are much richer than in Asia. At all events, they were the first Oriental people to make extensive use of it; and the superiority of that metal for warlike purposes may go far to explain their successes. They maintained a jealous monopoly of iron as long as they could, and there are records of presents of iron made to foreign potentates which were apparently much prized. They themselves also mined silver, copper, and lead, and carried on an extensive trade in metals. That they were not exclusively a warlike people but relied upon trade at least as much as on war for their penetration into foreign countries is suggested by the many Hittite products discovered far beyond their own borders. Moreover, the great bulk of the documents and clay tablets so far examined are legal and commercial, with some religious legends and stories, derived largely from Mesopotamian sources.

Their government was strongly centralized, with the king or the local governments owning all land and demanding services in return for its use, with wages and prices fixed for most commodities, and all services compensated at rates regulated by the state. An extensive Hittite law code has been translated, which is in many respects superior to the Babylonian, though apparently reflecting its influence.

Their architecture has few original features, though the palaces, with porch supported by two columns, with square towers guarded by great stone lions, have become familiar to Westerners through many pictures. Their art was comparatively crude, consisting mostly of sculptural reliefs showing scenes of war and mythology. The latter was very inclusive, and we find a great number of stories familiar throughout the Near East adopted by the Hittites without important changes or originality. The great importance of the Hittites in history, apart from their introduction of iron, and probably the horse and chariot, was their function as intermediaries between Mesopotamia and Western Asia. The Hyksos were probably indebted to them, and it is possible that Troy in Asia Minor came under their influence. The Lydians, who inherited the Hittite power in Asia Minor and themselves influenced the Greeks in a later age, almost certainly learned from the Hittites the business methods which they used so effectively themselves.

THE LYDIANS

The Lydians grew to power in Western Asia Minor at a time when the great ancient empires were in decline and the newer and more efficient empires had not yet arisen. They may have migrated from Europe and intermingled with the existing peoples, probably after the fall of the Hittites. They became prosperous by the exploitation of the natural mineral wealth of the country, including gold and electrum, a mixture of gold and silver found in river sands. The electrum gave them the opportunity to make their greatest contribution to civilization for which they are chiefly remembered—the coining of money. Prior to this time precious metals were usually weighed and the currency unit corresponded to a given weight. Now the Lydians began to stamp the electrum with its value and used it as money in

The earliest coined money in the world. Invention attributed to the Lydians, three of whose coins are shown here. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)
our modern sense. The practice was quickly adopted by other countries which used gold and silver, thus considerably helping international trade. The Lydians established a strong and wealthy state based on Sardis, their capital, and extended their empire into the Greek (Ionian) coastal cities, but apparently without disturbing too much local self-government, as long as the subject cities paid their taxes regularly. The great age of Ionian science began during the Lydian rule. The last great king of Lydia was the famous and fabulously wealthy Croesus, about whom the Greeks wove many legends; and the sudden loss of his empire to Cyrus the Persian was the theme of many moral stories. Sardis, the Lydian capital, fell in 547 B.C. and the Lydian Empire was absorbed into Persia.

The trading civilizations of the Near East

THE ARAMEAENS

The Aramaeans, a Semitic people, were probably originally descended from nomad desert tribes who infiltrated into Syria during the decline of the Hittite Empire, and who, after its disappearance, established a number of small but prosperous kingdoms, the most important of which was Damascus. Biblical records tell us much of the relationship of the Hebrews with the kings of Damascus; on one occasion the prophet Elisha was even sent by God to instigate the murder of one king and anoint his murderer as king to the vacant throne. At all events, the kingdom of Damascus was very useful to the Hebrews, acting as a buffer state to absorb the shocks from Assyria and the north. It was not until Damascus had been taken that the full fury of the Assyrian onslaught was felt in Israel.

After the fall of Damascus the Aramaeans engaged in extensive trade, acting as factors for the uncommercial Assyrians, and surviving them. It was from the Aramaeans' alphabet that the new Babylonian state which rose on the Assyrian ruins had its first experience of an alphabet; and it was their language, spoken and written, that finally became the common language of the Near East. Jesus Christ spoke Aramaic, and some of the latest books of the Old Testament were written in this language, which displaced Hebrew even in Palestine itself. The Aramaeans are an interesting example of a people which made all its conquests by peaceful means after it had lost its national independence, thus providing a precedent for the later history of the Jews.

THE PHOENICIANS

The Phoenicians were settled in northwest Palestine at a very early date in history. They are mentioned in Old Kingdom Egyptian records as shipbuilders and traders, and Sargon of Agade, the first conqueror of the Sumerians, claimed to have conquered them. They were frequently under foreign domination at all periods in their history, and no doubt this fact to some degree affected their prosperity; but all their conquerors found them too useful to allow their talents ever to be completely suppressed. They seem, however, to have suffered also from competition in the carrying trade from Minoan Crete and the maritime cities of Greece. For it was when these cities declined and when Hittite power which had controlled Phoenicia disappeared that they rose to their greatest heights of power and prosperity. At this time the chief Phoenician cities, Tyre, Sidon, Byblos, and Beirut, which had previously been separate and all relatively small, joined together for a period under the monarchy of Tyre, and all became prosperous and wealthy together. It was during this period that Hiram, king of Tyre, helped Solomon to build his temple. The Phoenicians did not, however, move far inland, where the Aramaeans were established in force, but preferred to make their living from industry and the sea.

They are usually credited with having sailed as far as Britain in search of tin for bronze, and it is certain that they traded with Spain. By tradition they were hired by one of the last Egyptian Pharaohs to circumnavigate the African continent, and they are said to have accomplished the mission successfully. They founded colonies through-
out the Mediterranean, the most important of which, Carthage, survived the fall of its founder and dominated the western Mediterranean until destroyed by Rome. They were evidently still the chief sea power in the Aegean and Mediterranean area in the Homeric epoch, and their wealth and skill in manufacture were proverbial.

In spite of a desperate resistance against the Assyrians, the union of Phoenician cities was unable to maintain its independence, and passed under the Assyrian yoke. They were also conquered by the Chaldeans of New Babylon, and by the Persians. Alexander captured Tyre after a long siege, then after the Phoenicians made another effort at independence one of his successors recaptured the city. The Phoenicians always retained their maritime skills, and their sailors and ships were always put to use by their conquerors. But they never again recovered the trade they had possessed before the Assyrian conquest. The Greeks who had remained free, and the Greek cities in Asia Minor in the Lydian and Persian empires, captured the bulk of Phoenician trade and never again lost it.

In addition to their seafaring and their function as distributors of goods, especially the luxury products of Egypt, they had a thriving industry of their own, for the most part learned from Egypt. They were especially noted for their dye, the Tyrian purple, which was exclusive to them, being made from a Mediterranean shellfish. But they also excelled in glassware, textiles, and metalwork, with designs mostly borrowed from Egypt.

The Phoenicians have also usually been credited with the invention of the Semitic alphabet, from which the Greek and Roman alphabets were derived. The earliest known Phoenician alphabetic inscription is dated about 1300 B.C., and was found at Byblos; but much older alphabetic inscriptions are now known, so that it is no longer clear whether it was the Phoenicians themselves who developed the alphabet from Egyptian hieroglyphic signs, or whether they merely adopted it and transmitted it to Greece and elsewhere in the course of trade. At present most scholars seem to think that it was a Canaanitish people in Palestine that saw the value of alphabetic signs and made the alphabet. Its usefulness in Phoenician and Aramaean hands assured its adoption else-
where. The Greeks in adopting it—probably, as they said, from the Phoenicians—found that there were more letters than they needed for the Greek language. So they used the surplus Phoenician consonants as vowels, which were not used by the Phoenicians at all.

The peoples of Palestine

THE EARLY INHABITANTS

South of the Aramaean state, extending to the desert of Sinai, stretched the land of Canaan, fought over for centuries, its early inhabitants Semitic but mingling with its various conquerors, so that the resulting amalgam was as polyglot as any in the ancient world. This was the land “promised” to the Hebrews by their God, but not “given” to them until they had for centuries fought for it. Egyptians conquered it in the time of Thutmose III (1470 B.C.); Hittites penetrated into it in the later days of the Egyptian Empire (thirteenth century B.C.); from the twelfth century B.C. Philistines from over the sea settled in the southern coastal plain. Before the desert Hebrews conquered it, the people whom we call the Canaanites built up a considerable civilization in the land, founding several important cities, including Jebus, the later Jerusalem. The Canaanites were strongly influenced by Mesopotamian culture, with a law not dissimilar to that of the Babylon of Hammurabi, while they used the Hittite horse and chariot and iron weapons.

Though to the invading Hebrews from the desert the land of Canaan seemed a “land flowing with milk and honey,” it is in truth a hard and rocky land, especially in the south, and the rainfall is scanty. Only the coastal plain is adequately supplied with water, and only in comparison with the deserts of Sinai and Arabia can it be considered a fertile and fruitful land. But for its unequalled importance in the religious history of the world it has become the “Holy Land,” and since World War II it has become once more a haven of refuge for Jews under its ancient name, held in antiquity for but a few centuries and now revived—Israel.

The persisting significance of Hebrew history

There is little doubt that the Hebrews would have occupied but a small place in history books if the impression they made upon the external world in their own time were the sole criterion for their importance. Yet this history is familiar to us in the Western world probably beyond that of any ancient people. The names of outstanding Hebrew individuals are familiar to us as household words, and a modern encyclopaedia boasts that it contains every Biblical character with an appropriate Biblical reference. Medieval scholars with their love of allegory tried to extract a secondary religious meaning from every event recorded in the historical writings of the Hebrews.

This astonishing success of Hebrew historians arises not only from the fact that they were the great pioneers in the historical art, and may rightfully be considered as the founders of systematic historical study. It is above all the result of their way of regarding history as meaningful. To a Hebrew historian there was no such thing as a chance event. If a pestilence decimated the people this was an act of God, arranged by God either to teach them a lesson, or to punish them for some sin against him. God was ceaselessly watchful, tirelessly guiding his chosen people on their path. The peoples of Mesopotamia, as we have seen, attributed their disasters to divine powers who had been insufficiently courted and appeased; but the Hebrews tried to make sense of every event, even of some that might seem to us trivial or resulting from quite adequate natural causes, and always as revealing some new facet of the relationship between man and God. And because man likes to think that his sojourn on earth has significance, the Hebrews’ belief in divine Providence has permeated the
writings of numberless historians since their
day, and even those in our time who merely
search for laws of history are in their debt
for having been the first to deny that it is
"told by an idiot, signifying nothing."

It will, of course, at once be realized
that a history designed with the purpose
of setting forth the relationship between
man and God, intended to instruct the people
in their duties toward God, and in what
happens when man disobeys the divine in-
junctions, must be treated with some caution,
since both events and their interpretation are
inextricably interwoven, and events selected
for recording will be those that lend them-
selves best to this particular interpretation.
Nevertheless such events as archaeologists
and scholars have been able to check have
tended with remarkable consistency to con-
firm the Biblical record. And if we must
regret the shortage of information on the
lives of kings, such as Omri of Israel, who
played an important part in the external
affairs of their time but were unimportant
in religious history, this is a small price to
pay for the incomparable color and life im-
parted to their historical writings by the
fervor and conviction of these ancient He-
brew writers.

It has not been possible to check most
of the early history of the Hebrews against
either the contemporary writings of other
peoples or archaeological records. In this
book, therefore, the story will be told as the
Hebrews themselves told it, a procedure
we shall also adopt with the early Christian
stories recorded in the Gospels and the Acts
of the Apostles, adding only a few explana-
tions not considered necessary by the He-
brews themselves. We are the more justified
in refraining from criticizing the probabil-
ties in the case of both the Hebrews and
Christians because the belief of these peo-
bles that their own history was true served
itself to mold their later history. The teach-
ings and actions of Christ and of medieval
Christians would surely have been different
had they not believed, for instance, in the
sojourn of the Hebrews in Egypt and their
miraculous escape through divine interven-
tion, just as Christian history would unques-
tionably have been different had there been
any doubt in Christian minds of the absolute
truth of the Gospel story.

External history of the Hebrew people

The scriptural tradition of the Hebrew
people, or, as they called themselves, the
Children of Israel, begins with the patriar-
ch Abraham to whom God promised that his
seed would endure for ever. Abraham came
from "Ur of the Chaldees," but migrated
into Palestine with his flocks, setting up altars
to his God, Yahweh, and digging wells. It is
very likely that this tradition is true, and
that Abraham did indeed found the worship
of Yahweh in Palestine. His son Isaac and
his grandson Jacob, also called Israel, con-
tinued his work, digging the wells again and
finding "living water," growing prosperous
and powerful in the land through alliances
with the local Canaanites. Joseph, one of the
sons of Jacob, was "sold into Egypt," where
he became later the vizier of the Pharaoh,
from which office he was able to befriend
his brothers and father when they emigrated
there to escape a famine in Canaan. The
cendants of Jacob in Egypt were all en-
slaved by a subsequent Pharaoh "who knew
not Joseph," and made to work on his ex-
tensive building program. From this serv-
tude they were rescued by Moses, who led
them back into Canaan after they had spent
forty years in the wilderness of Sinai. Moses
taught them to worship Yahweh and welded
them into a powerful and united fighting
force capable of conquering the country.
Moses himself did not live to lead them per-
sonally into the promised land, this task
falling to his successor Joshua.

There is nothing inherently improbable
in this tradition in spite of the fact that only
minor corroboration of parts of it can be
obtained from Egyptian records. It seems
clear, however, that a people named Habiru
(from which comes our word "Hebrew")
continued to inhabit Palestine during the
period of the sojourn in Egypt, and that
they were one of the Canaanite peoples,
or, if originally distinct from them, that they
had intermingled with the Canaanites. During the period of Egyptian imperialism numbers of these Habiru had been taken captive and made to work for the Pharaoh, and Egyptian records show that they were still present in Egypt sixty years after the first and only Egyptian mention of the Israelites as a Palestinian people. The probability would therefore seem to be that a party of Habiru either voluntarily emigrated to Egypt or were taken there as prisoners, and perhaps already were united through their worship of Yahweh. Later they were enslaved, a condition from which they were rescued by Moses, who reminded them of their worship of Yahweh and unified them during the desert wanderings. But some of the kinsmen of the Habiru remained in Palestine, while yet others did not take part in the Exodus but remained in Egypt. It is possible that the invaders, now called the “Children of Israel” after their ancestor Jacob, or Israel, were able to unite in Palestine with the remnants of the Habiru whom they found there, and who were willing to accept Yahweh as their God since he had so miraculously delivered their kinsmen out of the land of Egypt.

But the promised land was, as has been said, by no means uninhabited. It required several centuries of fighting before the Israelites were able to conquer it, subduing first the peoples of Moab and Ammon across the Jordan, then the various Canaanite peoples who resisted them, and ultimately the Philistines. The Israelites themselves were rarely united, preferring to fight by tribes in a loose alliance. The Song of Deborah, perhaps the earliest document in the Old Testament, celebrates the victory of one such alliance, and treats with contempt those Children of Israel who had been too timorous to join it.

The early Israelites were ruled by judges, who were religious leaders with only a local authority. In the course of the wars with the Philistines, who for many years kept most of the Hebrews in subjection, it was realized that a king would best serve as a rallying point for the whole people. The prophet and judge Samuel therefore chose a certain Saul, of the tribe of Benjamin, as king, and anointed him as the chosen of Yahweh, thus conferring upon him both a secular and a religious responsibility. Throughout Hebrew history the king had a special task in that he had to set an example in worshiping Yahweh as well as leading the people in their secular affairs.

According to the Biblical narrative Saul failed in his religious duties, and was abandoned by Samuel in favor of a young man named David of the tribe of Judah, who was anointed king even before he had reached manhood. Thereafter David went to the court of Saul, and acted for a time as Saul’s armor-bearer and married Saul’s daughter. But Saul became jealous of the military prowess that David showed and forced him to go into exile, where he engaged in guerrilla warfare against the common enemy the Philistines. When Saul was killed in battle against the Philistines, David was proclaimed king. In this new capacity he broke the Philistine yoke for good, captured Jebus, which he made into his new capital, and founded a strong unified kingdom stretching as far as the Aramaean and Phoenician cities in the north and in the south to the borders of the Arabian desert. The Canaanite peoples of Moab and Ammon and Edom in southern Palestine were kept under control, though retaining their nominal independence. This Israelite kingdom lasted through the reigns of David and his son Solomon.

But the price was heavy. Solomon tried with his limited resources to live like an Oriental despot, and at the same time to engage in an extensive building program, including the famous temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem. His resources were not sufficient, and he was compelled to enter into an agreement with the Phoenician king of Tyre to send Israelites to work in the forests there in exchange for materials and assistance in the building program at Jerusalem. The result was a rebellion of the northern tribes of Israel on the accession of Solomon’s son.
Thereafter there were two kingdoms, the north, which took the name of Ephraim or Israel, and the south, which was composed of only two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, and which centered around what had been the national capital of the united kingdom. The northern kingdom was the more prosperous and sophisticated, but at the same time more subject to foreign influence and penetration. It enjoyed several periods of prosperity, even though the priestly chronicler does not admit that one single king "did what was right in the sight of the Lord." Everyone walked in the ways of the first king of the north, Jeroboam the son of Nebat "who made Israel to sin." In other words, he adopted most of the customs of the local religion and deserted Yahweh. But it was the northern kingdom that fell first (in 721 B.C.) to the conquering
Assyrians, while the southern, which was more defensible and not so close to the great conquering powers of the age, maintained a precarious and usually only nominal independence. It, too, fell, to the Chaldeans, in 586, after its rulers had vainly allied themselves with the decadent and powerless last Pharaohs of Egypt. From the southern kingdom a number of Jews, as they were called by this time (from Judah), were taken as prisoners to Babylon, where under the inspiration of at least one great prophet they kept alive the worship of Yahweh and probably intrigued against their captors. When the Persian Cyrus took Babylon, they received their reward, and were allowed to return to Jerusalem, where, after encountering much opposition but supported by their Persian overlords, they were able to rebuild the temple as a center for their religion.

Palestine remained in Persian hands until the conquests of Alexander, after whose death it fell to Seleucus, one of his generals. When Antiochus Epiphanes, a descendant of Seleucus, tried to enforce the Hellenization of the country, he encountered stiff opposition from the more orthodox Jews who, under the leadership of the family of the Maccabees, asserted their independence until the whole country fell to the Romans. Thereafter the land was ruled by client kings of the Romans until it was converted into an imperial province A.D. 6. When it rebelled against the Roman rule, Jerusalem was captured by Titus A.D. 70 and the inhabitants dispersed. There was no Jewish nation again until the middle of the twentieth century.

The Hebrew contribution to civilization

The Evolution of Hebrew Thought

This account of the external history of the Jews, bald though it is, does serve to bring out one remarkable, almost unique phenomenon—the extraordinary persistence of the national and religious tradition, and the tenacious refusal of the Hebrews to be absorbed permanently into any other culture. Though thousands of them—no doubt an enormous majority of those born into it through the centuries—abandoned their heritage, nevertheless a nucleus always remained who “remembered the god of their fathers.” So when Jesus of Nazareth was born a few years before Judaea became a Roman province, he was able to sum up the whole Hebrew and Jewish heritage in such a way that it could be passed on by his followers as the foundation for the great militant religion of the West. Even if the Jewish religion itself had not survived, this transmission to Christianity alone would justify the tremendous efforts and concentrated thought devoted by generations of Hebrew prophets and priests to the great problems of life, destiny, and the duty of man toward God.

We have purposely refrained from treating the evolution of the Hebrew religion in terms of the changing social experience of the Hebrew people partly because there is still so much controversy about it, especially concerning the dates of the various documents which comprise the Old Testament, and partly because this religion has never died, and is still regarded by millions of Christians and Jews as permanently true: there is one God, not many; he is just and righteous and omnipotent; he did create the world; and he does rule it through his Providence. In such circumstances it is needlessly offensive to suggest that the Bible was arrived at by addition and subtraction, a kind of Darwinian process of the survival of the fittest—this idea having been pilfered from Babylon, this from Egypt, and this from Persia—or that the Hebrews, having suffered so much, wanted so urgently that a god should punish their enemies that they came to believe in a God of the whole earth, using even the terrible Assyrians as his tools. Yet it is clear that there are such differing concepts of Yahweh in the Old Testament that it is impossible to believe that the concept in the Book of Isaiah, for instance, was held at the same time as the concept in the Book of
Exodus or the Book of Numbers. So it would seem best to attempt to trace Hebrew thought in regard to the same great problems with which their contemporaries also contended, and to see what solutions were worked out by different Hebrew writers at different times, without relation to the events that may be supposed to have suggested these solutions. In this way we shall treat the thought as a whole, dating the writings from the standpoint of maturity and richness of conception, instead of trying to relate this thought to particular social experiences. The student will have enough material at his disposal to enable him to judge this relevance for himself.

THE NATURE AND UNITY OF GOD

Monotheism versus polytheism

The Hebrews are, of course, credited above all with the formulation of monotheism, the worship of one God; and this monotheism has been transmitted both to Christianity and to Islam, so that it is the fundamental religious belief of the West. But it is not always recognized that they are also responsible for the precise definition of the nature of sin; and their thought upon the question of sin and punishment has permeated Western thought as deeply as has the concept of monotheism itself. The evolution of Hebrew thought on these two subjects will therefore be treated in some detail in this chapter.

The Hebrews did not come all at once to their idea of a transcendent God ruling the universe. In the period of the desert wanderings we find them given the commandment that they are to have no other gods beside Yahweh, but there is as yet no suggestion that other gods do not exist. He is their special God, their protector and rock of defense, who will keep his promises to his chosen people; but as yet nothing more. It is only in relatively late times that the great prophets picture him as the God of the universe, with all peoples alike subjected to him, and the gods of other peoples as nothing but idols of wood and stone. They were perhaps driven to this conclusion through their belief that God used foreigners to punish his own people, and thus must control these foreigners also.

In early times also it is clear that the Hebrews believed in a rather primitive anthropomorphism, that Yahweh could walk the earth and talk to men, and that he needed an earthly habitation. By the time of the end of the kingdom of Judah the priests were emphasizing that God could neither be seen nor heard by human beings, but that He was a spirit, infinitely remote from man, though caring for him like a father, dwelling in heaven and not on earth. Ultimately both these concepts—the unity and the spiritual nature of God—were fully accepted by the Jews, and it was in this form that the Hebrew ideas about God were transmitted to posterity.

It should be pointed out, however, that there is no reason to assume that this evolution from polytheism to monotheism is a necessary progress in religious thought, as has already been suggested in connection with the Egyptians. The best Hindu religious thought is far from primitive; yet it is polytheistic, and it shows no signs of developing into monotheism. To a Hindu all gods are an aspect of the great whole which is Brahma; but this does not mean that the others do not have a separate existence. The process of subtracting from the powers of lesser gods and adding them to Brahma is not considered necessary to the Hindus, as it was by the Hebrews— and it is perhaps not surprising that ancient legend should have attributed the invention of mathematics to Abraham. For Hebrew thought on God was eminently logical, and, in a sense, mathematical; whereas the Hindu approach to religion, as was the case also with the ancient Egyptians, is emotional, enriching their feeling for the Divine by indefinitely multiplying their gods, in accordance with their reverence for all the works of God. Monotheism conceives of God as a person, on the analogy of an omnipotent and omniscient ruler, whereas the Hindu thinks of Brahma as present in all the works
of his creation, a divine element in all phenomena, rather than separate from them and responsible for their existence.

Importance of monotheism for morality—
Contrast with Mesopotamian polytheism

The supreme consequence of the Hebrew concept is in the field of human morality. Because God is a person, he can take part in human affairs, guiding them, rewarding and punishing his children, thus upholding the moral order. This monotheism is clearly an advance on Mesopotamian thought, since the many gods of the Babylonians were conceived of as so many arbitrary but powerful beings competing for man’s worship. Each man had a personal god who was expected to use his influence with the higher gods on behalf of his protégé, as human beings use political influence to ensure personal favors. And among the higher gods it was impossible for a man to choose which to petition. He could not tell which one he had offended, nor did he know what was demanded of him.

Polytheism cannot escape the dilemma that the different gods may issue contradictory demands; unless these gods may be said to have agreed among themselves on what to demand from man, their different commands will necessarily at some time conflict with each other. The separate gods can only reward and punish in accordance with their limited power, and thus cannot command obedience from man and insist upon it on pain of punishment. Shamash, the Babylonian god of the sun and of justice, might give Hammurabi a code of laws, but it was only by virtue of his function as lawgiver among the numerous Babylonian gods. The Babylonian did not regard him as the enforcer of the laws, nor did he pray to

Shamash to mitigate his severity. This was the task of the personal god of the Babylonian, who used his influence among his superiors in the pantheon.

But the Hebrew God, being one, not a force of nature but a transcendent being, separate from the world, could act as ruler and governor, first of his chosen people and then of the whole world. He could issue a law which instructed the people as to exactly what he expected of them, could define disobedience to the law as sin, and could take steps to see that he was obeyed. The law thus removed any doubt in the sinner’s mind as to what he was expected to do, and what was forbidden him, and held out the hope that if he fulfilled these duties toward God he would be prosperous and happy. We shall see in the next section how the Hebrews were forced to modify this simple conception in the light of their actual experience, but the following quotations from Babylonian and Hebrew documents will serve to point the contrast between the two attitudes, and reveal at the same time how greatly the Hebrew felt he had been privileged when God gave him his Law.

The Babylonian: “What is good in one’s sight is evil for a god, what is bad in one’s own mind is good for his god. Who can understand the counsel of the gods in the midst of heaven? Where has befuddled mankind ever learned what a god’s conduct is?” Again: “Man is dumb; he knows nothing. Mankind, everyone that exists—what does he know? Whether he is committing sin or doing good he does not even know.”

The Hebrew: “I have stored thy message in my heart that I may not sin against thee.... With my lips I recount all the ordinances of thy mouth. In the way of thy decrees I delight, as much as in all wealth. I meditate upon thy precepts, and I observe thy paths. I find joy in thy statutes, I will not forget thy word.... At midnight I rise up to give thee thanks because of thy righteous
ordinances ... the law of thy mouth is worth more to me than thousands in gold and silver.”

Hebrew monotheism, then, with its consequent belief that God rewarded and punished men in accordance with their deeds, has been of incalculable importance in the religious and psychological history of mankind. Nevertheless, the conception of morality, enforced by God in his capacity as judge, even tempered by mercy shown by him as a loving father who “rebukes and chastens” his children, is ultimately a sterile one, negative because it does not (indeed, cannot) prescribe goodness, and because it does not touch the more difficult matter of human ethics, or the art of right action.

This aspect too did not escape the best Hebrew thinkers. Some of the prophets saw that the commands of the Law limited morality within a too rigid framework. When Micah spoke of the task of man as to “do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God,” he extended the boundaries of those actions favored by God to cover less circumscribed activities. And Jeremiah had an inklng of the need for escape from the bondage of the Law when he made this promise in the name of the Lord: “Behold I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel ... I will put my law in their inward parts and in their hearts will I write it ... And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor and his brothers, saying, 'Know the Lord'; for they shall all know me from the least to the greatest of them.”

Paul, converted from Judaism to Christianity, but thoroughly conversant with the Law, explained that the Law was given to the people because of offenses, that they might know what was sin, and could strive to avoid it. The Law, he said, was a schoolmaster, to prepare the people for Christ: “A man is not made upright by doing what the Law commands, but by faith ... the Law has nothing to do with faith; ... We, by the Spirit, through faith wait for the uprightness we hope for ... What the Spirit produces is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” When we were children, he says, we needed such a schoolmaster, but when we became men we put away childish things.

This conception of the schoolmaster seems to suggest the true place of the Law in the history of human morality. It was an advance on the arbitrariness of the Babylonian gods who kept mankind in ignorance. When man did not yet know from within what he must do, then his behavior must be prescribed from without. When the Law was written within the heart, or was replaced by faith, then there was no longer need of the schoolmaster. Here, as we shall see, Greek and Hebrew thought meet, in Socrates’ experience of the “little god” within, and in the search for the positive good carried out so unwearingly by himself and his pupil Plato.

The idea of a Universal God

The third great development in Hebrew thought concerns the total activity of God in the world. In early times the whole conception of God expressed in Hebrew writings was as protector of the Children of Israel, his chosen and peculiar people. But if he was all-powerful, then he did not have to fight with other nations; he would deliver them into the hands of Israel. What, then, did this deduction mean, from the point of view of other nations? Was he not their god also? Once this problem was posed, and it did not arise so long as Yahweh was only one god among many, the answer must follow. But it did arise when the logical consequences of his supreme power were considered. If his power were not supreme, then he had to fight on behalf of Israel against the gods of their enemies. If he was supreme, then he was their enemies’ protector too; or else they were unfortunately left without a true God at all, which would be unjust. There was no way out of the dilemma; the other nations must somehow fit into the world order. It was all very well

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*Psalms 119:11-16, 62, 72.
*Jeremiah 31:31-34.

*Galatians 2:15, 3:12, 5:5, 22-23.
to denounce Assyria and Egypt, call their gods false gods, and prophesy destruction for them. But could any prophet with a sense of justice allow such a one-sided arrangement and say it was the work of a just God?

The answer might be, and was, given in terms of Israel’s mission. God was using the foreign nations for purposes of his own, for the disciplining of Israel. He could have prevented the Assyrians from oppressing Israel, as he prevented them from taking Jerusalem in the time of Hezekiah; or he could use them to punish Israel’s sin, as when the northern kingdom was deported. But to the more thoughtful among the prophets even this seemed rather a cavalier treatment of foreign nations. Were they not judged and punished for their sins; or did only Israel’s sins count?

The question was no sooner posed in this manner than it must be answered in the only way possible. If Yahweh were indeed the God of the whole earth, then all the peoples were responsible to him equally; even if Israel had special tasks and special responsibilities as the only people of the earth to whom he had revealed himself and his Law. But the Assyrians were responsible when they broke the ordinary unrevealed natural law, and could be punished for it.

And so we have the Book of Jonah, which tells how the prophet was sent to Nineveh to urge the Assyrians to repent. It is nothing short of astounding how daring this thought was that a prophet from the despised nation of Israel should go up to the capital of the mightiest world empire at the height of its power and prophesy its destruction (if it did not repent). And the writer shows that Jonah was well aware of his temerity. For at first he did not dare to go, but took a ship going in the opposite direction. Then the Lord sent a storm upon the ship and did not calm it until the sailors had cast Jonah into the sea. Here he was swallowed by a whale, and not released from the belly of the whale until he had repented and promised to fulfill his mission. So at last he went up to Nineveh and preached. And, lo and behold, the Assyrians did repent, and the Lord spared them.

But the story does not end here. Jonah is angry because God has forgiven the Assyrians, thus making him a false prophet. So he sulks in the sun by the gate of the city. A gourd grows to protect him from the sun, and then, at God’s command, the gourd withers, showing him by this sign that God has everything in his power, and that Jonah himself would not survive against God’s will. And the book ends with the stern rebuke, “Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who know not their right hands from the left, and also many cattle?” Their ignorance saved them, for they had not been chosen and so had not known of God; when at last they were warned and heard, then God turned from his original purpose.

It should not be thought from this emphasis on the logical thought of the Hebrews that there was anything cold or abstract about their religion or their God. On the contrary, their whole thinking represented God as a person impossibly high above man, but recognizably akin to him, and with the
feelings of man. It was thus possible not only to worship God but to love him, and God loved man in return. Man was in a real sense to the Hebrews the son of God, who must occasionally be corrected, but always with a fatherly hand. "Those I love I rebuke and chasten," says the writer of the Proverbs. But the emphasis was not always in the chastening. "I taught Ephraim to walk, I took him in my arms ... with human bonds I drew him, with cords of love. How shall I give you up, Ephraim, how shall I let you go, Israel? My heart turns within me, all my tenderness is kindled. I will not perform my fierce anger. I will not turn about to destroy Ephraim. For I am God and not man."*

SIN AND PUNISHMENT

It has already been suggested that later Hebrew thought was disturbed by the discrepancy between the promises made by God to his people seen by the Hebrews as a special Covenant between God and his chosen people—and the experience of life on earth as they knew it. If they obeyed the Law they should have been rewarded, and if they ceased to obey it, then they should have been punished. But only rarely did this happen; and it was the apparent happiness of the ungodly, and the undoubted occasional suffering of the manifestly righteous that probably persuaded the later Hebrews to adopt the idea of a future life where justice would be vindicated.

It does not seem that the Covenant itself was ever seriously questioned. But later thinkers realized that it could not comprise the whole duty of man, nor could the simple theory of rewards and punishments on earth for keeping or breaking it suffice for them. More thought was needed on this central problem of the relationship between God and man, and much of the profoundest thought of mankind went into the effort to understand it—which thought, embodied in the Old Testament, became part of the imperishable heritage of Western man.

God had created man, not as a slave of God, but in the image of God. He had made man only a little lower than the Elohim (one of the Hebrew words for God, but sometimes translated by the timorous who do not appreciate the grandeur of the Hebrew aspiration, as "angels"); he was God's special favorite among all living creatures, a child of God. And God was for man a Rock of Defense. If this were so, and God was all-just, all-righteous, and all-powerful, demanding equal righteousness from man, how could he sometimes seem not to care, and deliver man over to destructive forces of nature or to his earthly enemies? Was this the protection to which he was entitled by the Covenant?

The answer varied in different stages of Hebrew civilization, and according to whether the fate of the Hebrew people or the individual man was being considered. But both problems were thoroughly explored.

The most prevalent early view, the one expounded by the priestly writers when they considered the history of the people of Israel, was that in fact the people had not obeyed the Law and were rightly punished for disobedience. The individual kings were also punished for leading Israel into sin. But this theory was far from accounting for all the facts. Jeroboam II of Israel and Manasseh of Judah, both wicked kings according to the priests, had long and apparently prosperous reigns. Josiah of Judah, in spite of his reform of the religion in accordance with priestly desires, met an untimely death in battle. These matters are not satisfactorily explained by the writers. But much is made of the miraculous prolongation of the life of King Hezekiah of Judah and his deliverance from the Assyrians because "his heart was right with the Lord." It can be seen, therefore, how great a temptation it was for these priestly writers to slurr quickly over those reigns which pointed no moral lesson, thus in some degree distorting their history.

According to the priestly tradition, then, the sins of the people of Israel and Judah were responsible for the destruction of these independent kingdoms; but Judah, because it was the home of David, to whom God had

*Hosea 11:3-8.
made special promises, would not be destroyed forever, because of God’s mercy and because of his oath to David. God therefore was able to act unilaterally on behalf of his people out of his mercy, though the people had not in fact deserved it. The people sinned and deserved punishment; God sometimes spared and sometimes condemned them. Yet this was still not arbitrariness on the part of God, as he was bound by his oath to spare the house of Judah. This tradition is naturally characterized by concentration upon the deeds of the kings because it was primarily they who led the people astray and “made them to sin.” Though there were individual righteous men in Israel and Judah, and schools of prophets continuing to keep the First Commandment, they were far outnumbered by those who followed the king in his aberrations.

The great prophets, deeper thinkers than the priests, and gradually moving away from the strict tradition of the Law as comprising the sum total of human duties, would not accept the traditional answer; and some of them came to the thought that the sufferings of the people were not the result of sin, but a preparation, a testing, for an even higher destiny. At the time of the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon, and during the exile, this thought alone seemed to fit the circumstances. It was not only because of God’s mercy that the remnant was saved; it was because God had need of them. Not all of them, but those who had continued to worship him in spite of all their disasters. From the idea of suffering as the due recompense for sin, it became instead a discipline, a purification in the fire, so that those who survived were fitted for this great destiny. And so ultimately, fully in accord with this thought, followed the idea of a Messiah who should redeem the world, sometimes conceived of as an earthly king who would inaugurate the rule of righteousness on earth, and sometimes as a suffering servant, “the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” who would take upon himself the sorrows of the world. In both cases the mission of the whole Hebrew people had been to prepare themselves to be ready to receive the Messiah, forming an elect body of righteous men to leaven the great masses of wicked humanity in the new age.

Once again it will be seen that these prophets returned the only answer that was logically possible unless the whole Hebrew tradition were to be abandoned as false. The suffering of a people, if it is to have a meaning—and the Hebrews could not deny meaning to it without abandoning their faith in the justice and righteousness of God—must be either punishment for the past or discipline for the future. There is no other alternative.

It did not, however, need a prophet to give the answer to the other parallel problem, the sufferings of the individual. To the logical mind, if the man who keeps the Law suffers, there must be some reason. Conversely, if the man who fails to keep the Law is not punished, why not? Here there are more possibilities, and the Hebrews explored all but one—the possibility of a future life of rewards and punishments—very thoroughly. And this last possibility as soon as it was suggested was abandoned by all the thinkers included in the canonical books of the Old Testament. Moreover, even when it was accepted by some Jews, it did not attain the dignity of a revelation, and was still not accepted by the priestly party at the time of Christ.

We see a suggestion of the problem very early, and already in the Law there is a typically primitive answer. The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, an answer scornfully rejected by the prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah: “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” It is posed frequently in the Psalms: “Why do the ungodly flourish like a green bay-tree?” Look to the end of their life, suggests one answer. Their good fortune will change. But manifestly this is not always the case. They will suffer inwardly from the knowledge of their crimes; but no, there are instances where this does not happen. The problem treated from this point of view is insoluble. And the righteous
man. The Psalmist stoutly affirms that he has never seen him in poverty and his seed begging their bread. But he must be honest with himself; he has seen them. And in case the conception of sin contained in the Law is too narrow, the Psalmist makes it clear that he is considering just dealing in its broadest sense, and not only as obedience to the Law. After wrestling with the problem without receiving an answer he goes into the sanctuary of the Lord, and there it appears he receives the only possible answer—he must just continue to believe and throw himself on the mercy and trust to the wisdom of God. And as for the ungodly man, he must believe that God will punish him "in the latter end." 10

Substantially this is the same answer given in the Book of Job, an old Babylonian legend in a new guise, with all the depth of Hebrew thought built into it. Here the problem is presented in dramatic form. The book opens with the Devil boasting in Heaven of his accomplishments. There is, thanks to him, no righteous man upon earth. God asks him to consider "my servant Job," a man "after my own heart." The Devil complains that Job has never been properly tempted, and receives permission first to take away his wealth; then, when this has failed, to afflict him with "boils." Job’s wife advises him to "curse God and die," but he refuses to accept such a counsel of despair. God remains just, and there is some reason for his action, but Job cannot find it. Three "friends" visit him, and with varying arguments they try to convince Job that he must have sinned, and must repent before God will forgive him. Job replies stubbornly that he is not conscious of any sin, either of breaking the Law or of sinning in any other way. He considers all the possible alternatives, including the possibility of an afterlife but rejects them all, finally being almost driven to the conclusion that God is ruled by caprice, that he is arbitrary and unjust, afflicting man without cause. And so at last he appeals to God himself to answer him.

God answers out of the whirlwind with the unanswerable argument. Job, he asks, can you make a crocodile—or a horse—or even a hippopotamus? And these chapters give the Hebrew poet a wonderful opportunity to describe these animals, the marvelous works of God. But Job can only answer no. "Can you make any of my works?" The answer is still no. So Job is at last convinced that man can find no answer, and God is so tremendously far above him that he cannot attempt to find understanding. And he "repents in dust and ashes" for ever having dared to question. At which God shows mercy to him, heals him, and gives him twice as much as he had before. So this magnificent book ends on a note of the deepest pessimism as far as man is concerned. There is an answer, but it is not to be understood by man’s weak faculties. God remains just, but "his ways are past finding out."

THE CANONIZATION OF THE LAW

It should be emphasized that the bulk of Hebrew thought on the relationship between man and God was achieved by prophets and independent thinkers rather than by the priests. But in the last days of the kingdom of Judah a book of the Law was "found" in the temple and became the basis of a thoroughgoing religious reform carried out by King Josiah and the priests. This book is almost certainly the one called Deuteronomy, and from it we can see that as yet there has been no great change in the conception of sin and punishment held in earlier times, no emphasis on righteousness beyond the dictates of the Law. God will prosper the people if they keep his Law. "If you will but heed the commands that I am giving you today, to love the Lord your God, and serve him with all your mind and heart, he will give you rain for your land in due season . . . and he will produce grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat your fill." 11 This is the tone of the whole book, as was indeed to be expected in a religious reform carried out by the aid of the priesthood. The emphasis was on the

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10 See especially Psalm 73.

tribulations that had come upon the people because they had not kept the Law, and the material rewards that would be their lot if they returned to it.

A short time afterward the kingdom was conquered by the Chaldeans, and some of the leading Jews were taken captive and brought to Babylon. There, in spite of great prophets to lead them who lacked little emphasis on the Law, they were held together as a people by the Law, and on their return to Palestine under Persian auspices, it was the priests who supervised the return and rebuilt the temple. As can be clearly seen especially from the book called Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Sirach, the Law had become the cement binding together both the Hebrew religion and the Jewish nation. The Law in its now conclusive form was sufficient for all human purposes. The Torah or Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) was canonized as the revealed word of God. It was not earthly but divine; and it was unchangeable. It remained for Jesus Christ and his followers to return the emphasis to the spirit of the Law as suggested by Jeremiah, and allow scope for human ethics beyond it.

THE INFLUENCE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE HEBREW RELIGION

The importance of the whole Hebrew religion to the world is incalculable. Once the problems of man's relationship with God and the resultant ethics had been wrestled with and certain conclusions reached, the world would never be the same again. One may deny the original premises\(^\text{12}\) and ask for the evidence for the existence of any God at all; one may say that the Hebrews projected their own highest aspirations into their imagination of a supreme ruler of the universe. But one cannot deny the aspirations nor that the conclusions, as far as they go, follow from the premises. Not only did Christianity, the predominant religion in the West, base itself upon Hebrew thinking, but Islam also adopted the idea of the single transcendent God and much of Hebrew social thought. The teachings of the Old Testament became the standard of conduct and even provided some of the law for the Protestant reformers in the sixteenth century, especially for those who followed the teachings of Calvin. And the Jews themselves have preserved their heritage and their belief in the promised land even thirty centuries after the death of Moses, and over nineteen hundred years after they ceased to exist as a separate nation. But more important than all this may have been their belief that man is answerable to God for his deeds on earth, that there is a divine sanction over man's activity. Whether we forget this, or believe with Aristotle that man cannot be happy unless he is good and that no divine sanction is necessary, since man must seek for happiness, we cannot deny that the concept has profoundly influenced all subsequent civilization, and that few men in the West have not at some time in their lives been forced to consider the possibility of its truth.

THE HEBREWS AS LITERARY ARTISTS

After this extended study of Hebrew religion it is hardly necessary to dwell further upon Hebrew literature. The Hebrew religious documents, with very rare exceptions, are couched in language of considerable beauty and are rich with concrete images; many of them, such as the Psalms, are the purest poetry. The ancient Hebrew clearly had a discerning eye, and took a delight in this world. The famous description of the horse in the Book of Job; the Psalmist's panegyric on the way God provides for the animals; Isaiah's prophecy of the heavenly world of peace among men and beasts; and even the Deuteronomic priest's lyric description of the land of Canaan—all spring to mind. The so-called Song of Songs is one of the most beautiful love lyrics in any language. "The time of the singing of birds is come and the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land.\(^\text{13}\)"

\(^{12}\) The author of Ecclesiastes, a canonical book, even puts this point of view forward himself!

\(^{13}\) Not "turtle," as in the King James version. Song of Songs 2:12.
even this is included in the Old Testament. There is no secular literature known to us until a very late date, simply because only literature that concerned man and God was worth preserving in a canon of Scriptures, and to the Hebrew almost any poetry concerned some aspect of this relationship.

The Hebrews contributed little to political theory or practice outside what is implied in their religion. Kings, of course, could never be, or be made into, gods because there was only one God, and only one God was conceivable. The kings of Israel were chosen because they were needed for government and warfare; but they as well as, or more than, their people must obey the Law. They were not above the Law, and they could be and were frequently recalled to their duty by outspoken prophets, who were protected from kingly anger either by divine protection (as with Elijah) or by the prestige of their calling (Micaiah before Ahab). The priest Jehoiada kept a king of Judah from “sinning” as long as he was his guardian.

In all the other arts and in science the Hebrews were singularly lacking in accomplishment. The famous temple of Solomon was Phoenician in design and execution. It was a great wonder to the Hebrew chronicler, but it would hardly have ranked as a second-class building in Egypt. Sculpture was abhorred and forbidden by the law; no scientific invention is to be ascribed to the Hebrews. There can be no doubt that the whole of their creative genius was concentrated on their religion and thought and, incidentally, their literature. More could hardly be expected of one small people.

### Aegean civilization

**MINOAN CRETE—A TRIUMPH OF ARCHAEOLOGY**

The discovery and excavation of the Aegean civilization is one of the great romances of archaeology. It began when Heinrich Schliemann, a retired businessman, organized an expedition to Asia Minor to search for the site of Troy. In spite of discouragement from scholars, he firmly believed that the Troy of the Iliad was not an invention of Homer and Greek bards, but a real city which had had a real war with the Achaeans of Greece, even if the war had not concerned the theft of Helen from her husband’s palace in Sparta. He succeeded in finding nine cities superimposed upon one another, the last dating from Roman times; and though he was too anxious to identify the Troy of Homeric fame, and chose the second instead of the seventh city, his work excited the imagination of the whole scholarly world. Homer was now taken much more seriously as historian as well as poet, and Schliemann himself turned his attention to the Greek mainland and to Mycenae, the supposed home of Agamemnon. New discoveries of tombs were made here containing great treasures belonging to a civilization then still unknown, which were later identified as offshoots from a great Bronze Age Cretan Empire. Soon after 1900 the headquarters of this civilization was uncovered on the island of Crete by Sir Arthur Evans, and an international group of archaeologists set to work on one of the richest remains from the ancient world ever found, uncovering gradually the history of a whole civilization whose existence had hardly been suspected a brief fifty years before.

It is extremely unfortunate that the Cretan language has not yet been deciphered, and the whole history has to be inferred from the material remains, supplemented by Egyptian records and the stories of Homer and later writers. And in making use of the latter it must be constantly remembered that these writers were interested in telling a tale rather than in recounting sober fact, and in any case they lived hundreds of years after the great period of Cretan civilization. If the language is ever deciphered it is more than possible that our whole present tentative historical reconstruction will have to be drastically revised. All that can be determined with

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14 See pages 130, 180–187.
15 On the subject of the possible decipherment of the language, however, see further remarks later in this chapter.
A reproduction of the Phaestus disk, with Cretan writing from the period of Mycenaean domination. With the recent success in deciphering the Mycenaean script, it is hoped that this disk will soon yield to translation. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)

some accuracy at present are the various phases of culture—and even on these scholarly opinion is far from unanimous. These are based primarily upon the types of pottery, which are found also in Egypt where it can be dated more accurately. Knowledge of Egypt is thus applied to the Cretan remains. As indicated in earlier chapters, it would be most unsafe to date the remains on the basis of aesthetic considerations alone, for we have seen that much of the early work in these ancient civilizations is greatly superior to the later work, for reasons that have been discussed. And there are many periods of flowering and decline in all civilizations.

A word should be said on the names used for these cultural phases, and for the Aegean civilization in general. While the archaeological record is still far from complete and excavation is still continuing, more evidence is continually being found of the extensive area influenced by this culture. But the earliest phases, as far as we know, are certainly Cretan, and there is no doubt that this is the parent civilization. However, the conventional term used to describe it is not Cretan, but Minoan, after the mythical King Minos, famed in Greek legend (though probably he was also a historic king.) The phases of the culture are called Early, Middle, and Late Minoan, and they are each given three subdivisions. The mainland Greek civilization which sprang from the Cretan center is usually called Mycenaean. As a rule when the Mycenaean civilization is referred to the reference is to the period after the island civilization had fallen and only this offshoot survived. The whole complex of this civilization, covering primarily the lands surrounding the Aegean Sea, is called Aegean, and this will be the name used for the civilization in this book.

RISE AND FALL OF CRETE

The Minoan civilization is of great antiquity, hardly, if at all, subsequent to the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt; and there are extensive Neolithic remains prior to 3000 B.C. It is also one of the most long-lived civilizations known to us, as Crete apparently never lost her independence between 3000 and 1400 B.C. After 1200 B.C. she was unable to recover any of her former greatness and she declined into the comparatively unimportant Greek island that she has been ever since. It was for this reason that her ancient civilization remained unknown for so long. No one suspected her past glories from her drab present.

Yet Crete in ancient days had all the elements necessary for the flowering of a great civilization, as long as the human inhabitants made the necessary “response.” It had fertile land as well as marginal uplands, enough to support a prosperous agriculture; it had several fine harbors if the people wished to take to the sea. The Cretans were close enough to the willfully isolated Egyptians for a profitable commerce to be maintained which the Egyptians did not care to undertake themselves; moreover, Crete had resources of gold, silver, copper and lead, and fine building material. Tin could be imported for bronze from Spain, Britain, and possibly Asia Minor. About 2400 B.C. the Cretans began to use bronze extensively, and thereafter they were
probably the greatest producers of bronze implements in the world. They maintained this supremacy for a thousand years, and it is possible that their ultimate decline was due to the supersession of bronze by iron. At all events their final conquerors from Greece were warlike peoples who used iron, and the day of the more expensive bronze was over.

It is in its middle period that Minoan civilization rose to its greatest heights of power and commercial influence. It was during this period that the great cities of Cnossus and Phaestus were built on a grand scale, and when even private houses surpassed anything similar elsewhere, including those of contemporary Egypt. Though an earthquake, probably followed by revolution, destroyed the great palace of Cnossus about 1700 B.C., this was only a temporary setback; new and finer palaces were built, and trade and colonization spread to Mycenae and Troy. Mycenae, inhabited now by the warlike Achaeans, learned quickly. Their civilization never equaled that of their teachers; also, they were not as peaceful. Their cities were fortified strongly, and probably they chafed against Cretan restrictions and tribute. The Cretans had a strong navy, but from the evidence it would appear that they never had any land force of importance. It is thus usually assumed that when Cnossus and its palace and the other cities of the island were suddenly and ruthlessly destroyed by invaders, it was by the Mycenaean Achaeans, who were trained to war and over the centuries had built up a navy capable of defeating the Cretan masters—as even landlocked Sparta under Lysander was able, with the aid of Persian gold, to defeat the maritime Athenians in 404 B.C.

Thereafter the ancient position was reversed, and the Cretans were subservient to the Mycenaeans. They rebuilt their cities, but on a smaller scale, and the palaces now became fortresses. Achaean figures appear in Cretan art, and Achaean place names replace the Cretan; and throughout the whole Aegean area Achaean influence is predominant. It was during this time no doubt that the famous expedition of Agamemnon to the Asiatic stronghold of Troy took place, and we know from Egyptian records that Achaeans were repulsed in the Egyptian Delta by the Pharaoh Rameses III.

But the Achaean domination did not endure beyond 1200 B.C. The semibarbaric Dorians were already penetrating into western and central Greece, probably from Illyria and further north. The Dorians had iron weapons, and were not interested in Cretan or Achaean culture. They completed a thorough job of destroying both the Mycenaean civilization and what remained of the Cretan. Thereafter the Aegean area went into a decline from which it did not recover until the beginning of the classical age of Greece. By that time the Dorian, Ionian, and other invaders had altogether eclipsed the Achaeans, but not without absorbing some of their culture, and making some of the elements of their history into the background of their own tradition.

MINOAN GOVERNMENT, RELIGION, AND SOCIETY

The Cretan people were evidently closely related to the Egyptians in physical type as well as in culture. They cannot be classed as Greeks, of whom the Achaeans were the earliest known. Nevertheless, their art, while perhaps mainly Egyptian in inspiration, resembles in many respects that of the later Greeks, as will be shown. The Minoan civilization therefore was an important link between ancient Egypt and classical Greece. Even Minoan government seems to have been much more similar to later Greek institutions than to Egyptian, though it is difficult to speak with much conviction in the absence of written records. Their writing, unfortunately, was original, though the earlier script was pictographic in the Egyptian style. Knowledge of Greek or Egyptian has not as yet been of any help in deciphering it.

The kings of Crete seem to have held a position unparalleled elsewhere in early times. Attached to their palaces were great factories, which turned out pottery, textiles, and metal goods, suggesting that they were
merchants as well as kings; and that perhaps their power was based on their commercial position at least as much as on any reverence paid to the throne as such. But even in the capital cities there were apparently private enterprises, as there were certainly in other cities of the island. Until Late Minoan times there was little centralized government, each city being at least partly self-governing. In the later ages of commercial penetration and colonization the government was centralized and the kings ruled the whole island from Cnossus. It is during this period that Minos himself is believed to have ruled, entering into Greek legend as a tyrant who required the sacrifices of Greek maidens to his bull, shut up in his famous labyrinth. Greek legend also placed him as judge in the underworld. The question of Minos, however, has never been settled, and other scholars think that Minos was only a title comparable to that of the Pharaoh in Egypt. In Minoan art the later kings are shown with symbols indicating that the king was military and naval commander, legislator, judge, priest. Like Hammurabi he is shown receiving the code of law from the gods.

The chief deity of Crete was not a god but a goddess, represented in art as the symbol of fertility, sometimes carrying a child in her arms, and accompanied by a serpent and a dove. She brought storm and destruction as well as fertility, and was apparently the source of evil as well as good. The dead were buried with all the articles they had

16 See also the note on "Menes" of Egypt, page 36.
Ivory statuette of Cretan snake goddess. with a golden snake in each hand and hair entwined with snakes. The unusual facial features of the goddess have given rise to suggestions that the piece is a modern forgery, but opinion still seems to incline toward its acceptance as genuine. (Courtesy Boston Museum of Fine Arts)

used in life, the hunter with his spear and the sailor with a miniature boat. A prominent feature of the religion was the sacrifice of large numbers of animals, together with fruit and grain offered up to the gods. There is, however, no sign of human sacrifice, as suggested in the Greek legend; but the Minotaur, half bull and half man, is prominent, as are the bull and the stag, and sacred trees and symbolic objects. All information about the religion itself, however, and any meaning it may have had, has to be inferred from the painting and reliefs. But there are, most surprisingly, no temples at all nor buildings devoted exclusively to religious purposes. The Cretans used high places open to the sky, or sacred caves, and there were altars, and chapels in the palaces. Each house had its own corner devoted to worship, and miniature statues were kept in them.

The Cretans seem to have been precursors of the Greeks in their love of athletics and all forms of games. The national game was bull-leaping. The bull, however, was not killed; the toreadors, men and women, would catch a horn of the animal, spring to his head and turn a somersault, trying to land on their feet to the rear of the bull. A comrade stood ready to catch the athlete in case of mishap. They engaged in boxing contests, running matches, and dancing, and they built fine stone theatres for their games, processions, and music. In all these things they were far closer to the Greeks than to the Egyptians.

There seems to have been substantial social equality, and little if any slavery. Women were evidently in a social position superior to that held by them in classical Greece. The kings possessed no harems, and women took a prominent part in religious festivals as priestesses. In addition to engaging in the athletic contests—including prize-fighting!—we see them working side by side with men in the factories, and even hunting with them. But they remained feminine, as evidenced by the remarkable changes in fashion, puffed short sleeves and bare forearms, tiered skirts, even bustles, their many hats, and their attention to the art of hairdressing. Though an Egyptian might not feel too strange in Crete, any stray visitor from Palestine or Mesopotamia would find himself sadly out of place in this atmosphere; and even a classical Greek straying back into the past would find much to wonder at, and perhaps to condemn.

The foregoing information is based solely upon the archaeological record. But hopes have recently been raised that before very long we shall be able to read the Cretan writings, which are numerous, being found extensively even in the houses of the poorer classes. Toward the end of 1953 an English amateur succeeded in deciphering one of
Reproduction of a Cretan fresco from the palace at Cnossus, showing the sport of bull leaping. Evidently the man uses the bull's horns as an aid in leaping over the bull, to be caught by his female partner on the other side. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)

Reproduction of a fresco from Cnossus, "Men and women in garden." (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)
the two scripts in use during the Aegean civilization. The script deciphered is the later of the two known to us and was in use on the mainland of Greece during the Mycenaean Age, and on the island of Crete during the period of Achaean domination. The language is now known to be definitely Greek, and can thus be understood by classical scholars. However, as yet no connection has been established between this Achaean script and the earlier purely Cretan script, an example of which is the Phaestus disc, illustrated in the text. But scholars believe that this connection will be able to be made with further work, and then perhaps at last we shall be in a position to know how far the picture of Cretan civilization available to us from the archaeological record corresponds with what the Cretan people tell us about themselves.\(^\text{17}\)

\(^{17}\) A useful and informative account of the deciphering of the script is easily available in a popular magazine. J. Johnson, “The Language of Homer’s Heroes,” Scientific American, May, 1954, pp. 70–75.
MINOAN ART

But the greatest glory of Minoan Crete was its art, one of the few really great arts of the world. It was delicate, and at the same time spontaneous and natural, and continuously creative; beautiful objects, as in the Greek world, were to be found everywhere and not only in the houses and palaces of the great. As with the Greeks, art seems to have been a necessity of their lives. Though the Cretans learned much from the Egyptians, in certain respects they far surpassed their masters. While their architecture was not especially distinguished, even the great palaces being designed at least partly for comfort and utility, the interiors...
of their buildings were beautifully decorated, especially with paintings. Painting was the supreme art of the Minoans, although sculpture and pottery were not far behind. It is typical of this culture that it developed sanitation more thoroughly than any Oriental people. Flush toilets were already known, and there was a sewage system, with main and subsidiary drains, for the streets as well as for the palaces. No ancient people surpassed the Minoans in such refinements until the Romans.

Minoan painting, mostly in the form of mural frescoes, shows a strong instinct for the dramatic, and for the naturalistic portrayal of plants, and of animals in action. Their wonderful pictures of the frightened deer and the stalking cat have become famous in reproductions in the Western world. Human figures appear only in late times, and they are largely stereotypes and conventional. The sculptor did not make gigantic statues but concentrated upon miniature objects of exquisite workmanship in clay, ivory, and metal, which were used in individual homes. Only in very late Minoan times did the quality of these fall off, possibly with mass production, to fulfill the huge demand for domestic and foreign consumption. In ceramics there was constant development and improvement in technique as well as creative inspiration, and new forms were continually produced until the late period, when the same decline is seen as in sculpture. The old forms were used again and again; and at last after the fall of Cnossus the workshops were reduced to the production in quantity of common ware. The art of the goldsmith and jeweler was as highly developed as sculpture and ceramics. Exquisite jewelry of all kinds has been found, and finely decorated swords and daggers; and gaming boards are known with inlays of gold, silver, and crystal.

It is difficult to appreciate the impression made by the remains of this ancient civilization, and the extraordinary enthusiasm kindled by it unless one examines a large number of its art objects. It was a civilization that remains all light and color and beauty, in the absence of written records which might contradict that impression. It is hard indeed to forgive the ruthlessness of those peoples who learned so much from it, if it was indeed they who destroyed it.

For the art of the Mycenaeans is derivative and inferior by comparison, in spite of its own great superiority to what followed before the classical age of Greece. And their civilization, with its concentration on war and defense, bears no comparison at all. Marvelous gold weapons, crowns and swords belonging to the treasure of their kings, were found in the six shaft graves of Mycenae,
as well as bracelets, cups, necklaces, and alabaster vases. But the art of making these was learned from Crete, and many of the best specimens were imported from there. Literacy seems to have been uncommon among the Achaeans, and it was the kings and princes for whose benefit the weapons and ornaments were made. It is therefore not necessary to go into the achievements of the Achaeans and Mycenae and Orchomenus and the mainland cities separately.

INFLUENCE OF AEGEAN CIVILIZATION

It is not possible to assess accurately the influence of Aegean civilization in general upon the world. The Achaeans remained in Greece and were absorbed or worked as serfs for their conquerors, especially in Laconia, the main center of Doric penetration, though some cities remained independent for a long time. The memory of Minoan and Mycenaean civilization was retained by the Greeks and found its echoes in Homeric poetry, and some Greek gods were known by Cretan names. Probably the festivals of Greece and certainly their devotion to athletics were derived from this earlier pre-Hellenic age. In spite of the dark age that followed the Dorian invasion, much of the past was retained without a distinct break, and this especially in the cities of Asia, peopled by Ionians and living for centuries under the mild rule of Lydians and Persians. Philistines who settled in Palestine introduced a few elements of Aegean culture into Palestine. As traders the Aegean peoples spread Egyptian culture as well as their own, and they formed a kind of cultural bridge between Egypt and Europe.

But, as far as our present information goes, the Aegean peoples were not thinkers, and their influence on Western civilization has been incomparably less than that of the Hebrews or the Mesopotamians—a fact which provides an interesting reflection on the requirements for cultural immortality. But it is good to think, until written evidence can serve to suggest the contrary, that at least one people enjoyed themselves in antiquity.

Suggestions for further reading

The most up-to-date book on the Hittites for general use is the recently issued Pelican, O. R. Gurney, The Hittites (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1952), which, unlike some of the Pelican series, has also some useful and informative illustrations. Gurney is both a Hittite linguist and archaeologist, and his book is a reliable survey of what is presently known about the Hittites. The Phoenicians are studied in R. Weill, Phoenicia and Western Asia to the Macedonian Conquest (tr. E. F. Row; London: G. Harrap & Co., 1940). This book collects within a manageable compass much information difficult to find together elsewhere and is especially interesting for its study of Carthage as a Phoenician outpost rather than as one of the enemies of Rome. The book, however, illustrates at the same time the difficulty of dealing adequately with a people whose written records are meager, and much of the work is taken up with a study of the other peoples of the Mediterranean world, including some pertinent information about the Israelites and Canaanites which takes into account the most modern researches.

On the Hebrews there is an enormous amount of material available, and the main difficulty is to select what is most valuable for the beginning student. The Pelican book by W. F. Albright, The Archaeology of Palestine (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1949), is an excellent survey of the various peoples who inhabited Palestine from the earliest times, written entirely from the point of view of an archaeologist, leaving the reader, for the most part, to reconcile this material with the Old Testament records. The best general history of the Hebrews, a carefully planned, judicious, readable study, which takes full account of the history of the other peoples with whom the Hebrews were in contact, and uses all the material available at the time of writing, is T. H. Robinson and W. O. E. Oesterly, A History of Israel (2 vols.; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1932). Two well-organized books by Adolphe Lods give a very thoughtful, interesting account of the religious, intellectual, and social history of the Hebrews, using primarily, but not exclusively, the Old Testament records: Israel from Its Beginnings to the Middle of the Eighth Century (tr. S. H. H. Hooke; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1932) and The Prophets and the Rise of Judaism (tr. S. H. H. Hooke; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co.,

The pioneer work on the Old Testament documents which was constantly reprinted until most of it had been generally incorporated into other men's work, but still worth reading, is S. R. Driver, *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (9th ed., rev.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914). The author of the present text has made much use of W. A. Irwin's essay on the Hebrews in the University of Chicago symposium already referred to, H. Frankfort et al., *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1946), which essay, however, was not reprinted in the Pelican *Before Philosophy*. This is a very provocative piece of work, in which the writer looks again with fresh eyes upon the real contribution of the Hebrews to human thought. From another point of view, the English historian Butterfield examines the Hebrew attitude toward history and traces the influence of Hebrew ideas on the meaning of history in several superb chapters: H. Butterfield, *Christianity and History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950). A good survey of the influence of Hebrew thought is to be found in W. G. De Burgh, *The Legacy of the Ancient World* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1953), I, 50–95.

Finally, of course, as much of the Old Testament should be read as possible, including the Apocrypha, but preferably in some modern translation such as J. M. P. Smith and E. J. Goodspeed, eds., *The Complete Bible: An American Translation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939). In the author's view, it is a great mistake for the student anxious to ascertain and understand the meaning of the Bible, to read it in the early seventeenth-century translation known as the King James version, in spite of the extreme beauty of the archaic diction. The familiar words, no longer in current usage, serve to obscure the true meaning, and prevent too often the serious attempt to understand the subject matter. Moreover, in most editions of the King James version the insistence on the use of verses printed separately in a quite arbitrary manner, rather than paragraphs designed according to the required sense, is an additional hindrance.

On the Aegean civilization undoubtedly the most comprehensive work is still G. Glotz, *The Aegean Civilization* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1925), although in detail some of Glotz's views are no longer acceptable. A. R. Burn, *Minoans, Philistines, and Greeks* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1930), is an interesting attempt to write a chronological history of the Aegean world from records available in 1930, and is certainly a fair summary of the work done by archaeologists up to that time. The book, however, is also an illustration of the difficulties inherent in the writing of any history without access to contemporary written records. Sometimes Burn blandly assumes the truth of highly disputed hypotheses and states them as facts without mentioning that they are hypotheses. The coming decipherment of Cretan records, now confidently hoped for, may make all these earlier books obsolete. But meanwhile Burn is still worth reading, if only for the attempted synthesis of legendary, semimythical, and archaeological material.

The best account of Minoan art is probably J. D. S. Pendlebury, *The Archaeology of Crete* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1939), which is well illustrated, though somewhat technical for the general reader.
Far Eastern Contrasts with the Western World

Reasons for inclusion of the Far East - India: the land and its history - China: the land and its history - Similarities between China and India - Contrast of both with the West

Reasons for inclusion of the Far East

In a book intended to deal with the heritage of the West, there would at first thought seem no reason to discuss China and India, whose influence on Western civilization has been relatively slight, certainly not important enough to justify an extended treatment. These countries, however, are now influencing and being influenced by the West, with tremendous and far-reaching consequences for each. So it has seemed worth while to offer a brief study here, not of these civilizations as a whole, but primarily of the great differences between East and West which prevented any extensive diffusion of culture in either direction until the nineteenth century of our era. There was always some trade between East and West, sometimes on quite an extended scale as in the period of the Roman Empire. But such trade was almost entirely in scarce luxury goods, and the traders had only minor contacts with the peoples with whom they traded.

The Indian and Chinese civilizations, indeed, have been astonishingly self-sufficient, even to this day. It is barely a hundred years since the Chinese emperor learned to
into India and Pakistan, a considerable number of believers in the religions which were held by the minority in each segment chose to leave the land of their ancestors and make a home anew in those parts of India given to their co-religionists. In the process more than a million people died. The Muslims, descendants of the conquering bands that set up the Mogul Empire, like the British who supplanted them, kept to their own religion and customs. And though over a period of centuries there were some converts to Islam \(^1\) who carried over some of their customs into their new religion, on the whole their numbers remained small. Neither people effected any profound change in the nature of Hinduism, nor did they in any way break down the general self-sufficiency of Hinduism.

In this chapter, therefore, the history of the Indian and Chinese peoples will be kept to a minimum, only enough to give some indication of the greatness of these civilizations in the past, which is so often ignored by Westerners who know only of the drab present of the East at a time when it suffers from poverty, overpopulation, and exploitation. What will mainly be stressed are the social and cultural differences between the East and the West. This procedure, it is hoped, will bring out the self-sufficiency of the Eastern cultures and the limited nature and extent of their contribution to the heritage of the West.

### India—The land and its history

#### THE LAND

India is usually called a subcontinent, a fair description when it is recalled that her population is only a little less than 400 million, and her territory is as large as all Europe without Russia. The high mountains to the northeast, shutting India off from Tibet and western China, have served to keep contacts with China to a minimum, although the way into southeastern China is not so strongly protected by natural barriers. But the mountains to the northeast are not altogether impassable, and the northwestern frontier, which was always guarded carefully by the British, has been the historic route for land invasions of India. The British, however, with their command of the sea, conquered India from over the sea, a feat that could hardly have been accomplished if India had been united against them, or if they had been compelled to bring land armies over the Khyber Pass from Afghanistan.

The land of India falls naturally into four well-defined sections—the northern hill country stretching up to the Himalayas; the north central plain, partly desert but mostly well watered by India’s great rivers; the south central plain known as the Deccan, south of the hills called the Vindhyas which formerly were covered with thick jungle; and the southern maritime plains known as Tamil Land. The two northern regions have usually provided India with its conquerors. In ancient times the small Vindhya Hills were sufficient to protect the Deccan from any but the best equipped and most militant of empire builders, and the Deccan was the first to be lost when the emperors of the north fell on evil times. The narrow southern plains have usually been ruled independently. At certain times in Indian history one language could be understood from coast to coast, and from northern mountains to the southern tip. But in modern times countless dialects are spoken throughout India, though scholars everywhere may be able to read Sanskrit, the language of Hindu learning and the Hindu scriptures. The great religions of India have their believers in the whole territory, and help to give the people an awareness of their cultural unity.

The land is a violent one, and there are everywhere violent contrasts. Many parts of the country are extremely fertile and have a very high rainfall; others are chronically short of rain, dependent upon a specially favorable monsoon, and much of the northern territory is semidesert. Except for the highlands, the climate is torrid and enervating, and there is always danger in India.

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\(^1\) There was no such mass conversion as occurred elsewhere, for example in Indonesia.
from animals and reptiles as well as from hunger and starvation. Nevertheless, before the last centuries of gross overpopulation, India was a relatively prosperous land. China and India were both envied by Westerners as lands of riches and luxury for most of the centuries of their history.

**HARAPPA OR INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION (ca. 3000–1500 B.C.)**

Not so many years ago there was no suspicion in the minds of historians that there had been a flourishing civilization in the Indus Valley before the invasions of the people usually called the Aryans in the second millennium B.C., and little was known of the pre-Aryan inhabitants. But in recent years two important sites have been excavated and thoroughly explored by archaeologists, and many others are known. These two sites are at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa in the northwest of India, and the civilization is now usually called the Harappa after the name of the modern village over one of the ancient sites. It appears to have been a civilization at least as far advanced as those of its slightly older contemporaries in Egypt and Mesopotamia, with a bronze and copper technology, buildings made of a fired brick superior to that used in Sumer, and a pictographic script. The latter, however, has not yet been deciphered, though it is not now believed there was any extensive literature. All the records so far discovered are short, and probably concern details of personal property. There are far fewer recognizably different characters than in Sumer or Egypt, although the script is nonalphabetic. This fact has suggested to scholars either that the script represents an advanced stage of writing, or, alternatively, that there was little use for many signs because few
This picture of the site of the prehistoric Indian city of Mohenjo-Daro gives some idea of the size of this ancient center of the Indus Valley civilization. (COURTESY GOVERNMENT OF INDIA INFORMATION SERVICES)

A group of representative seals from Mohenjo-Daro with pictographic script. (COURTESY GOVERNMENT OF INDIA INFORMATION SERVICES)
things needed to be expressed in writing. Archaeologists now believe that this civilization developed almost entirely independently of its Western contemporaries, and there are no certain evidences of diffusion in either direction.

But it is not the details of this early civilization that concern us here. What is most suggestive is the discovery of the archaeologists that so many of the features of later Hindu society were found at these ancient sites and apparently survived the Aryan invasions. The area of the Harappa civilization was considerable, more than seven times the extent of Sumer. More than seventy towns and villages have been discovered in addition to the two main sites, which themselves were four hundred odd miles apart. It is clear that it was not a confederation of cities but an organized kingdom with a central government. Both cities were in all essentials similar, planned urban units, well built, rectilinear, and without any of the crooked narrow streets and slums characteristic of later Oriental (and Occidental) towns. What is of great interest is the quite extraordinary conservatism of these ancient Indians. Several times Mohenjo-Daro was actually destroyed by the flooding of the river Indus, but on each occasion it was rebuilt exactly as before, with no apparent changes, even the houses rising again on exactly the same spot as before. In the citadel at Mohenjo-Daro there was an open bath surrounded by verandahs, complete with disrobing rooms. The bath was apparently the central feature of the building, just as in later sacred sites of India—suggesting the importance even to the ancient Indian of a ritual bath, which may indeed, as now, have been prescribed by his religion. The art and architecture of the Harappa civilization are quite distinctly Indian. There are several statuettes of gods and goddesses which resemble their later counterparts, especially one of a god which could easily be taken for the later Siva.

In the whole civilization there is no sign that there was ever any warfare. There are no war implements, no strong points for defense. The leading cities never went to war with each other. It seems to have been a truly peaceful civilization, and it was perhaps this very feature that made these early Indians incapable of defending themselves when at last they were attacked and defeated by invading Aryans. All this suggests that the authority wielded by the central government was moral and religious, not military, and that already there were priest-kings who ruled by virtue of their sanctity and their connection with the gods. Such rulers, the basis of whose power was their moral ascendancy over their people, are less rare in Indian history than in any other known civilization, and the example of Gandhi in modern times shows that the tradition is not yet dead. However, such suggestions cannot yet be confirmed and must await further excavation and possibly a deciphering of the script.

THE ARYAN INVASIONS—THE VEDIC AGE

Invaders from the northwest began infiltrating into India early in the second millennium B.C. They probably destroyed the Harappa civilization about 1500, moving on gradually into the south, driving many of the earlier so-called Dravidian peoples into the south of the peninsula. These invaders, who are called the Aryans, established effective dominion only in the northern part of the country. They produced a remarkable heroic literature, especially two long epic poems known as the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, which are comparable in many respects to the poetry of the Heroic Age in Greece to be described in the next chapter. This early poetry, which included also many hymns, was incorporated in the Vedas probably many hundred years later. These Vedas have given their name to the whole age, which is usually called the Vedic age.8

8 It is difficult to tell in exactly what order these epics were composed since for a long time the Vedas were considered too sacred to write down, and in any case the great epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, contain material evidently from different periods. The most sacred book of the Hindus, the Bhagavad Gita, is incorporated, for instance, into the Mahabharata. The poems and the hymns together give a fairly complete picture of early Aryan society.
In due course the marauders settled down to a life of agriculture. They began to live in villages, as their descendants have lived until today. The larger Aryan towns were usually fortified, and wars were constant. To these invaders is ascribed the caste system, perhaps originally devised for the purpose of maintaining their separateness from the earlier inhabitants, though in early times the castes were not so highly stratified as they became later. It is not known whether the Aryans found a caste system already in existence among the people they conquered or whether they developed it themselves. At all events by the end of the Vedic age it had already crystallized into a closed system without freedom of movement between the castes. The system will be fully dealt with in a later section of this chapter.

**Persian and Greek Invasions—The Maurya Dynasty (322–185 B.C.)**

Under the Persian ruler Darius I, an expedition succeeded in entering India from the northwest, and a Persian satrapy was set up which did not survive for very long. The Persian admiral sailed down the Indus to the ocean, a feat duplicated by the next invader, Alexander the Great of Macedon in 327–326 B.C. Alexander defeated the local Indian chieftain at the battle of the Hydaspes, mentioned in a later chapter, but was forced to turn back when his troops refused to follow him further into the unknown. The expedition had no lasting effects on the Indian government or social structure, though some of Alexander’s successors again penetrated into the Punjab and for brief periods set up independent kingdoms in that area. Greek influence, however, can be discerned in Indian art, and Alexander himself became a heroic figure of Indian legend under the name of Iscander.

The year after Alexander’s death an Indian ruler named Chandragupta Maurya (322–298 B.C.), who is believed to have met Alexander and even fought against him, began to unify northern India, and ultimately was able to establish a firm rule over all India north of the Vindhyas. The dynasty that he founded was sometimes disturbed by Greek inroads from the Bactrian kingdom to the east of the Persian Empire, but those Greeks who penetrated to the court of Chandragupta were welcomed there. The new kingdom was peaceful and well organized, and extremely rich by comparison with any of the other kingdoms of that day. The Brahmin priests were influential and the Hindu religion, enriched some while earlier by the profound speculation of the Upanishads, was the official religion of the realm.

Chandragupta’s grandson Asoka (273–232 B.C.), however, was converted to Buddhism, with its more ethical teachings and its charitable emphasis. This monarch deserves more than a passing attention.

After adding the Deccan in southern India to the lands that he had inherited, Asoka underwent a conversion to Buddhism, as a result of which he realized that he had caused unnecessary suffering to millions of people. Thereafter he eschewed war and became a model ruler, tolerant in matters of religion in spite of his conversion, helpful and compassionate, determined to convert others to Buddhism by example rather than by coercion. Asoka, in this respect, is unique.
in history. India has had many rulers of high character, the mainspring in whose lives was the desire to put into practice the ethics of Indian religion, which insist upon nonviolence, peacefulness, and government in the interests of all, and who have believed that the king himself must set an example of humility and responsibility. But none appears to have equaled Asoka, and his attitude is an ideal which has been alien to the West, especially in his humility and tolerance. The best Western monarchs have had a deep sense of responsibility. But the dynamism and activism which are characteristic of the West have usually led to intolerance of opposition and to the attempt to gain adherents by force, rather than by love and compassion, so greatly emphasized by Asoka. It is difficult to imagine any Western ruler insisting that the poor serfs should be won
over by kindness, as Asoka attempted to win over the jungle folk, comparing himself to a nurse. "The skilled nurse," he said, "is eager to care for the happiness of her child. Even so have my governors been created for the welfare and happiness of my country, and their task is to be pursued with patience and perseverance."

Asoka sent Buddhist missionaries into countries to the west, as well as throughout India itself. These missionaries converted Ceylon, which became and has remained to this day primarily a Buddhist country. Tibetans, Burmese, and Siamese similarly received his message and kept it. Difficult also is it to imagine a Western ruler, even a pope, insisting that "although a man injures him, the Emperor believes that as far as possible it must patiently be endured," although this has been the teaching of the Founder of Christianity. Asoka proclaimed the Dharma, or Law of Piety of Buddha, as the ideal to be followed, with its virtues of compassion, liberality, truth, purity, gentleness, and saintliness of life, and he endeavored himself to live up to it. Wars of religion were to be stopped, all religions were to receive toleration and even royal support, no more animals were to be slaughtered, and animal sacrifices were to be abandoned. The emperor abolished the royal hunt as an example.

Fundamentally the Buddhist ideal, preached and demonstrated by the emperor, rested upon the belief that all men equally were subject to the law of karma, or repeated earth lives. Life was suffering, as the Buddha had proclaimed. No man could escape from this suffering, which was the lot of men upon earth, but each man had the task on earth of helping others, alleviating and not adding to this suffering, knowing that he was in his present position on earth as the result of his former lives, and each equally was worthy of pity and compassion, as on the same path as one's self. Parenthetically, it may be added that, according to Western ideals, Asoka should have made an attack upon the caste system. But it is symptomatic that we should know nothing of any such attempt. We know of his tolerance of the Brahmans, although they were not of his religion, and we know of his efforts to mitigate the hard lot of the lowest members of society. But the caste system, as we shall see, was not looked upon as discrimination, but rather as the conferring of a definite status and definite responsibilities upon all members of society; and the system was deeply rooted in all Indian religion of the time, whether Hindu or Buddhist. A man was in his particular caste in this incarnation because of his deeds in a previous life, and he encountered the opportunities and suffered the restrictions imposed upon him by it. In an individualist society which believes in "getting on in the world" this notion would be intolerable; but India of this age was not individualist. Indian philosophers and holy men did not even believe the world itself to be real, but an illusion, a maya which had to be endured and ultimately understood for the illusion that it was. The bond with earth had to be severed by the achievement of a state of being without desire for it; the thirst for existence had to be overcome.

It can therefore be seen why even the most enlightened of reformers would not wish to interfere with a system believed to be part of the whole universal order. A man's place in life was not only divinely ordained, but was for the ultimate benefit of the individual man himself. For only by being tested and by suffering in the position he had merited by his deeds, and needed for his development, could he hope to rise into the state called Nirvana by the Buddhists, which would make unnecessary any further incarnation upon earth. This question has been entered into briefly by anticipation here because it invariably arises in a discussion of Asoka. Hinduism and Buddhism will be dealt with in more detail later in this chapter.

*This system was only fully developed in the Sankara school of philosophy about A.D. 800, but it is implicit in many of the Upanishads which had already been composed well before the time of Asoka.
LATER INDIAN HISTORY TO THE ONSET OF ISLAM

The Maurya dynasty did not long survive the death of Asoka. The next period is poorly documented—the Indians themselves were not interested in writing history until a much later period—but it is certain that the control of the monarchy declined. The Deccan became independent for several centuries under one dynasty (Andra), and was never fully conquered again, in spite of sporadic campaigns from the north, until the coming of the Muslims. Invaders again poured into the north, including Greeks from Bactria who became Indianized, and in many cases accepted Hindu religion. A dynasty of nomads, called the Kushans (ca. A.D. 40-220) controlled much of the north fairly effectively for two centuries or so. As close neighbors of the Roman Empire to the west, the Kushans imitated Roman coins and engaged in trade with them. Many of the Kushan rulers became Buddhist, but under their rule Buddhism became a theist religion, in the form of Mahayana Buddhism, to be discussed briefly later. Buddha himself became a god, and was represented as such in Indian sculpture.

Following the breakup of the Kushan Empire there was a further dark age which ended in the establishment of the so-called Guptan Empire (320-647) which under Chandragupta II (380-415) again became a benevolent despotism, with the country well ordered, peaceful, and prosperous. Though apparently an orthodox Hindu himself, he and his family always granted full and complete tolerance to the Buddhists. It was this circumstance that gives us our knowledge of his reign, since he was visited by a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, one of many devoted and learned Chinese who made the difficult pilgrimage from China to visit the shrines and holy places and monasteries of their religion. Another glimpse of a great ruler of this time is given by a seventh-century Chinese pilgrim, who was also much impressed by the Emperor Harsha (606-647). He especially noted the excellence of the administration and the high standard of living enjoyed by all classes. Both Brahmins and Buddhists he found to be living up to the best precepts of their religions. During the Gupta Empire there was considerable trade with the West over the caravan routes: but much more with China. Occasional Indian merchants voyaged to the West by way of the Red Sea. But it seems that the voyages were mostly in the easterly direction, while the Indians themselves went east and planted colonies in Burma, Java, Sumatra, and Indo-China, taking both Hinduism and Buddhism with them.

During all this time southern India and Ceylon were entirely free from domination by the northern region, and they themselves did not expand, but seem to have been content with their own very fertile territory. The government usually seems to have been decentralized. Most of the people made their living by agriculture. But the tropical products which grew there in such profusion were much in demand in the West, and a very extensive trade was carried on with the Roman Empire. The Romans and Greeks, however, had little to offer to this prosperous people. The West, therefore, had an extremely unfavorable balance of trade with southern India, which had to be made up by the export of currency, of which there was a great shortage in the later days of the empire. About A.D. 900 southern India fell under the rule of an efficient but warlike series of monarchs who unified the whole of the southern region and maintained the unity for several centuries. They were great builders. Hinduism and Buddhism flourished together for a long time in the southern area, but in later times several rulers instituted persecutions of Buddhists and Jainists. The result was the eventual triumph of Hinduism except in Ceylon, which was ruled by native Singhalese monarchs until the fourteenth century. Tamil invaders from southern India then entered Ceylon: they tried to extirpate Buddhism but only succeeded in driving it from the coastal areas into the highlands, where it persisted until the present time.
The old Hinayana Buddhism of Asoka had, as has been seen, been replaced by Mahayana Buddhism with its personal gods, among whom was the Buddha himself. Perhaps this latter form of Buddhism seemed to be too little distinguished from orthodox Hinduism to be worthy of a separate existence in the country of its birth. The Buddhist monasteries, with their praying monks, may well have been a social evil, in addition to presenting a serious competition to the Brahmins who were dominant in Hinduism. At all events, it seems that the new Rajput princes who followed the Gupta emperors allied themselves with the Brahmins and together they vanquished Buddhism, so that today it is almost extinct in the territory of India. Hinduism was made more formal and ritualistic than ever and the caste system was defined and enforced. So the Muslims were faced with a polytheistic religion which was by this time marked by a number of rather horrible rites, which, incidentally, did not conduce to effective defense against a courageous and fiercely aggressive enemy. In particular the jauhar, a mass suicide of the vanquished, or those who believed themselves to be vanquished, became not uncommon. The Hindus, rather than allow themselves to be captured or defiled by ritually unclean peoples, cremated themselves on a gigantic funeral pyre. Suttee, or the suicide of a widow on her husband's funeral pyre, had always been expected of a Hindu woman who wished to stay with her husband in the afterlife. But during the ascendancy of the Rajputs and during the Muslim invasions it became ever more prevalent and was even enforced instead of being left to the choice of the widow. The Hindus invariably outnumbered their adversaries, but their military tactics were outmoded. The elephants, on which Hindu military rulers had always relied, were defeated time and again by mobile horsemen, and were made to turn back upon their own army, as had already been done centuries before by Alexander at the battle of the Hydaspes. But the Indians did not change their tactics, and the numerous Hindu kingdoms refused to unite against the common enemy. The only breathing space they had against the Muslims was when the latter withdrew of their own accord, or there were internecine rivalries between Muslim rulers. Almost never did the Hindus win a battle, until at last the Muslims came to stay, and organized the enduring empire of the Moguls.

Although this period lies outside the scope of this book, a few words should be devoted to Akbar the Great (1556-1605). This extraordinary man, though an alien conqueror, ruled in the tradition of Asoka. If he was not quite as saintly in his private life, and if he sometimes lost his temper and
Portrait of Mogul Emperor Shah Jehan. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)
meted out severe punishment to his enemies, he nevertheless stands out as a ruler with few equals in the history of the world. Like Asoka he realized that it was his duty as monarch to care for the interests of his subjects, Hindu and Muslim alike. Completely tolerant in matters of religion, and himself a striver after religious truth, he tried to devise an administrative system for his subjects that would be based upon the principles of order and justice. During his reign there can be no doubt that the Mogul Empire was the best-governed territory in the world, there was the least corruption, the greatest equity in matters of taxation, and equality for all under the law. The administrative system that he devised lived for centuries after him. And it is said of him, too, that he loved children; and he is remembered for the saying “Children are the young saplings in the garden of life; to love them is to turn our minds to the Bountiful Creator.”

For more than a century not all the vices and bigotry of his successors could destroy the structure that he had built. The dynasty itself did not officially end until after the so-called Indian mutiny in 1857, though the British had been virtual masters in India for a century before.

**China—The land and its history**

**THE LAND**

China is a land of great contrasts. Larger than India, it stretches in the north into temperate and even cold climatic zones, while in the south it is subtropical. Thus the crops are varied, depending not only upon the differences in temperature, but upon the rainfall. Many parts of the north and northwest are arid, and the land needs more water than it obtains by nature. Though irrigation is practiced, China nevertheless suffers from famine because of insufficient rainfall and damage due to floods—sometimes both in the same year. Parts of the land, especially in the south, are rich, but on the whole it is not a rich country, and the soil is always in danger of severe erosion. But very careful attention to the land, the building of terraces, and controlled irrigation have always made possible a high yield per acre of cultivable land, whether of northern wheat or of southern rice. But it has also necessitated the hard and constant labor of many people, and at all times the very large majority of Chinese have been tied to the land. Until a few centuries ago China was underpopulated in relation to its resources, and the comparatively few inhabitants probably enjoyed as good a standard of living as anywhere else in the world. Only in these last few centuries has the population begun to mount, enforcing a grinding poverty only equaled by the similarly overpopulated India and parts of the Near East.

The two greatest rivers in China have not been an unmixed blessing. The Hwang Ho, or Yellow River, in the north has had to be heavily diked to spare the surrounding countryside the floods which would otherwise have overwhelmed it and it is as a rule not navigable owing to the swiftness of its current; yet, when kept under control, it brings down with it enormous quantities of life-giving and soil-building mud. The Yangtze River is the main artery and waterway and means of communication in China, and upon it have grown up the great commercial cities which have always served as industrial centers and entrepôts of trade. Southern China has also its great river, the St, on which is situated the great commercial city of Canton. The Chinese are not a homogeneous people. Most of them belong to the race classified as Mongolian; but there are large Turkish elements, Tibetans, and others which have been kept united by the all-pervading and absorbent Chinese culture, which, by any known criterion, must surely be considered to have been the greatest in the world for almost two thousand years of the world’s history. At most periods in this history a considerable percentage of the area now called China has been ruled by a single “Son of Heaven,” in this differing in a marked manner from India, which until modern times was never ruled entirely by any single government.
Prehistory

For various reasons which will be discussed later, the Chinese have always been very conscious of their history, and the historical records of China are more complete and continuous than those of any other nation. Yet the bulk of the earlier records are so seriously refuted by the evidences of archaeology that many scholars are inclined to abandon them as utterly worthless. There are legends of celestial emperors reigning for impossibly long periods of time, ruling over highly civilized peoples during ages when the archaeological records show little beyond small primitive Neolithic settlements. The earliest really historical records confirmed by archaeology only begin in the middle of the second millennium B.C., at a time when Egyptian civilization was already growing old and entering on its long period of decline, when Hammurabi had long been gathered to his fathers and the Sumerian language had already become extinct. Yet China had its prehistoric "Peking Man," Sinanthropus Pekinensis, already referred to in Chapter 2, and archaeologists have found in this ancient type of man certain physical traits similar to those of the later Mongol peoples. But the long interval between this ancient Chinese and the Neolithic Chinese of 4000 B.C. is not as yet filled save by a few stray remains, the age and significance of which are still greatly in dispute.

The Chinese histories are extremely detailed on these prehistoric epochs. They name the kings and give anecdotes from their lives, even to the words they are supposed to have spoken. If these are only the results of the working of fertile human imaginations of later times, they still remain interesting; but their significance has yet to be established.

The Shang and Chou Dynasties
(ca. 1450–256 B.C.)

History proper, then, begins with the Shang dynasty, and with the first known use of writing. Yet this is already a highly developed civilization, with excellent glazed

Two bronze vessels from the first historical dynasty of China, the Shang. The vessel below is called a kuei, that at the right a ku. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)
pottery which is very close to the later porcelain, an advanced bronze technology, and the use of that characteristic Chinese material, silk, which was woven into garments and material for decoration. All these things must have been developed in the earlier prehistoric times, and indeed there are traces of their use in excavated villages and towns belonging to an earlier epoch. There were already hundreds of gods, local deities attached to particular places, and gods of every element of nature from rivers to thunder and lightning. There was divination, especially by means of “oracle bones,” that is, bones which were burned on one side in order to make cracks on the other which were believed to have significance. There were human sacrifices, apparently, for the most part, of captured prisoners of war. The ruler of the Shang state was already an emperor, who was chosen to rule by the “mandate of Heaven.” All the names of the Shang rulers can be found on contemporary records as well as in history books, and the historians of later ages have their names correctly. This suggests the careful work of the scholar, thus making the mystery of the earlier rulers whose existence has not been confirmed even more baffling. The Shang dynasty, however, did not rule over the whole of China, but primarily in the province of Shensi in the northwest, though their dominion was later extended farther toward the south. Rebellion brought the dynasty to an end about the year 1050 B.C., and the Shang dynasty was replaced by the Chou, which held the mandate of Heaven for over eight hundred years. As has happened so often in China, the new ruling house does not seem to have been Chinese in origin, but rather nomad Turkish. However, the rulers soon identified themselves with their subjects. For the long centuries of their rule the Chou monarchs were rarely effectively in control of their lands. As a comparatively small group of interlopers, they were forced to share their rule with powerful lords, and sometimes the reigning monarchs were puppets of these lords, kept with an honorary title but without effective power. It was during the period of their weakness in the fifth century B.C. that Confucius taught his political and social ethics, elaborated on especially by his follower Mencius, and left substantially unchanged by generations of political theorists, though some schools of thought did develop that disagreed with a few of the basic tenets of Confucius. Confucius and his followers elaborated precepts of behavior for rulers and subjects that were based on conditions of the Chou period when there was no effective centralized state. Yet the rules for the moral behavior of emperors in name were not found to be too much different even when the rulers were effective absolute monarchs. All rulers, in Confucius’ view, being dependent upon heaven for their thrones, should act with responsibility towards their subjects. Thus Confucian ideas, derived from the social experience of an earlier epoch, could be used in later centuries as a real limitation on the arbitrariness of absolute monarchs.

THE CENTRALIZED MONARCHY OF THE CH'IN (256–207 B.C.)

The last years of the Chou are known as the period of the “Contending States.” In this period whatever authority the Chou had exercised collapsed, and more than a thousand petty Chinese states engaged in almost unending warfare. None of these states proved able to dominate the whole. Alliances were made and remade, war lords aligned themselves first on one side and then on the other; but gradually in the stress of military competition many war lords found they could no longer survive in independence. They offered their swords and services to others more powerful than themselves. By the middle of the third century B.C. there were only fourteen states left that could lay claim to and enforce any effective degree of independence. At the same time peaceful and military penetration into southern China increased, the natives of these regions putting up little resistance, either to the merchants in search of new food supplies and ready to provide their industrial wares in exchange, or to the military adventurers in search of
new land. The result was that the stage was set for the unification of all China under the short-lived military dictatorship of the Ch'ìn (256-207 B.C.).

The state of Ch'ìn in the northwest of China had been one of the “Contending States,” but differed from most of the others in that a large proportion of the people of Ch'ìn were not Chinese, but had a considerable admixture of Turks and Tibetans. The other states regarded the Ch'ìn as barbarians. Nevertheless before the final downfall of the Chou dynasty the Ch'ìn had put their house in order, and the state was ruled by real leaders who had effectively subordinated the feudal lords in their territory. For about thirty-five years the Ch'ìn waged an organized warfare against the feudal lords of the rest of China, until at last the emperor Shih Huang Ti became Emperor of all China (221-207 B.C.), ably assisted by an extraordinary minister, Li Ssu.

These able and energetic men, who had a few key ideas as to how the empire was to be administered, were backed by an efficient army and supported by a school of realistic political philosophers (the Legalists). They succeeded in the short period of less than twenty years in remaking China in such a way that the work was never undone in spite of the fall of the Ch'ìn themselves. The key policy was one of unlimited centralization in every field, and the destruction, as complete as possible, of the decentralized feudal system. The entire administration of the country was to be carried out by officials in a graded hierarchy, the higher members appointed by the emperor himself, and the lower responsible directly to imperial appointees. Weights and measures were to be standardized throughout the country, and a uniform tax system instituted.

These plans were duly put into effect with considerable energy and brutality. Feudal lords were forcibly transferred from their previous domains when necessary. The greatest difficulty experienced was in finding enough competent officials, but the Ch'ìn did at least firmly lay the foundation for the bureaucratic rule which has been so characteristic of China ever since. In the effort to obliterate all memory of the destroyed feudal states and the philosophy that had underpinned earlier Chinese society, the Ch'ìn decreed a gigantic holocaust of books throughout the country, especially books of history and of Confucian philosophy, which latter had stressed the responsibility and virtue of rulers rather than the power politics of the Legalist School, which was now in the saddle. This literature had to be laboriously pieced together again by later rulers who returned to Confucian principles in their government; and there can be little doubt that this great burning has been in large part responsible for the unreliable nature of earlier Chinese history.

Finally the Ch'ìn built the so-called Great Wall, which already existed in part, a remarkable effort to keep out the constantly invading nomads from the north, as well, perhaps, as to seal in Chinese civilization against disruptive forces from without. The huge rampart, made partly of brick and partly of stone, now stretched from the personal kingdom of the Ch'ìn in the northwest, right to the sea. According to Chinese tradition, the loss of life in the building was enormous, but the Ch'ìn cared nothing for this and pursued the work with the utmost thoroughness and determination. The wall was completed before the dynasty fell.5

THE HAN DYNASTY—RULE BY THE BUREAUCRACY AND GENTRY (206 B.C.–A.D. 220)

The Emperor Shih Huang Ti was no sooner in his grave than the reaction came. But it was found impossible to reverse the centralizing process. The revolution, once made, could not be undone, and the new imperial system was so tempting for other autocrats that it is not surprising that the first ruler of the Han dynasty who came to the

5 It has, of course, often been remarked how similar the whole process was to recent twentieth-century revolutions, and efforts have been made to predict the future accordingly. There is no doubt that the Russians, certainly unconsciously, have used many of the techniques of the Ch'ìn, and the present Chinese revolutionaries are returning to the same tradition.
throne in 206 B.C. built his empire upon the foundations laid by the Ch'in and changed nothing of importance. It is true that the Han proceeded to give out new feudal estates to their friends and relatives. But the new independent landowners, who possessed both wealth from their land and valuable official positions in the state, were able to prevent the recrudescence of the old-style feudal system based solely upon landownership and the military power that went with it. The old system was completely dead within a hundred years of the accession of the Han. The new, independently wealthy landowners united with the emperors to form the real governing class of China from the time of the Han until the Chinese Revolution of the twentieth century. They became the scholars and officials of the empire, and their numbers were constantly augmented from others of the same class. These officials are usually called in Western literature the "gentry class," although some Chinese historians have objected to the term as misleading. They
THE GROWTH OF THE KINGDOM OF CHINA
have pointed out that these men were closely tied to the interests of their own local communities, and did not in any way identify themselves with lords and officials in similar positions in other communities. They never took action as a class either for or against the emperors. However this may be—and some attention will be given to the matter later in the chapter—the scholar-bureaucrats did in effect become the mainstay of the Chinese throne for the remainder of Chinese history.

LATER CHINESE DYNASTIES TO THE COMING OF THE MONGOLS (220–1279)

In a chapter primarily devoted to contrasts between East and West it is unnecessary to go into the details of the successive dynasties of China after the Han. The Han dynasty was broken by a brief interlude under a usurper, Wang Mang (A.D. 9–23), who was backed by a powerful clique of gentry. But in spite of extreme measures to perpetuate his power (often termed “socialist,” but erroneously, since the sole object was to strengthen the power of the monarchy), he failed after a few years of power, and was replaced by more rulers of the Han dynasty.

Following the final fall of the Han in A.D. 220, the kingdom was divided into three independent domains, and considerable territory to the south was added. Larger areas were penetrated by Chinese language and culture. From Han times onward there were continuous wars in the north, especially with the Hsiung Nu or Huns, a nomad people, about half of whom finally settled in China and became Chinese, while the remainder turned west and formed the nucleus of the Hun hordes that poured into Europe in the fifth century (see Chapter 14).

At last China achieved stability again under the T’ang dynasty (618–906), whose founder instituted a series of far-reaching administrative reforms which tied the gentry-bureaucrats more closely to his person and greatly improved the collection of taxes. In the T’ang period the famous Chinese civil service examination, already instituted by the Han, became the invariable method of recruiting new members of the bureaucracy.

Theoretically all the people of China were entitled to sit for this examination, which was given in literary and philosophical subjects, the so-called Classics. But the examination was extremely difficult, and was divided into three parts, all of which had to be passed successfully. Then the candidate was eligible for an imperial appointment, which was usually forthcoming, especially to those whose grades were highest. As few could afford the considerable time needed for the study and memorization required of the candidates, the highest positions in the state were virtually barred to the peasant class. But at least the system prevented purely hereditary appointments and thus kept the power of the bureaucracy from falling into the hands of the hereditary nobility. It may be added that even the passing of the first part of the examination conferred local prestige on the candidate, who had been forced at least to become literate in order to sit for the examination at all.

After a century and a half of power, during which the boundaries of the empire had been considerably extended, the T’ang dynasty had to cope with a number of serious revolts by their Turkish subjects as well as with invasions by foreigners. For a time these outsiders controlled the throne. Then, soon after the restoration of the T’ang, the dynasty was again threatened by a peasant revolt, the first in Chinese history, brought on by famine and military exactions. The revolt became a full-fledged civil war, with the government depending upon the alien Turks for support. Finally a Chinese leader emerged who successfully deposed the last T’ang, and proclaimed himself Emperor Chu Chuan-Chung (A.D. 906). Again China became divided, with the south enjoying under a series of military rulers a greater prosperity than the north. This period was followed by the rise of the great Sung dynasty, which was able in the process of time to defeat the northerners who had set up a separate state under Mongol leadership. The Sung, however, never established any lasting and effective rule over north China. Their power was really consolidated only in the south,
though they are officially credited with being the rulers of China from 960 to 1279.

MONGOL RULE (1259–1368)

The Chinese now had to face the onslaught of the Mongols, Jenghiz Khan and his successors. This nomadic horde, united for once under a single leader, was able with the aid of its central Asiatic resources, its tremendous army, and for the day, its advanced military technique, to conquer and subdue the whole of China for the first time. Kublai Khan (1259–1294), the final conqueror of China, who also attempted even to conquer Japan, was an efficient organizer and administrator as well as soldier. But his power could not rest upon anything but the sword in view of the racial policy he adopted. There were hundreds of thousands of Mongols and their allies to be supported, ultimately by the Chinese peasantry; and every Mongol employed in a supervisory capacity meant a Chinese bureaucrat disgruntled and out of work, a further burden to be supported by the same overburdened peasantry. However, as long as the Mongols had control of other areas in Central Asia and could be sure of military reinforcements and supplies, they were able to hold China in subjection. Legislation favoring Mongols, and adopting a generally racialist policy, was enforced. The capital was moved for the first time to Peking, which was laid out by the Mongols without regard for expense, and with the aid of a forced corvée of the Chinese peasantry. It remains the most brilliantly planned capital of the world, not excelled by any European capital city, since it could be built without regard for any existing rights of the former inhabitants. Tremendous palaces and temples were erected, far larger than anything China had boasted previously. The life of the court of the Mongols, described by Marco Polo, was of a style and grandeur never before seen.

Yet Peking was not really the center of the country. It was in the wheat belt, whereas most of the Chinese were now subsisting on rice, and the land around Peking was not especially fertile. So again huge quantities of food for the capital had to be imported at great cost, and transportation had to be improved. Hence the Grand Canal, a tremendous engineering project of the sixth century A.D. which links the Yellow River with the Yangtze, had to be made fit for the heavy traffic of this age. All this was necessarily at the expense of the peasants; the bulk of the

The summer palace at Peking built by the Yuan (Mongol) dynasty. (courtesy THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)
gentry accepted the inevitable and joined the Mongols. They were allowed to keep their estates but were deprived of their privileged political position, which was naturally reserved for the Mongols.

It was therefore not surprising that with the first signs of weakness in the Mongol rule the peasants again revolted against the oppressions of the tax collectors and the ever-increasing corvée. Whenever the Mongols tried to collect corvées, even when in the interests of the people as, for instance, when the dikes of the Yellow River burst, they were met by armed resistance. A peasant leader who in his youth had been a Buddhist monk finally organized these scattered revolts into a really national resistance movement. Such of the Chinese gentry as had not been murdered by the peasants again switched sides and joined the adventurer, and the Mongols at last retired from China to their northern domains without attempting any serious resistance. The peasant leader Chu became the founder of the great Ming dynasty (1368–1644).

The last years of Mongol rule were embittered for the Chinese by stringent racial laws put into effect against them, with the consequence that what had started as simple resistance to Mongol exactions became in effect a war of national liberation. From this time onward the Chinese have had a certain sense of Chinese nationality, missing in earlier times, combined with a detestation of foreigners. The Mongol period of rule has always been distorted by Chinese historians, although in fact it left for the Ming rulers the heritage of a united China which the Chinese themselves had never been able to organize.

MINGS AND MANCHUS

After a brief brilliant period of rule, the Ming emperors became puppets of the court cliques, while the more virile Mongols and Manchurian tribes (Manchus) from the north began to penetrate China again. By the early part of the seventeenth century they were entering northern China almost with impunity, and in due course numbers of im-

> Similarities between China and India—Contrast of both with the West

GENERAL SIMILARITIES

The two great countries of the East, with a population between them of over 800 million, not much less than half of the entire human race, are in many respects extremely similar. They have never fought with each
other as nations, the only clashes between them occurring in districts in Southeastern Asia in which both peoples competed for spheres of influence. Each has at many periods of history admired and imitated the other. Numerous Chinese, in particular, visited India in ancient times, often for the purpose of worshiping at Buddhist shrines and holy places in the land of the founder of their religion. It is to Chinese pilgrims that we owe much of our knowledge of such paternal Indian monarchs as Asoka, Chandragupta II, and Harsha, all of whom these pilgrims greatly admired, and whose rule appeared to them to be in accordance with the moral principles they themselves accepted. Both countries are now heavily over-populated. This overpopulation, however, seems to be a phenomenon only of the last few centuries, a fact which accounts for the relative prosperity of these countries in earlier ages.

The religions and patterns of social behavior of each country are based upon a different conception of time from those of the West, on an understanding of the continuity of human existence rather than of the importance of the self-realization of particular individuals in one incarnation upon earth. In all history they have lacked the dynamism and drive of the West, and their influence upon the West, if not quite negligible, is nevertheless very small indeed. Until recent times the influence of the West upon the East was likewise small. The Macedonian-Greek Alexander the Great was able to win victories in India, but left little there beyond a legend; the Muslims, with their dynamic monotheistic religion which they wished to force upon the world, conquered India, but did not convert very many—and the bulk of these were only casteless persons who were not accepted as equals in India itself. Thus the Muslims always remained a separate community, and under the present partition still inhabit a territory carved out of India, instead of allowing themselves to become assimilated with the Indians. The British were never more than a small company of administrators and soldiers who introduced India to the West but remained incurably alien. The Mongol conquerors of China lost their nomad dynamism under the Manchu regime and became as Chinese as their subjects, the same people having failed to hold the throne in an earlier century because they insisted on remaining alien and practicing racial discrimination. It is only now that both China and India—and of course Japan—are being forced by the manifest superiority of Western techniques and armaments, and the shrinking of the world under modern methods of transportation and communication, to realize that they cannot remain isolated and insulated from the impact of the West.

Japan imitated the West with a forced march into the twentieth century. China is engaged in the same process, first under the influence of the Western democratic powers and presently under the influence of Russian communism. India, after a long period of tutelage and preparation under the British, in her new independence is now trying to increase the tempo of change gradually, and hopes to accomplish the necessary revolution in cooperation with the West rather than being forced violently into a mold imposed upon her either by the West or by Russia. Each country has reacted in its own way, and all deserve the utmost sympathy and understanding that the West can give them. But the basic problem is the same for all—how to modify their ancient cultures without succumbing to the dynamic expansionism of the West.

THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN THE ORIENT

The village as center of the community

The basic social unit in China and India is the family, and the basic political unit is the village. This has been the case from the most ancient times, and is still true at the present time. The village is made up of a number of families, almost all of whose members are engaged in agriculture. The villages are largely self-sufficient. As in medieval Europe, but unlike modern Western coun-

* See Chapter 9.
tries, the farmers do not live in isolated farms in the middle of their land; on the contrary, the village is the center of the cultivated land. Each family owns or leases some part of the land and keeps it in cultivation, but the family actually lives in the village. Thus what affects one person in the village affects everyone else, though the family, or the several closely related families under one roof, has its own private life. And, especially in China, the houses, when possible, are built in such a way as to insulate this small community within its walls; the windows in many cases face inward onto a court and not outward to the street. But in almost all the affairs of life, community cooperation is a necessity, and both Indian and Chinese societies are fundamentally uncompetitive. The individual person obtains his entire psychological security from his position in his own family and community rather than from the possession of wealth or a thriving business; and any prestige he may gain in the course of his life is worthless to him unless it is recognized by his family and community.

The possession of enough land for the family is, of course, required. Loss of land entails the breakup of the family. But a business—unless, as is so often the case in these countries, it is a family business based on the ownership of property—does not serve to keep the family together, and its loss is only a loss of money, not of security. A bankrupt merchant always has his family to fall back upon. The persistent conservatism of these peoples, which is the despair of the West, is primarily due to the lack of incentive provided by the society; whereas in the West, where prestige is bound up with success, and especially financial success, there is always a pressing incentive to "get on," which increases as small successes are won, and is, in the nature of things, ultimately insatiable. When a member of the Chinese family leaves the shelter of his home community to make his way in the world, any success is nothing to him unless he can return to the community, use his wealth to help his family, and can be pointed out in his town or village as a great man. It is no use merely being a great man at Peking or Nanking or Shanghai, for he can enjoy that success with no one whose good opinion he really desires.

The caste system in India

In these respects China and India are similar, in contrast with the West. In their methods of achieving this social control their methods are different, though the results are not too unlike. The caste system in India has been briefly referred to above, but will now be dealt with in more detail. As has already been said, the early Aryans do not seem to have had a fully developed caste system, though in the later Vedic age the lines of differentiation had already been established. At about the beginning of the Christian Era the system was formulated clearly and written down in the so-called Laws of Manu, named after a mythical lawgiver of the ancient past. These laws, which prescribe the duties of each caste, making clear in particular the central position of the Brahmin, have been accepted since that time as authoritative until the present century, when the Indian government, under the inspiration of Gandhi, outlawed untouchability in its constitution.

The highest caste is the Brahmin, whose members perform all the priestly and religious duties of the society; the second is the Kshatriya or warrior caste; the Vaisya caste, the third, is made up of herdsmen, farmers, and tradesmen. The lowest caste is the Sudra, whose duty it is to perform the menial work for the others. But not all Indians belong to these four castes. There are others, in some cases composed of foreign slaves and their descendants, and the offspring of mixed marriages; and in other cases perhaps of people who had disobeyed the laws of their castes and have been expelled from their former castes. These—in recent times as many as one sixth of the whole population—were the outcasts, pariahs or untouchables, the very contact with whom by men of superior castes meant defilement. They carry on occupations which themselves are considered defiling and, unlike orthodox Hindus, can eat meat, and by this very act
become defiled. The caste system has tended to divide and subdivide into rigid occupational groups, all distinguished from each other by the nature of their work, which it is impossible, or at least very difficult, for any members of the family to leave in order to better themselves.

It should be emphasized that the members of each caste have their duties and responsibilities as well as their privileges. The Brahmin performs all religious rituals for which he may receive payment as well as prestige from the rest of the community; but at the same time he must rigorously observe the regulations of his caste, and these are not simple or easy. He may not eat meat, he must constantly purify and repurify himself, especially from the slightest contact with untouchables, or even the shadow of an untouchable. He must bathe several times a day in running water; his clothes must always be scrupulously clean. There are thousands of things he is forbidden to do. He is not necessarily a professional priest, and there are holy men in India from every caste. But if he is not a priest, and is only called upon occasionally to perform priestly functions which he is entitled to perform by reason of his birth, he must still at all times act in such a way as not to defile himself or in any way disqualify himself from those duties for which he was born. It is doubtful in many ways more difficult for the Brahmin to live up to his high responsibilities than for members of the lower castes to live up to their lesser ones.

The religious system of Hinduism as developed by Hindu philosophers makes clear the basis of the caste system. Every human being holds his caste in this earthly life as a result of his acts in a previous life. It is not simply an arbitrary decision on the part of the gods. Over the course of many incarnations he has worked himself up to the position where it is possible for him to be born, for instance, as a Brahmin. And it is equally possible to degrade one's self by one's acts so that one may be born another time as a member of the lower castes or even as an untouchable. In honoring a Brahmin, therefore, a lower-caste Hindu is not honoring primarily the Brahmin himself, nor even paying tribute to his present holiness. He is honoring the whole process of development of the individual soul in previous incarnations which have led the Brahmin to his present position of social superiority.

The social consequences of the caste system have been immense. In such a system there was, of course, no equality of opportunity. Birth determined the nature of the career, and, whether in a village or in a great city, there was an upper limit beyond which one could not progress. As marriage between castes was forbidden, there was no free choice of marriage partners. This did not trouble the member of a higher caste, but it might be serious for a Vaisya or a Sudra (though there was at least one family of Sudras which occupied the throne). If there had been no subdivision of castes then there would have been plenty of opportunity, even within the caste. But with the proliferation of the castes in later centuries opportunity for promotion and social mobility became scarcer. Discrimination between castes worked enough hardship upon the lower castes, but it was serious indeed for the untouchables, who were kept in their lowly position by the united pressure of all the persons of caste. They could not enter a temple, they could not take part in festivals, they could not receive an education. It was these manifest disabilities and the visible evidence everywhere of their enforced degradation that made Gandhi undertake so many fasts on their behalf in the effort to force his fellow religionists to relax their laws. His triumph came when the Indian Constitution at last outlawed untouchability, though common practice has not as yet caught up with the provisions of the law.

Yet the caste system did have one redeeming feature besides its stress on responsibilities and duties. It gave each man and woman of caste a secure position in society, and it strengthened the bonds of community between persons of the same caste or subcaste. When the bonds of family and village were broken, the city dweller could find fel-
low caste members who accepted him as one of themselves, and to some extent overcame the psychological disease of loneliness which may afflict a Western man in similar circumstances. The ordinary Indian, unprepared by the nature of his closely knit family life and the lack of stress upon individuality in his upbringing and education for living by himself in the alien world of the big city, nevertheless found a natural milieu in which he would be socially accepted.

The family in the Orient

The caste system, important though it is in India, is not as important as the family considered as a social and economic unit, both in India and in China. The caste system could probably be entirely abolished without disrupting the general social basis of Indian life. Not so with the family structure. Within the village the families, as has been said, tended to congregate under one roof or in several houses built close to each other. In both countries the chief element that served to keep the family together was the observance of ritual presided over by the male head of the family. The family property was held in common, that is, none of the land could be alienated or in any way disposed of without common agreement between the males. When the father died, if there was enough, the land would be divided, thus starting another family group, though the eldest son remained the head of the family. But under the Laws of Manu they had no right even to this division while the father still lived. Likewise all the earnings of individual members were considered to belong to the family as a whole. It was therefore of the utmost importance for every man to have sons to carry on his line, and especially to take care of his funeral rites. This applied in both countries in spite of the difference of actual religious beliefs. If there was only one house for the family, it was presided over by the head of the family; if the family was large enough to possess more than one house, then all members of the family would gather for common worship, as far as feasible, at the house of the head of the family. Women who married into the family were regarded as part of it, and therefore had to be chosen with the greatest care and found acceptable to the head of the family and its other more prominent members. Unmarried daughters remained in the parental home until they were married.

Modern conditions have wrought various changes in this stable social structure in both China and India, especially with the growth of industrialism, and the new opportunities offered for both men and women in factories and other establishments far from the control of parents. The Chinese Communists are trying by military and political means to force its destruction from above. But a structure that has endured for centuries can clearly be neither destroyed nor even radically changed in a few short years, much less in a moment.

For such a social order is very stable, and it presents certain advantages not always apparent to Westerners. And even though under the impact of the West it is bound to change, it is not yet certain that the whole structure will go. The child from his earliest years is under the influence of his elders of both sexes, by whom he is automatically accepted and from whom he learns. He does not look especially to one parent for protection; still less does he expect them to compete for his favor. He is just one of the family, a junior because he is its youngest. He is not encouraged to be an individual and to express himself, and no psychological problems arise from excessive competitiveness, as in the West. He is expected to show respect to his elders, and he sees others in his family doing the same. In China this even extends beyond the surviving parents to the ancestors who are now no longer on the earthly plane, but are believed to retain an interest in the affairs of their earthly family, and who are informed of these at regular intervals by the survivors. These members have only changed their form but continue close to their household as protecting spirits. When the child grows up he knows that his first duty is still to his elders, and above all to his father, who has no worries about being neglected in his
old age, having to survive alone and unloved and uncaressed. The old men and women have no need to seek for old-age pensions and retirement pay; they have the first call upon their children's earnings as these latter will be able to look to their children when they in turn come to their own old age. The Western isolation of the individual has no place in Oriental society. Unemployment and old age may be hardships, but old age holds the compensation of greater respect and attention, while unemployment is at least shared by the whole family, and in many cases by the whole community. It thus becomes more bearable, and any member who is able to find work will become the mainstay of the rest of the family. For this he will be repaid in prestige and gratitude—which for an Oriental may be better reward than "enjoying himself" with the fruits of his labor.

There is no outsider in an Oriental family. If there is only one house and fifteen persons to live in it, they at least know that there are always a few square feet available for them. If they have but one bushel of wheat, no stronger member will steal from the others and leave the weakest to starve. Clearly it is a system which gives little incentive to an individual to outshine the others, and this may be in part a reason for the grinding poverty of their lands. But it is also a system in which poverty can be more easily borne than in a society where it is regarded as a measure of ill success and of failure to make the grade in a competitive world, and is despised accordingly.

THE ROLE OF THE RULER IN THE ORIENT

It is no accident that both Oriental peoples should have produced thinkers who stressed virtue, above all, in their rulers. Perhaps the bulk of the rulers of these lands were in practice no more virtuous than rulers in the West. But it is significant that the ideal ruler in the theory of both peoples should have been pictured as a wise and benevolent father, and performing the functions of a father. It is hard to match the deeds of Asoka, Harsha, or Akbar anywhere in the West at any time. Asoka, as we have seen, after a destructive conquest of the people of the south, was horrified at what he had done and became a convert to Buddhism. Then he proceeded not only to preach the enlightened doctrines of Buddhism but to practice them. He actually did renounce war, he did execute justice as far as he could possibly conceive it, he did enforce upon his subordinates the same canons of morality as he obeyed himself. In the whole record of his reign after his conversion it is impossible for the most carping critic to find one act in which he was untrue to his ideals of justice, mercy, and humility, and even nonviolence to animals, the hunting of which had been the traditional royal pastime until his day. Harsha of Kanauj followed in his footsteps, granting tolerance to all, discharged all his duties with never-failing care and courtesy, tried to mitigate the rigors of the caste system, and gave away the surplus of the imperial treasury to the poor as an act of charity. When there was nothing to distribute it was said of him that he wore a secondhand garment until there was again a surplus. Akbar stated publicly that his gratitude to his God could only be shown by preserving a just government with due recognition of merit. Though an alien conqueror, he refused to treat his Hindu subjects as unequals, severely punished any attempt to humiliate them, and gave them complete equality of treatment in his appointments. He abolished the tax on pilgrims to the sacred shrines of India though he was not a Buddhist, and he not only devised an administrative system that was one of the most equitable ever yet put into practice, but he saw to it that each position, as far as was humanly possible, should be filled on the sole basis of merit.

The Chinese rulers, according to Confucian theory, held the "mandate of Heaven" only as long as they ruled well. It was always understood that revolution was justified if the ruler failed to maintain his own virtue. It was the theory of Confucius and his follower Mencius that virtue was handed down from the ruler to the people. He must rule by the force of his moral example, not by the use of crude force. "An intelligent ruler," says
Mencius, "will regulate the livelihood of the people, so that they shall have enough to serve their parents, wives, and children." Then he "may urge them, and they will proceed to what is good, for in this case the people will follow this good example." Confucius says that the rulers, "when they wished to order well their own states, first regulated their families." In order to do this they must first "rectify their hearts, and be sincere in their thoughts."

We do not know of any Chinese rulers who were, in practice, the equal of the greatest Indian rulers. But constantly their scholars urged the path of virtue upon them; no Chinese ruler, under pressure from his society which believed that the gods would overthrow him if he ceased to follow it, could afford to be completely arbitrary if he hoped to maintain his position. Moreover, it was expected of the emperor that he would take the blame for any natural disasters that overtook the empire, and attribute them to his own lack of worth. Cases are known of emperors obeying this prescription. Alien conquerors such as the Manchus were early taught by their scholars and bureaucracy what was expected of them when they took over the "mandate of Heaven." Many of them did their best to live up to it. There is no instance in Chinese history of the restoration of any emperor who had ruled badly and thus lost that mandate. Once they had shown themselves to be lacking not only in power but in "virtue" they were never able to obtain the necessary support for their restoration. Apparent disloyalty to a particular ruler and wholesale switching of sides in China is not to be judged, therefore, altogether by the standards of the West. Recent history has tended to show that this ancient Confucian principle has not been forgotten even by men who have ceased to read the works of the sage himself.

While benevolence has sometimes been the Western kingly ideal, as in eighteenth-century monarchy,7 on the whole, Western doctrine has taught rather the responsibility of the ruler to God, with an emphasis on the right to rule ("divine right of kings") rather than on the responsibilities entailed by the position. Moreover, the power to win the throne and the prestige attached to a particular family have generally been regarded as sufficient justification for the tenure of Western rulers. The Hebrews are a possible exception. But for Hebrew historians and religious theorists, the kings' responsibilities were primarily in the matter of religion. Hebrew history shows little evidence that the rulers themselves regarded the matter in the same light. The priests put pressure on them to observe the Law, and when the kings were unsuccessful they blamed it on royal disregard for the Law. But there is no sign that any priest threatened the king with divine displeasure or interpreted his failure as evidence of the lack of that "virtue" extolled by Confucius.

It should be added that one important school of Chinese political philosophers, the Legalists, rejected the theory of the virtue required of rulers. They insisted instead on the proto-Machiavellian theory that the king rules by rewards and punishments (one reward against nine punishments!) and impresses his will on the people by keeping them weak and the army strong and obedient. It is perhaps instructive to note that the only dynasty that ever officially adopted this philosophy was the Ch'in, which came to an untimely end, the shortest rule of any of the recognized Chinese dynasties.

**ORIENTAL CONCEPTION OF TIME AND HUMAN LIFE—REINCARNATION**

**Chinese religion and philosophy**

There are many important differences between Chinese and Indian religion and art, but both are based upon the conception of time and continuity held in the East. Each people expresses its time sense in different ways. Chinese art is impressionistic, suggest-

7 In extolling the excellence of benevolent despotism, Voltaire used, in fact, the extensive Chinese literature on the subject, which was just being translated in his time, assuming for the purposes of his argument that the Chinese rulers had always lived up to the ideal.
Painting attributed to Ma Yuan (Sung dynasty). As often portrayed in Chinese paintings, the sage is shown in contemplation. Note the contrast between the suggestions of landscape in this picture and the care for detail shown in the flower painting (below) of the same period. Evidently the purpose of the second painting is to induce a mood, and the painting might therefore be termed "impressionistic." (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)

Flower painting of Sung dynasty, showing the Chinese exquisite care for detail. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)
ing tranquillity; even silk, the material used for the painting, enhances the effect. The painter or sage often paints himself in the picture as part of the landscape—not differentiated, however, as an individual, as in such Western masterpieces as the Rembrandt and Van Gogh self-portraits, but rather to suggest that the human being, too, is a part of the natural scene, any human being, not especially the painter. Chinese poetry has a similar tendency. Much of it is nature poetry, usually short and descriptive, not full of dramatic action, but pictorial, the images having no inner symbolism, making no connection with other allied thoughts in the reader’s mind.

It is no accident that the Chinese symbol for time is a pool. A stone thrown into a pool spreads ripples ever wider and wider, and then the water is as it was before. To an Oriental, time is not something to be hoarded or spent, time is not money, and it is not something which is fast running out and must be enjoyed because it is going by so quickly. A life on earth is a short space in years, but it is a part of eternity, without beginning and without end except in some unimagined, far-distant future. It is not exactly true, as is so often said, that the Chinese worship their ancestors. Their ancestors are only an earlier phase of their continuing family, as the "celestial" emperors who gave China her first rulers are likewise a part of the continuity of China herself. The heavens are peopled by millions of gods under the Supreme Lord Shang Ti, who corresponds to the emperor on earth. The worshiper, as in ancient Babylonia, does not expect to interest the supreme god in his very minor affairs on earth. Rather he deals with minor functionaries who are chosen as his special protectors, who may be bribed and cajoled like men on earth. In China also it has always been important to find what these gods wanted and appease or placate them; hence the need for the ubiquitous soothsayers and diviners still to be found plying their trade in every Chinese village. The excellence or failure of harvests is due to interventions by the gods, who may be persuaded not to attack a particular community if their intentions are known in advance.

After death there are numerous rewards and punishments, but this life after death is not of unlimited duration, as in Western thought. Soon there will be a return to life on earth in a position commensurate with one’s behavior in the previous life. Life is an endless cycle; to be born in a fortunate position is due either to one’s own merits in a previous life or to the merits of one’s parents who had deserved to have such a dutiful son. The ancestors then are only temporarily sojourning in the spirit worlds during the period between death and rebirth. Soon their imperishable spirit will return to inhabit a new body. But meanwhile they need sustenance during their period of death, and this must be provided for them by the living. If there are no living to provide for them, then death for them is a sorry affair. Hence the importance of having a dutiful family. These ancestors can reciprocate by helping the living.

There is thus no clear distinction between the living and the dead, as there also may not have been in ancient Egypt. But the Chinese are not depressed by this belief, nor by their ignorance of what the gods desire of them. For these spirits are not altogether arbitrary. The members of one’s own well-loved family live as spirits in the spirit land, and it is possible to receive aid from them and to give them aid in return. This attitude seems to have taken away from the Chinese all horror of the hereafter and allowed them to concentrate their attention on earthly affairs. The orientation of the Chinese toward the earth, their philosophy of this world, and their religion are rooted in the belief that nothing changes fundamentally after death. Even a natural disaster such as an earthquake could affect the dead ancestors equally, and the living were expected to give them special aid and relief as if they were alive. At death only one change occurred: the body was dropped and the spirit pursued its path without it, needing sustenance as before but satisfied with
food and paper models of furniture and other requirements of earthly life.

This folk religion is of immemorial antiquity and is almost universal in China except among the minority for whom one of the more highly developed religions such as Buddhism, Islam, or Christianity has been found acceptable. But, as we shall see, Buddhism in the form in which it was accepted in China (Mahayana Buddhism) was in no way contradictory to basic prevailing beliefs. For most Chinese, Buddha became merely one of the gods, as Christ and Mahomet were also accepted into the pantheon without grave difficulty. Every town, and nearly every village, has more than one temple, and the worshiper may use any or all of them as he wishes, in the hope of finding the solace and protection he needs from one, if not from another. Some temples will house Confucius, Buddha, and Lao-tzu as gods. This fact has one important consequence, religious toleration. The Westerner may wish to oust all the other gods in favor of his single all-powerful one; but the Chinese is quite willing to be hospitable to the gods of other peoples. In his system there can never be too many gods. Any or all of them may work evil upon him at any given time and for any given offense; but they are not intrinsically evil except those demons whose business it is to cause natural catastrophes. Yet these, too, can be kept in order by their superiors.

It is never therefore as an enemy of any particular religion that the Chinese in history have sometimes shown signs of intolerance. Organized religions may lead to social abuses as did the increase of Buddhist monasticism in the ninth century A.D., with its attendant evils of idleness and celibacy. For the practices of Buddhist monks could only be considered by most Chinese as damaging to the whole of their society, not least because when the monks died their spirits wandered aimlessly with no descendants to take care of them, causing some disruption in the social order in the spirit worlds and consequent harmful effects on the living. Similar social and political disturbances followed the introduction of Christianity; but any persecution visited upon missionaries was the result of their Westernism, not of their religion. As emissaries, and sometimes the vanguard, of the hated Western powers in the nineteenth century they received the
same treatment as their conationalists, and thus they are treated today by the Chinese Communists.

Chinese religion, as this account has made clear, has been conspicuous for its dearth of any systematic theology or religious speculation. It is for this reason that it has been dealt with first in this book before coming to the profound and extensive Indian thought on the subject, which was adopted, often in toto, by Chinese religious thinkers. There has, however, been at least one important Chinese religious philosophy, although its appeal was limited. This is the philosophy of Lao-tzu, usually called Taoism. Systematic Confucianism was a political and social teaching. When, many centuries after the death of Confucius, it became a religion, it was absorbed into the popular cult and Confucius was accepted merely as one of the many gods. Lao-tzu was likewise received into their company, as was even Buddha himself, except among the sophisticated monks and philosophers, some of whom made the pilgrimage to India already mentioned.

The Taoist writers stressed the unity and transitoriness of all worldly phenomena. All things change their form but return in the process of time to their starting points to take up the ceaseless round. This is the "Tao," or the Way of the universe. Man who pursues the Way must give up striving and realize the relativity of all things in the universe, including action, and he must not strive to interfere with their harmonious workings. He must contemplate and become one with the world by direct experience, not trying to force change upon it by his puny efforts. The Taoists, therefore, wished to retire from active interference with nature, take no part in government, and, if possible, even avoid the ordinary social duties of private life. It is not surprising that in later centuries the Taoists became interested in the transmutation of elements, the science of alchemy. It became the chief concern of many of the followers of the cult to find the philosophers' stone or the elixir of life; for this stone had the power of hastening the ceaseless process of the Tao. All things were slowly changing in their endless cycle. Base metals would certainly one day become gold. Why should a good Taoist not cooperate to his own profit?

This philosophy bears very remarkable resemblances to the Hinduism of the Upanishads and later Hindu philosophy, though apparently of independent origin. But both, as will be seen, derive from the same view of life and the same understanding that man's life on earth is but a small part of his sojourn in eternal duration.

Indian religion and philosophy

The wheel of rebirth—The Hindu thinkers from very early times gave serious attention to the fundamental problems of religion. Even in the Vedic hymns there is speculation on the nature and existence of the gods. In the popular religion of India

![The Indian goddess Durga, with ten arms each holding a weapon, accompanied by lions, overcoming a demon. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)](image-url)
there have always been many gods representing various powers of nature. Today, while there are still many gods, there are three who are almost universally worshiped: Brahma the all-embracing Lord of the Universe, Vishnu the Preserver, and Siva the Destroyer. But this did not prevent Hindu thinkers from striving to penetrate behind even these gods and speculate upon the nature of Brahma and in what way he was present in all created things, even in the other gods, and upon the universe of Brahma. The teachings of these thinkers are to be found especially in the Upanishads (written down from about the sixth century B.C.) and their numerous commentaries in later centuries. Their assumptions, which seem to have been shared by all the Indian peoples, even those far removed from philosophical and religious speculation, are extraordinarily alien to our own, and, indeed, appear to be so contradictory to the realities of life that only mystics in the West have ever interpreted our earthly experience in similar terms. * 

*It should, perhaps, be noted that while the discussion in the text describes the general cast of Hindu thought, Hindu philosophy is so rich that it would be possible to cite other thinkers who have followed paths of thought less alien to ours, and more similar to certain schools of thought in the West. Nevertheless, these have not been the really influential schools of thought in India, perhaps in part, at least, because of the fact that the “illusionist” philosophies have been more in accord with traditional Hindu religion and the way of life based upon it.*

Seated statue of the great god Brahma, represented in later Indian sculpture with three heads. Actually, in Indian philosophy Brahma is purely spiritual and impersonal, and thus could not have been represented in sculptured form. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)
For to many Hindu thinkers, and not only to the thinkers but to some of the ordinary believers, the world itself is an illusion, a maya. Man is not an earthly being who may hope to win immortality in a different kind of existence after death, but a spiritual being who incarnates from time to time on earth, in exile from his natural heavenly abode. The eternal being of man is indestructible; it does not have to win immortality, for it is already immortal; it is the deeds of this being in earthly life which chain him to that life and make his reincarnation on earth necessary. At different times in Indian thought it has been held that this eternal being can also incarnate in the lower kingdoms of nature; probably at all times some people have believed this, though it has not been held by the greater teachers, who have always insisted that reincarnation must be into another human being, not into an animal or plant. The soul or spirit of man indeed creates for itself a new body when required and chooses those parents who can best help him to achieve his destiny.

If, then, the world itself is an illusion, the task of the man who would become wise is to try to understand the nature of the illusion, and at the same time free himself from dependence upon it. Man has become dependent upon the earth for his sustenance by being born on earth for the first time. This has certain inevitable consequences. He begins to desire earthly things for their own sake, and while on earth he performs certain deeds which bind him to other people and to the whole destiny of the earth. These deeds can never be undone, and they constitute man’s karma. After his death when he is freed from his body these deeds are relived and spiritually understood; but they still must be compensated on earth, which is the only testing ground provided for man. So his karma attracts him back to earth to a milieu suitable for the task which he has to perform, which may be a particular family in a particular caste; or, indeed, he may be born as an untouchable if the task which he has to perform is one that demands persecution or enforced humility. He may also be required to compensate personally for evil deeds he has performed toward a certain person, in which case he will be born close to a person with whom he has lived on earth before. Thus a Hindu can never be sure that he is meeting another person for the first time in this incarnation; on the contrary, he may have a special task to perform for any person he meets, a task which must be performed if he is to redeem himself from some important part of his karma, and thus continue on the path of spiritual progress. There is thus, according to Hindu thought, a long procession of births and rebirths, usually pictured as a kind of wheel. But in all these incarnations the eternal spirit of the particular man, which, incidentally, is not itself truly real but appears to be subjectively real for the duration of the incarnations, should continue to strive upward to reach moksha or enlightenment, by freeing itself as far as possible from the desire for earthly things.

It is at once clear how exactly the caste system fits into this scheme. The Brahmin and the untouchable equally hold their status by virtue of their previous lives on earth, and the task which has been laid upon them by their karma to perform in this particular life. Interference with the caste system, even the improvement of the lot of an untouchable, is, in this scheme, an interference with the destiny that the man has chosen on earth for himself, and which he really needs for his spiritual development. It is a scheme perfectly fitted for a static social order where man’s task lies not in trying to improve his position on earth but in accepting this lot as unchangeable. Instead he must try to help others whom he may have wronged in a previous life, while in patience and resignation he now strives to build up less karma for himself to be redeemed in a later incarnation.

Though most Hindus are unaware of all these subtleties in their religion, nevertheless some elements of it are almost always understood in all classes of Indian society. This accounts for an atmosphere in India which is quite different from any known
in the West, a kind of widespread gentleness and tendency toward resignation and non-violence, a respect for holiness and moral purity, and a willingness to follow the example and advice of a holy man who really lives out his principles in daily life. The “go-getter” of the West rarely commands such admiration as is accorded to an apparently lazy holy man. And though Gandhi may have been a shrewd politician as well as a holy man, it was his holiness and not his shrewdness that gave him his unique hold upon Indian minds and hearts and made his spectacular feats so effective. Few were prepared to take responsibility for his death if they had refused to do what he wanted, even though it meant adopting a policy of which, as political men, they disapproved. The extreme nationalists who at length murdered him had to replace in their own minds the old religion of India with their nationalism, a modern variety of religion which they themselves held fanatically before they could have dared to lay a hand upon him.

A further aspect of nonviolence should be noted which is equally bound up with Indian religion. All created things, as has been said, were considered an aspect of Brahma and thus sacred. Especially sacred are certain animals, above all the cow, which provides the perfect food for man in the form of milk. The cow, therefore, must not be killed. The strict Hindu must eat no food that comes from a dead animal, and the Hindu religion does not permit animals to be killed for food at all. The doctrine of nonviolence (ahimsa), though imperfectly observed at all times in Indian history, is the necessary consequence of the understanding of all nature as being one. “Thou art That,” says the Hindu sage.

Escape from the wheel of rebirth—Yoga, Jainism, Buddhism—In their desire to dispense with the almost endless round of rebirths which put such a premium on resignation, many schools of thought in India have wished to speed up the process of acquiring enlightenment. One, very well known to the West because of its often spectacular manifestations, is the practice of Yoga, which has developed certain ancient Hindu practices to an extreme, though its detailed regulations are of comparatively recent date.

The theory of Yoga is that a man must endeavor by special exercises to make himself as little dependent upon earthly things as possible. He must cultivate his latent spiritual powers, especially by intense concentration and exclusion of worldly thoughts. In this way the yogi achieves enlightenment by learning to understand the illusionary nature of the world; moreover, by developing his spiritual powers, he becomes less dependent upon his physical environment. He lives as simply as possible and fasts often; he may become a hermit, able to bear solitude and physical discomfort, or he may return to the world, be in it but not of it, giving advice and aid to others. There are different practices in Yoga according to the task which the yogi conceives to be his. Some practices are intended to fit him for prolonged work in the world, administering loving care to others, while different practices may fit him rather for a life of solitude. In all cases the yogi is expected to acquire control of his physical organism and dominate it through his developed spiritual powers. Since self-control, with its accompanying enlightenment, is admired by all those in India who have refrained from attempting it, the yogi is widely regarded as a holy man and honored accordingly. Not all holy men who are thus honored, however, have actually attained any degree of self-control or enlightenment, and there are many who prey upon the superstitions and beliefs of the people, and are sometimes willing to admit that fact to strangers. Many are simply charlatans, professional beggars who make their living performing feats of “magic,” but the prestige accorded to them undoubtedly rests upon the general belief that the yogi has genuinely renounced the world for the purpose of attaining that freedom from earthly ties and the lessening of karma, which is the main task of all men upon earth.

But long before Yoga had been systematized there appeared about the same time (sixth century B.C.) the two chief “heretical”
religions of India, Buddhism and Jainism. Both built upon the earlier Hindu foundations and were based upon Indian life experience. Perhaps they are best thought of as reform movements in Hinduism which later became distinct religions. They arose at a time when Hinduism itself had not yet become as systematized and carefully formulated as it was later in the different Hindu schools of religious philosophy, though it was already filled with carefully prescribed ritual.

Jainism was founded by Mahavira, probably an older contemporary of Gautama Buddha, who after years of meditation emerged from his seclusion to become a prophet and teacher. While accepting the general religious ideas of Hinduism, including, of course, the doctrine of karma, he lowered the number of incarnations to be endured by human beings to nine provided that they were lived in strict asceticism, that certain vows were taken and kept, such as sexual abstinence and the renunciation of worldly goods, and that continuous attention was paid to the achievement of enlightenment. After nine such incarnations the soul could attain a state of desirelessness and freedom from earthly entanglements which was called Nirvana. But according to Jainist teaching not all souls who had attained the right to Nirvana did in fact accept it. They could, if they so wished, return to the earth and help others toward the same salvation. Before long Jainism divided into two sects, the stricter one composed of ascetics who practiced nudity as part of the effort to separate themselves from earthly things and contact with matter (the “air-clothed”), the members of the other sect distinguished by white clothes, symbols of the purity they sought. The Jainists, as ascetics, were often persecuted in later times, and several rulers tried to extirpate the sect. Nevertheless, it still exists in India, with an estimated million and a half believers.

Buddhism, on the other hand, is almost extinct on the mainland of India, though, as has been seen, it is still strong elsewhere, if in a form that its founder would scarcely have recognized. Thousands of legends have sprung up about Gautama Buddha, which it is impossible at this late date to disentangle from the truth. But the main lines of his life are fairly well established.

He was the son of a ruler variously described as a king or a chieftain. Brought up in his father's palace, he was kept shielded from the realities of life until he was an adult. Then suddenly he was exposed to the sight of death and poverty, which made such a profound impression upon him that he spent the next years of his life wandering through India ministering to the poor and sharing their suffering. At last in his twenty-ninth year he fell into a deep meditation as he sat under a bo tree, from which he emerged as an “enlightened one,” a Buddha. Soon afterward he went to Benares, where he delivered a famous sermon which laid down the teachings which became the core of what was later called Hinayana Buddhism (the “Lesser Vehicle”). It was this form of Buddhism that was accepted by the Emperor Asoka and spread by his missionaries. Thereafter Gautama Buddha spent the rest of his life as a wandering preacher and teacher, gathering around himself a devoted band of disciples who were the first Buddhist missionaries.

The fundamental teaching of Buddha was that all life is suffering, and that man's task on earth is to overcome it by following the Eightfold Path. The choice of these particular eight means of overcoming suffering shows how deeply indebted Buddha was to his Indian predecessors, and to the Indian view of the nature of the world. For one must not simply alleviate suffering, although this is a part of the task; one must perceive the illusion that it is. The Four Noble Truths of Buddha describe the nature of suffering: that all existence is suffering, that the origin of suffering is desire, that suffering ceases when there is no longer any desire, and that the way to overcome suffering is to follow the Eightfold Path. This path consists, in this order, of Right Belief, Right Resolve (to renounce all that leads to increased desire and to cultivate nonviolence), Right Speech,
Right Conduct, Right Way of Living, Right Effort, Right Contemplation, Right Meditation (or Ecstasy). The path thus leads from faith to action, and ultimately to Contemplation and Meditation, ever further away from the world into a mystic unity with the Divine. Thus each individual could progress in accordance with his own spiritual potentialities, first believing, then doing, ever moving upward to the highest form of earthly existence, to contemplation and meditation at which point he would be coming close to that desirelessness which was sought as an end. The end itself was Nirvana, the same state of being (or, more truly, nonbeing) which was pursued by the Jainists, when it would no longer be necessary to incarnate on earth, and all karma had been redeemed.

But Buddhism, by stressing the gentleness, compassion, and nonviolence which characterized the lower rungs of the ladder to Nirvana, put the emphasis more strongly upon ethical behavior than was customary in other Indian religions. Moreover, by emphasizing the fact that all human beings are equally born to suffering, the Buddhist paid less attention to the caste system, which may lead to pride in one’s own status and in one’s own spiritual achievements which have led to the present privileged position. For Buddha the lowest casteless man is as much a human being as the highest Brahmin; all alike are doomed to suffering and can only reach Nirvana in the same way as other men. Moreover, ritual held no importance in his teachings, nor was worship of the gods enjoined upon Buddhists. The only god in Buddhism was that divine essence (called Brahma in the Upanishads) which embraces every earthly phenomenon, living or dead, as the ocean embraces the waves.

It is one of the extraordinary ironies of religious history that this earlier Hinayana Buddhism should, in its later form of Mahayana Buddhism (the “Greater Vehicle”), have become theistic, that Buddha himself should have been metamorphosed into a god, and that statues of him should have been made in vast profusion in all the lands into which Buddhism penetrated. Though Buddha had not advocated asceticism, or separation from the world, Buddhist monasteries living under rules formulated by ascetics, grew up in India, and especially in Tibet, where they flourish till this day, even though the religion, as has been seen, was driven out of India. Mahayana Buddhism was far more active, seeking for converts in a dynamic manner not characteristic of its early adherents. There is no doubt that many of Buddha’s teachings lent themselves to this treatment when in other hands than his. If one stresses the last steps on the Eightfold Path, then for meditation and contemplation it is clearly best to retire from the world; if the overcoming of all desire is the primary end to be pursued, then asceticism, the denial of all ordinary human desires, may seem to be the best way of achieving it; and if the Divine is present in everything, then it is not out of place to glorify the particular aspects of the Divine as manifested in Buddha himself and in such other great men as Confucius and Lao-tzu, especially when it is seen how human beings crave for something less abstract than Brahma for the exercise of the human feelings of reverence and desire to worship. Finally, when the Buddhists had realized that their own leader had progressed to the status of a Buddha by his life on earth, prepared for him in previous incarnations, the possibility that other men might do the same led the Mahayana Buddhists to look for new appearances of other men (called bodhisattvas, a lower grade of adept than a Buddha) who would become Buddhas in their turn. Thus they introduced the idea of a Maitreya Buddha, as a messiah who would appear at the appointed time.

Influence of Indian religions

On Indian life—There is no doubt that these religions of India are, as they have been called, “life-denying.” They are all based on the assumption that the world is an illusion, a place for the testing of human souls, but not a field for human enterprise, nor a territory to be mastered to yield a life that is to be enjoyed for its own sake—
certainly not a place which is so beloved that the greatest wish of men is for heaven to be its replica, as in Old Kingdom Egypt. For the Indian, death is a welcome escape and release, a period between two lives when the soul can be truly itself. When such beliefs are widely held, as they are in India, it is evident that there will be little incentive to earthly progress, little emphasis on personal success, and little earthly ambition. And yet India has many virtues which may be thought to compensate. Gentleness, compassion for men and animals, nonviolence to others and realization of the sacredness of all living things, gratitude to divine powers and recognition of their gifts to man, and above all the strongest of all incentives toward well-doing in the doctrine of reincarnation and karma, the impossibility of escaping judgment for one's evil-doing in the next life on earth—these are not virtues to be entirely disregarded in these days of the ascendancy of the Western way of life with its self-assertiveness and aggression. But one has to look no further than these teachings of resignation, humility, and renunciation to see why the West has been able to exploit and dominate the East from first contact until the revolutions of the twentieth century.

**Influence on Western thought**—It has always been a fascinating question as to how far, if at all, the West has been influenced by these Oriental teachings. No direct influence has ever been proved in any of the major Western philosophers. Yet Plato's teaching, and even more the philosophy of his later follower Plotinus, who certainly had access to Oriental philosophies, insisted upon the inferior if not illusionary nature of the physical body and the physical earth. Plato, indeed, called the body the prison house of the soul, and the world as an inferior copy of the heavenly reality. The myth of the cave in the seventh book of his *Republic* comes very close to the Hindu teachings on the nature of reality, though Plato draws different, and Greek, conclusions from his story. The thought of Plato and Plotinus deeply influenced Christian philosophers, especially Paul and Augustine. Stoicism, the late Hellenistic Greek philosophy, also stressed resignation and the equality of all men through suffering, as had Buddhism; and the Stoic teachers could certainly have been in direct contact with Buddhist missionaries or with Buddhism itself in India. Moreover, the Stoic god of Divine Reason bears a recognizable resemblance to the Brahma of the Indians. Probably there is some influence on these key philosophies of the West which has penetrated into much of Christian thought. We know also that Indian mathematics, with its numerals mis-called Arabic and its zero (often suggested as a typical Hindu conception, a consequence of Hindu desire to recognize and attain nonbeing), influenced the West through the Muslims, as we shall see in a later chapter.

But whatever the underlying influences on Western thought that have been accepted from the Oriental world, one can hardly deny that the Western attitude toward life on earth as a field for human activity is profoundly antithetic to the attitude developed in the East, and that the importance of individuality is emphasized in the West in a manner that is still unaccepted by the East. This chapter, in striving to bring out these contrasts, may therefore be found to

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9 It is instructive to contrast the *Odyssey*, the great epic of the West, with the Indian *Ramayana*. The entire mood of the Indian epic is almost the polar opposite of the Greek. At the close of the *Ramayana* the heroine, Queen Sita, has been justified and it has been proved that she had, in spite of appearances, been faithful to her husband. But just at the moment of what for a Westerner would be triumph, Sita calls upon her Mother, the Earth, to take her back to herself, since she cannot bear the shame of having ever been doubted.

If unstained in thought and action I have lived from day of birth
Spare a daughter’s shame and anguish, and
receive her, Mother Earth!
If in duty and devotion I have laborèd unceasing,
Mother Earth who bore this woman, once again receive thy child.
If in truth unto my husband I have proved a faithful wife,
Mother Earth! relieve thy Sita from the burden of this life!

—Translation by Romesh Dutt (ca. 1880)
have been justified in a book devoted to Western civilization, for we often see ourselves most clearly in contrasts.\footnote{This account has purposely omitted more recent influences, which are numerous in the last two centuries even if they have not been very profound. New commodities, such as silk, muslins, brocade, and porcelain, and new foods such as tea, have been found desirable by Western countries. In a footnote to page 164 there is a mention of Voltaire's interest in the supposedly benevolent character of Oriental rule; other eighteenth-century thinkers, such as Rousseau and Montesquieu, were greatly interested in, and to some degree were affected by, Chinese thought, and they studied Chinese institutions. Western art has frequently admired and imitated some features of Chinese art. Finally, the importance of the wealth of India should not be underestimated, especially its effect on the rise of the British Empire, but this chapter has already gone far beyond the scope of a work devoted to the ancient world, and no more need be said here.}
Suggestions for further reading


Many histories of India exist, but none is wholly satisfactory. W. H. Moreland and A. C. Chatterjee, *A Short History of India* (2nd ed.; London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1944), is moderately successful in achieving its aim of presenting Indian culture within its historical framework, based on modern researches. But many chapters are so short that they raise more questions than they answer. Though much longer, R. C. Majumdar, N. C. Raychaudhuri, and K. Datta, *An Advanced History of India* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1950), may therefore perhaps be recommended more highly, even for beginning students, who can of course select the parts they wish to read, in the certainty that the authors have made a serious attempt to handle their subject adequately, in spite of the limitations of space. A book which is primarily devoted to modern India has some excellent early chapters on the country, peoples, and religions of India, and attempts, like the text, to draw contrasts and make comparisons with the West; this is P. Spear, *India, Pakistan and the West* (Home University Library; London: Oxford University Press, 1952). Stimulating and provocative are the chapters devoted to India in H. J. Muller, *The Uses of the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), and those on China and India in F. S. G. Northrop, *The Meeting of East and West* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1946). Though Northrop's case is undoubtedly overstated, the book has special value for those who are trying to determine what East and West can contribute to each other in the twentieth century. Finally, a popular book written by a thoughtful American who was in the O.S.S. in India during World War II, E. Taylor, *Richer by Asia* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1947) gives a very sympathetic account of present-day India and suggests many ways in which we could still learn from this "backward" culture.

On special subjects handled in this chapter S. Piggott, *Prehistoric India* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1951), gives a clear account of the excavations at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, while H. G. Rawlinson, in *India: A Short Cultural History* (4th imp. rev.; London: Cresset Press, 1952), presents an admirable survey of Indian culture, showing its relationship to Indian history. Hinduism and Buddhism are not easily understood in the West. There is a Pelican book on Buddhism, C. Humphreys, *Buddhism* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1951), but it concentrates rather excessively on explaining the difference between the various Buddhist sects, so that it may be better, even for the beginning student, to try the clear but detailed account in such a book as C. Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism* (3 vols.; London; E. Arnold & Co., 1921). Finally, there is a recent book written about Hinduism by a number of representative Indian scholars, much of which may be found helpful, K. W. Morgan, ed., *The Religion of the Hindus* (New York: The Ronald Press, 1953).
III Classical Civilization in the West
This photograph of the Parthenon as it appears today suggests the commanding position of this unique temple on the Acropolis at Athens.

(Courtesy Royal Greek Embassy)
**Greek Civilization**

*Physiography • The peoples of Greece • The Homeric Age • General characteristics of the Greek peoples • Political evolution • Intercity relations • The economic basis of Athenian imperialism • Athenian society.*

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**Physiography**

**Climate and Territory**

The mainland of Greece is a land of many contrasts, now, as in antiquity. There is wild mountain country, there are fertile river valleys and plains, and there are bustling seaports. Communication between the different areas has always been difficult, making for regional self-sufficiency and independence; political unity, though perhaps always desirable, was never essential for the maintenance of an orderly life, as it was in Egypt. Every city in classical times was at least partly dependent upon its local fertile area, while there were certain mountain districts where primitive conditions persisted throughout the whole period of Greek greatness. The fertile area of the country, however, amounts to hardly more than one fifth of the total acreage of the country, making poverty the general rule in the absence of nonagricultural methods of subsistence.

The pressure of poverty and population in Greece has always stimulated emigration; in classical times it also stimulated enterprise. In general, the valleys run in a southeasterly direction and the harbors face southeast. Hence there was no great open expanse of sea to be crossed before contact could be made with foreigners. There are chains of islands, welcome havens for the sailors of antiquity, each with its own harbor, inviting trade and transshipment. Before the Greeks became seafarers the Minoans and the Phoenicians came sailing into the Greek ports; when the Phoenicians declined in power it was natural for the Greeks to take their place.

The climate of Greece is equable; there are land and sea breezes to temper the heat of summer, and winter, except in the mountains, is not cold and remains sunny, as in all Mediterranean lands. As early as February the Athenians held an outdoor festival. There is little or no rain in summer, but in most areas there is sufficient rain in spring and fall. Severe storms, however, are known (the thunderbolt of Zeus was not only a poetic imagination); but they are local in incidence and never damage all the country's crops equally.

**Poverty of the Natural Resources**

The fertile areas themselves present contrasts. There is the lush plain of Boeotia, suitable for grain and cattle, and there is the
The grain that the Athenians had to import at the time when they were specializing in the culture of the vine and olive was paid for not only by these products but also by their craftsmanship. Clay was cheap and plentiful, but vases required skill and artistry. Taken into the right market by enterprising traders, they were worth much grain. But, even so, the only time Athens became really rich was when she was able to draw upon the surplus of her island confederacy. Then again, she provided skill in seamanship, and some political organization, as her invisible export to keep her economy balanced.

The Greek civilization then was far different from the material civilization of the Minoans, or of the modern Americans. But fourth- and fifth-century Athens nevertheless presents a roster of great names in every field of activity that would be hard to match in any civilization at any time in history, and we have continued to try to imitate her art with imperfect success to this day.

> The peoples of Greece

The Greeks called themselves Hellenes, and their land Hellas. In historic times they regarded themselves as a peculiar people, different from the rest of the world, which indeed, as we shall see, they were. Others were “barbarians,” a descriptive term originally used for those who spoke foreign languages, but certainly intended as a term of reproach. The Greeks were in no sense ethnically a pure “race,” nor ever pretended to be. It was their customs that set them apart.

There is no consensus as to who the Greeks were, nor where even they came from. They are presumed to have come from Central Europe, penetrating slowly over the course of centuries toward the south. It is also unknown who the original inhabitants of Greece were before the waves of immigrants arrived, nor what proportion

1 The word “Greek” is first used by the Romans in referring to the civilization of southern Italy.
of the original stock survived. There is little doubt that the least civilized of the conquering groups, the Dorians, arrived last in Greece, as already described. Ionians, as well as Achaeans preceded them, together with smaller groups such as the Aeolians. The Dorians themselves were followed by the always imperfectly civilized Epirotes, who did not penetrate into southern Greece at all. It seems probable that the Ionians were contemporary with, or even earlier than, the Achaeans, but that the latter were more warlike and came to grips therefore with the Minoans in the parts of the country to which they penetrated. The Ionians settled in Attica and southern Euboea. Then, either of their own accord at an early date, or later when driven to it by the Dorians, they populated the majority of the Aegean Islands and pushed across to Asia Minor, where they settled near the coast and maintained some contact with their Greek motherland at the same time as they absorbed some of the higher culture of the Orient.

The Athenians were proud of their Ionian heritage, and had many legends which boasted of its antiquity; in later days they regarded themselves as superior to the rude Dorians, whose virtues were certainly dissimilar to theirs. But both had great virtues, and these two were the leading peoples in Greece throughout the classical era.

**Homerian Age**

**INFORMATION FROM ARCHAEOLOGY**

We have already spoken of a Dark Age that fell upon Greece with the fading of the Mycenaean civilization and the invasions of the Dorians. It was not altogether dark, as
the age that followed the fall of Rome was also not altogether dark. There are, indeed, resemblances between these two periods. In each case barbarians had taken over a civilization that was alien to them, and which they could neither understand nor appreciate. They could not at once take it over and put their own energy to work on it. There was, so to speak, a long period of incubation, during which all political organization was primitive and intellectual activity feeble. Then suddenly, in each case, intellectual activity was reborn, different in direction from what went before; and the characteristic genius of the new people sprang to life. It was not altogether new in either case—indeed after the fall of Rome the chief surviving institution, the Church, was careful to preserve the ancient tradition as far as possible—but such of the old heritage as survived was used in a new way. This historical phenomenon is like a kind of dissolution into chaos, all the elements being mingled together and then finally coming forth in a new shape.

The only archaeological information we have for the four hundred years of incubation merely shows some development in the working of iron, and a decay in the other arts. This information, however, is not all that we possess. For a literary phenomenon of the first magnitude must also have been composed in these years— Homer’s immortal epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

The two poems are so familiar to most students in the Western world that little need be said of them here. The *Iliad* tells of the war between the Achaeans and the Trojans, fought because Helen, wife of King Menelaus of Sparta, was abducted by Paris, one of the sons of the king of Troy. The poem details at great length the deeds of the heroes on both sides, culminating in the death of the Trojan prince, Hector, and the ransoming of his body by his father Priam. The *Odyssey* tells of the wanderings of the Achaean hero Odysseus after the fall of Troy, his belated return to his home at Ithaca, and his revenge upon the unwelcome suitors of his wife, Penelope, who had tried to force her to acknowledge her husband’s death and choose one of them as his successor.

If, as the Greek historian Herodotus insists, Homer lived not more than four hundred years before his own time, and as scholarly consensus on a much disputed question would seem to agree, Homer must himself have lived during the Dark Age just described. Unquestionably he wrote about a period much earlier than his own, so that we cannot use his poems as direct evidence for his own times. What scholarly ingenuity therefore has concentrated upon the study of Homer for historical purposes has been to see what he writes between the lines, what he unconsciously gives away. This process has been made possible by our knowledge of Mycenaean civilization through archaeology. We assume that where Homer did not know of the details of this earlier period he has filled in with material from his own. Nevertheless, the whole that we can learn does not amount to a very impressive body of knowledge.

We discover, for instance, such things as that the dead were now cremated as well as being buried, that iron had now to some extent taken the position of bronze, that

*This bronze sword of the Homeric age in Greece might have been used in the Trojan War. (Courtesy the Metropolitan Museum of Art)*
chronological chart

Period of invasions
- Conquest of Crete by Achaeans (?) B.C. 1400
- Early period, Achaeans, Ionians, Aeolians, etc. 1300–1100
- Conquest of Crete by Doriens ca. 1200
- Fall of Troy to Achaeans and others ca. 1184
- Dorian invasions 1200–1000
- Settlements in Asia Minor (Aeolians, Ionians, Doriens) 1000–900

Homeric Age in Greece
- Homeric poems ca. 850
- Hesiod ca. 700

Expansion of Greece 800–600
- Colonization of Sicily and southern Italy 760–700
- Black Sea (Euxine) settlements 756–747
- Byzantium colonized by Megara 660
- Great age of Miletus 750–550

Sparta
- First Messenian War (first enslavement of Messenians) 736–716
- Second Messenian War 650–630
- "Lycurian" reforms 610?
- Peloponnesian League 560

Athens
- Rule of Areopagus and archons (abolition of kingship) ca. 683
- Draconian Code 621
- Solonian reforms 594
- Regime of Pisistratus 561–527
- Constitution of Cleisthenes 508
- Ascendancy of Pericles 457–429

Intercity relations
- First Persian invasion—Battle of Marathon 490
- Second Persian invasion—Salamis and Plataea 480–479
- Organization of Confederation of Delos 477
- Persians defeated at Eurymedon 467
- Treasury of the Confederation removed to Athens 454
- Peloponnesian War 431–404
- Knights of Aristophanes—Ascendancy of Cleon 425
- Athenian expedition to Syracuse 415–413
- Battle of Aegospotami—Defeat of Athenians 404
- Regime of Thirty and Ten "tyrants" 404–403
- Restoration of the democracy 403
- Trial and execution of Socrates 399
- Spartan hegemony of Greece 404–371
- Battle of Leuctra—Defeat of Spartans by Thebans 371
- Freedom of Spartan helots and organization of Arcadian League 370
- Hegemony of Thebes 371–362
- Plato at the court of Dion in Sicily 366
- Philip II becomes king of Macedon 359
agriculture and shepherding were the chief means of making a living, that the common method of distribution and exchange of goods was by barter, aided by war and plunder, that the Greeks were not as skilled as the Phoenicians at making industrial products, that slavery, except for domestic purposes, was relatively uncommon. And we can gather that family ties were strong, that respect for parents and age was the general rule, and that strangers were expected to be treated hospitably.

INFERENCES FROM THE HOMERIC POEMS

We are on less certain ground when we insist on the aristocratic nature of Homeric society. It is true that in the Iliad the common man is hardly mentioned, though he may be presumed to have done most of the real fighting against the Trojans, and even Thersites, who used to be cited as the one example of the common man, was not really one, but the son of a barbarian king. Eumaeus, the noble swineherd of the Odyssey, was also the son of a king, who had in his youth been enslaved by Phoenicians. But the purpose of Homer has to be considered before we can make inferences on the nature of the society of his day. He was not writing history, nor even a systematic story of the Trojan War. He does not begin at the beginning nor end with the fall of Troy. He is primarily interested in telling, as he himself informs us, of the wrath of Achilles and his quarrel with Agamemnon, and the evils to which they led. It was a moral poem, and was always recognized as such; and it is difficult to see where the common man could have been brought into it. Similarly in the Odyssey the story is of the cunning and craft of Odysseus, and the wickedness of the suitors who cared nothing for the gods nor for the traditional ideals of good faith and hospitality and common humanity, and so met with punishment from the returning master. Finally we must always remember that Homer’s audience was probably largely aristocratic, interested in listening to the deeds of heroes and not of common men.

There are, nevertheless, some inferences that may safely be made. There is a complete absence in the Homeric poems of anything resembling the divine kings of the Orient, or even of absolute rule by a monarch. Agamemnon, “the king of men,” is the leader of the expedition to Troy, and no one ever thinks of deposing him, in spite of the disasters brought upon the Achaean host by his willfulness. Achilles is able to retire and refuse to go into battle, though he cannot keep his prize, the maiden Briseis, once Agamemnon has decided to take her to compensate for the loss of his own prize. Achilles does not defend her by the might of his own sword because the goddess Athena counsels him against doing so, and he obeys rather than incur divine wrath. Put into secular terms, this sounds as if Agamemnon had a certain prescriptive right to rule which had nothing to do with his personal valor; and that he had a kind of overriding authority over the whole expedition which he was not expected to exercise in matters not affecting the expedition. He could, however, do as, even in the face of public opinion, which was all on the side of Achilles; no one except the aggrieved party could stop him, though all might counsel against a misuse of kingly power. On the other hand, there are many divine sanctions preventing Agamemnon’s use of arbitrary power; the gods could punish his host, and prevent the success of the expedition. Indeed, he had been forced to give up his own prize because she was the daughter of a priest of Apollo, and Apollo knew how to protect his own.

In both the Iliad and the Odyssey we have examples of councils and assemblies called by the rulers. Here there is considerable freedom of speech, even against these rulers. Anyone is permitted to speak, but he must convince the whole assembly and the ruler if he is to have his policy adopted. Telemachus, son of Odysseus, has apparently the right to call a council in the absence of his father. The suitors may meet among themselves, but in the absence of the actual ruler they cannot call a council of all the people. These customs do not look unlike
those of the Primitive Democracy discussed under Mesopotamia where the elders and heads of families were listened to with respect. But in Homeric times the chief elder has become a king, as we saw he did in Mesopotamia in historical times. But the king in Greece never developed into the absolute monarch of the Orient; on the contrary, he lost his power to the nobles and ultimately, as we shall see, to the people.

THE HOMERIC EPICS

The authorship of the poems

But the Homeric poems are far more important for what they are in themselves and for what they became in Greek culture than as source books for the history of the Dark Age in Greece.

There is no unanimity of opinion on who Homer was, when he lived, whether he wrote both the Iliad and the Odyssey, whether they were written in one piece or assembled at a later date—or even whether there was ever a Homer at all. The question will certainly never be settled to the satisfaction of everyone, and, on the whole, it does not seem necessary that it should. In spite of passages which seem to have been added to each poem, both have an impressive unity of idea; and this unity could best be attained by the activity of a great poet working over a considerable mass of earlier material. There is nothing immature about either poem; both are finished works of art, the despair of all later imitators. "Homer" would seem to come at the end of a long line of poets and minstrels rather than to have created both his epics out of nothing. But it was he who gave form to the material. Whether the Iliad and the Odyssey were written by the same poet is an even more thorny question. Longinus, the best critic of antiquity, did not doubt the authorship. His famous remark, "Homer in the Odyssey is like the setting sun; the grandeur remains but not the intensity; it is as though the Ocean had shrunk into its lair and lay becalmed within its own confines," has found many adherents among modern critics, while others are equally certain that the same poet could never have written both, so marked are the differences. The arguments put forward by Samuel Butler trying to prove that the author of the Odyssey was a woman make an impressive total; and even these cannot be refuted on the basis of our information.

Homer as "the Bible of the Greeks"

But whatever the answer to this "Homeric Question" there can be no doubt of the enormous influence of the poems on all later Greek thought, and the remark that Homer was the Bible of the Greeks is apt. Above all he was their common heritage; in spite of the differences between the individual city-states, Homer served, like the great Greek festivals, to remind them that they were one people. Painters, poets, men of action, and philosophers alike turned to him for inspiration. Every schoolboy could recite long passages by heart, and any allusion to Homer would at once be understood, as any allusion to the King James Bible was understood by every educated Englishman and most Americans before the twentieth century.\(^2\)

The Iliad—The first tragedy of destiny

Why did Homer become such a bible? The evidence shows it was not his language, magnificent though it is, but primarily his thought. Not that the later Greeks believed in the gods of Olympus in any literal sense—and there is no reason to believe that even Homer did. This was his conventional framework. He describes the activities of the gods, but he is really speaking about the human beings. When Achilles refrains from attacking Agamemnon and swallows the insult offered him, the good advice he receives is credited to Athena. But Achilles is not a puppet in the hands of Athena; it is he who receives

\(^2\) Toynbee in our day represents the tradition. There are few pages in his six volumes which do not have at least one Biblical allusion, which—alas, mistakenly—he seems to think will be appreciated at once by his readers, though he is careful to give the necessary chapter and verse, even for the most familiar passages.
the inspiration and acts upon it, and this is
the impression gained by the reader. Achilles
is the greater man for his self-control, and
this impression is undoubtedly intended by
the poet. When Diomede is filled with super-
human vigor in the fifth book of the _Iliad_
and attacks and puts the goddess Aphrodite
to flight, and even takes on the great god
Apollo himself, the god first defends him-
self. When Diomede continues to try to dis-
patch Aineias the Trojan against the god’s
will, Apollo finally forces him to desist with
the words “Be not so fain to match thyself
with God. The immortal kind ranks not with
mankind.” This is the message to the reader.
Man is not a god. Elsewhere we are shown
Apollo pleading for the life of Hector against
Athena, who claims it for Achilles. Zeus,
though sorry for Hector as a human being,
cannot override the Fates who have decreed
his death. So even Zeus is not all-powerful.
He, too, must bend to the unalterable law
of fate.

What, then, Homer taught the Greeks
was above all that man is not a god, that
pride, especially pride that would make man
equal with the gods, will lead to destruction;
and that the laws of the universe are not of
man’s making but must be obeyed. Homer
has an unsurpassed feeling for the tragedy
of man’s life, the _lacrimae rerum_ never far
from the Greek consciousness. Hector is
portrayed with the utmost sensitivity, and
his scenes with his wife Andromache are
unsurpassed in all literature for their human
tenderness. Homer understands what it will
mean for her when Hector is killed and
Troy captured. Yet Hector must die; we
know, and the poet knows, that this is a de-
cree of destiny and it is no fault of his. It
is no sin of Hector’s that is to bring him
to destruction, and there is no moral to be
taught. And Hector knows his fate, too, but
he cannot avoid it. Because he, as a hero,
must be true to himself. He cannot avoid
the battle and play the coward, even at the
entreaty of his beloved wife.

So in the _Iliad_ we have the heart of
Greek thinking already presented to us in
a magnificently dramatic and human form.

Man is living in a framework of necessity
which he cannot change. It is his delusion
that he should exult in his own strength,
and believe it is his, when in reality it is
given him by higher powers. He can always
abuse it by making himself the equal of the
gods, and this is the deadly error which will
lead to his destruction. But within the given
framework he has a duty also to be himself,
to seek for the only immortality that he will
ever know, a glory among men that will
live after him. Then he will have played his
part on earth with nobility. All classical
Greek thought is included in this ideal. The
gods disappear as persons, but the ideal re-
mains. Socrates, refusing to go into exile
rather than stand trial because his daemon
has not counseled it, and drinking the hem-
lock because he is not above the law, is in
the same tradition. Man’s morality is not
required of him by the gods. The gods make
no demands upon him, and so have been
thought immoral in Homer. But neither do
they make demands in any Greek thought.
The laws of the universe are there from the
beginning, and the gods administer them.
But it is man himself who creates his own
ideal of what is befitting him as man, and
his reward is on earth in the approval of
himself and his fellow men. Even in Plato
and Aristotle this humanism is present. The
gods of Olympus have disappeared, but the
search for the good remains human good.
The duty toward one’s self missing in He-
brew thought is balanced by the Greek
ideal of humanism; and because it was pres-
ent in Homer, he was never outmoded, even
while the gods of Olympus disappeared into
higher regions.

The _Odyssey_—The Greek mind in action

In the _Odyssey_ we see revealed the
second great gift of the Greeks to humanity,
the means by which the ideal is attained
—the Greek mind. Odysseus, above every-
thing else, is a man of “many wiles.” There
is no future for Achilles, who belonged
only to the old world of warriors, relying
on his strength and fleetness of foot, remain-
ing true to himself—for he had chosen a
short life of glory in preference to a long life of ease—but a man of swift anger and without compassion, almost a force of nature, living by instinct rather than in full self-consciousness. It is Odysseus who thinks out how to take Troy, with the wooden horse. And it is noticeable that the inspirations of Odysseus are not provided him by the gods; they are his own. It is he who thinks out how to outwit Polyphemus, not Athena, though Athena does guide him on other occasions. We must, however, remember also that Athena is the goddess of wisdom, and sprang, fully armed, from the head of Zeus. Odysseus boasts of his own cleverness, and in so doing draws upon himself the vengeance of the god Poseidon, who leads him into so many unnecessary dangers and hardships. But he is also a mighty man of valor and strength. It is only he who can string his bow; all the suitors have tried and failed. So in Odysseus we have the combination of mind and body which became the ideal of the classical Greeks.

The Odyssey has been described as a novel, and many recent translators have had this in mind as they worked. But it is far more than this, or it could never have commanded a position in Greek thought equivalent to that of the Iliad. It is the story of a wandering hero who passes through trials of fortitude to reach his home and execute judgment upon those who had been eating up his substance and breaking the sacred customs of the land. The suitors are godless men who think they can treat his wife and son with contempt, and they are punished with death, even those who had shown some signs of common humanity. Those survived who remained faithful to the wanderer and would not believe him dead. And Odysseus himself is clearly chastened by his wanderings and his bitter experiences during his long time in disguise in his homeland, living as a beggar and submitting to humiliation at the hands of the suitors. He knows he will destroy them when the time comes, but he has to wait for the right moment. The plan is carefully laid and carried out; the goddess Athena plays her part in this finale, guiding him at every turn. It does not seem that all this framework is present just for the purpose of making a good tale, though it is certainly that too.

What we have here is a story of the Homeric hero as a grown-up man, no longer ruled by elemental passions needing a god to control them; but ruled now by his own mind. And Homer shows how this cleverness and lack of moderation and wanton boasting destroyed his innocent companions, and led Odysseus himself to his trials and his humiliation. Only when this had been fully experienced could he take up his bow and with the help of Athena kill the suitors and recover his position as king. The divine framework is still there; man is still to beware of his pride which will bring destruction. He must still be true to himself and seek his ideal—which is not here conjugal bliss with Penelope but recovery of his rights as king, filched from him by the suitors and their families. Odysseus has all the qualities admired by the Greeks: valor, decision, presence of mind, and intelligence. Achilles lacked the last; he didn’t need it in the world of the Iliad. But in the new world of the Odyssey, when the hero is cast alone on the deep, when at the last he is thrown up naked and without one companion on the shores of Phaeacia, then a man must rely upon his own inner strength, his mind, and not only his martial prowess. Though few would claim that the Odyssey is superior to the Iliad in passion, sublimity, or humanity, it is a worthy companion and complement; and it is a fitting prologue to the drama of Greek history, which is in essence the coming to maturity of the human mind.

General characteristics of the Greek peoples

Greeks History as Universal History on a Miniature Scale—The Study of Extremes

The mature ideal of the Greeks was sophrosyne, or moderation, a quality for which they strove, but which was comparatively lacking in their original make-up. We study the history of Athens and Sparta,
the two most renowned of Greek city-states, because they were extremes. If we want to examine the nearest approach to a full democracy, completely logical, permeated through and through by the mind, we study Athens. If we want to study the opposite, the most completely logical example of a closed state, unwilling to accept a new idea, a civilization fossilized and arrested by intelligent design, we study Sparta. When Aristotle wanted to find a golden mean, a moderate state, neither too progressive nor too conservative, he looked for the halfway point between Athens and Sparta.

The Greeks impressed their minds on everything they undertook. Their political history is worth studying in some detail because it was an experiment in miniature with human nature. How much democracy and freedom can human nature stand? Or, on the other hand, how much self-sacrifice can it stand for an accepted ideal enforced on all members of the society? Though the conditions for each experiment were peculiar to the time and place and can never be exactly repeated again, we can learn something of the limitations of human nature from the efforts of these peoples. We can almost see the exact moment when the pressure of outside events proved too much for it—especially when we have with us as a guide a man who lived through the crucial times and recorded them with a self-consciousness and depth of understanding rarely, if ever, equaled in a historian.

The problems the Greeks had to deal with are universal problems, transcending the limitations of time and place. When we read in Thucydides' histories of the debate in the Athenian Assembly between Cleon and Diodotus on the efficacy of capital punishment as a deterrent to treason, we cannot say that times have changed or that human nature has changed essentially from the fifth century B.C. When we read Demosthenes' speeches in the same Assembly excoriating Philip of Macedon—warning against the dangers of self-delusion in the face of a determined enemy—we are transported forward to the 1930's. When we read of the deterioration of Athenian character under the influence of fear and desire for party gains, we are unhappily again in our own world of the 1950's. The only great difference is that today we are no longer living in a small polis, or city-state. The laboratory experiment has been transferred to the great world of superstates. So, necessarily, our particular problems are different, and the particular Greek solutions are not relevant as solutions to the problems of our world. But we can still return to the Greeks for an understanding of the dignity and the limitations of man; and the unanswered questions raised in the city-states of ancient Greece are with us still in our superstates. The refinements of a technical civilization, of which they never dreamed and which it is doubtful they would have appreciated, do not change the nature of the fundamental human problems with which man is confronted, today and twenty-five hundred years ago.

THE SEARCHING MIND OF THE GREEK

All knowledge, said the Greeks, begins in wonder, wonder about the world, and wonder about man. The Hebrews asked only one question about man, his relation to his God. The Greeks asked not only this question, but all other questions. They were the greatest people for questioning that the world has yet seen, or at all events until our own time. When Aristotle came to write his Politics he felt obliged to ask a great many fundamental questions before he dared to generalize. He had amassed material on 158 constitutions, constitutions evolved by generations of men struggling with the problem of how men could best be governed. None of the constitutions was perfect; all had failed in some respects. But the people themselves had discovered the defects, and by asking why and considering the alternatives they had tried to remedy them. So Aristotle conceived it to be his task to classify these constitutions, to see if he could evolve a system that would have the most merits and the fewest weaknesses even if it would not be ideal. Plato, on the other
hand, was looking in his Republic for an ideal state. So it was necessary for him to inquire first on what principles an ideal state could be built, and then try to find institutions through which it could be expressed. This took him a long way. For, having discovered that it must be based on justice, he then had to find out what justice was. Neither Plato nor Aristotle ever thought for a moment that it was not the duty of man to improve his institutions, as the ancient Egyptians had thought. And it is this willingness to seek new knowledge and to stake their lives upon the result of ever-continuous experiment based on the best thinking of which they were capable that distinguishes the Greeks from their predecessors.

The Greeks wondered about the physical world. What was the underlying stable substratum in a world where everything appeared to be in flux—was it water, air, fire, or atoms? Clearly everything changed in appearance; but they did not doubt that this change was only an apparent change. Underneath was a unity. When Thales saw the Egyptian notebooks which told of the measurements of the angles and sides of a triangle, his mind leaped ahead to the universal idea underlying all these particulars. And he is credited with the famous pons asinorum theorem—in all triangles, the angles subtending equal sides are equal to one another.

They wondered about man—his nature, the seen body and the unseen soul that gave life to it. They assumed the existence of the soul, but they tried to find the relationship between soul and body. How does man acquire knowledge? What is the nature of the mind that knows it? What are the laws of thinking? How does one idea connect with another? What is an idea? What are the activities proper to man? What is morality?

In all these questions except the last, the Greeks were pioneers in human thinking; and even in the last they were different from the Hebrews in that at least the later Greeks accepted nothing, even the gods, as final arbiters. While they might admit that the fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom, this to them would only be one more reminder that they were men and not gods. The last thing a classical Greek would do would be to enter the sanctuary and there receive a comfort which would save him the necessity of questioning further.

THE REVERENCE FOR MAN AND ALL HIS WORKS

But the Greeks were not a people of philosophers and questioners alone. Their interest in man excited not only their inquiry but also their reverence. The sudden panegyric of man voiced by the chorus in Sophocles’s tragic drama Antigone seems ready to burst out of the Greek at any moment. What a wonderful thing is man, of all things most wonderful. He can navigate the seas, he can curb the horse, he can tame the wild beast; with his thinking mind he is the lord of creation. And so with loving hands they modeled man in stone and clay, the discus thrower and the athlete and the runner, sculptured him in movement, breathing the living activity into him as no people has ever done since; and they put crystals in his sockets for eyes, put color on his face and sheen on his limbs. And the victor in the games was crowned with a laurel wreath, and poets extolled him for his achievements and gave him immortal fame.

Believing in the dignity of man, the classical Greeks were singularly uncorrupt in everything they did; and though they were later corrupted by exposure to the hard facts of life and found it beyond their powers to retain the purity of their ideal, as artists it was impossible for them to be insincere and shoddy. Though they all worked equally for a wage of one drachma a day, the nameless artists of the Parthenon and the Erechtheum did work that has been the despair and admiration of later ages. High above the ground and only dimly illuminated by such light as filtered through the translucent marble roof, the Parthenon friezes were a worthy offering to Athena, while the foundations beneath the unique
building are as honestly laid as anything in the temple that was visible. The artistry of the workmen, as well as the apparent ability of all the people to appreciate and understand the tragic drama, encourages us to believe that this was not a society where only the noble or the rich could play an active part in the culture of their city. It is therefore necessary to try to understand the nature of those institutions which provided them with something hitherto unique in world experience.

> Political evolution

**THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF THE POLIS**

"The man who can live without the polis is a beast or a god." This dogmatic statement of Aristotle, an alien resident in Athens, sums up admirably the attitude of a Greek toward his characteristic institution—the polis, or city-state. It is an enlargement of Aristotle's other famous dictum about man in society: "Man is an animal whose characteristic it is to live in a polis." Any other kind of state was unthinkable for Greeks, or indeed for complete men. The main distinction in Greek minds between barbarians and Greeks was that the barbarians lived under a monarchy, not in a polis. When Alexander, after his conquests, invited Greek immigrants into his Empire, they at once founded a polis. But it was an alien institution in Asia; the environment necessary for its proper functioning was absent. And it is sad to read of the immigrants with the forms of the polis around them but unable to breathe life into these forms. The polis existed for only a short time in history, and it was never possible anywhere else or at any other time to duplicate those conditions in which it flourished. Yet even such a thinker as Aristotle regarded it as the only possible form of social and political organization in which freedom and democracy could exist.

The word "polis" refers both to a city and to the people living in it; it refers also to the countryside around the city which supports it. The polis should be self-supporting as an entity. Though it could be very small it could not be so small that it ceased to be able to support itself, nor so large that the citizens would not know each other by sight and could not take part effectively in public business. It would have its own city-god, a kind of patron saint, who would receive special honor in it. The polis, of course, was self-governing, and it provided everything necessary for the good life through the joint communal activity of all the members. Every freeborn Greek was born as a member of a polis; his whole life centered around it. If he lived elsewhere he would be excluded from the polis, but he would have certain legal rights such as the right of trade, but probably not the right to intermarry or own property—and certainly without the right to take part in the Assembly. It was the all-embracing nature of the polis that made exile such a terrible punishment for the ancient Greek. He ceased to "belong," he ceased to be acceptable in his community, and save in rare circumstances he could not be taken into another.

The polis therefore is a combination of a political and a social unit. In a barbarian empire, said the Greeks, a monarchy is no doubt suitable; but it bears no comparison with a polis. How could you express yourself? How could you be free in an empire? And what would all the paper rights in the world be worth if you don't govern yourself, if you are told by others what to do? What above all the Greek loved in his small polis was the sense of participation in everything that was going on, and the sense of responsibility that went with it. Every man was as good as another. If a man grew rich he would have more responsibilities and duties to the polis. He would have to provide a warship or some part of a warship out of his own means—man it, even command it if he wanted. Expensive, no doubt, but he would have the honor among his fellow citizens as some compensation. On the other hand, a poor man
would not feel himself excluded by his poverty from the community life. Socrates was neither rich nor wellborn; nor did he build himself a career. But no one despised him. He took his turn in the Council with other citizens, and was president of it for one day like everyone else. He fought as a hoplite, or heavy-armed foot soldier, in the army. He voted in the Assembly and could speak when he wanted. He sat on the popular juries; he could be present at all the festivals. He lived the rich full life of the community. Though the theater was not free of charge, the polis provided a fund to pay for seats for those who could not find the small price of admission; and in later days a fee was paid to jurors and citizens attending the Assembly so that no one should be barred by poverty from his civic duties and privileges.

So when we compare our own representative government with that of the Greeks we have no real basis of comparison. We say that the Greeks did not invent representative government—implying that such clever people ought to have thought up such a progressive innovation—and certainly they did not. But why should they? They wanted to participate themselves. They were not interested in efficiency, and doing things in the most economical manner. Of course, Greek government was wasteful and expensive. There was gross overgovernment, and doubtless a streamlined administrative system could have saved them much wasted energy. But the Greek loved to talk and listen. Parrhesia—freedom of speech—was a necessity of his life. These prerogatives would not be possible in an empire of the Persian type, however smoothly it worked.

But it was also important for the Greek that his polis should be effective in action. It was useless for the Roman consul Flamininus in later days to proclaim the freedom of all Greeks. The Greek did not want just to talk; but effective action was no more possible under the Roman eagles than it had been in the empire of Alexander and his successors. Only for one brief period when no empire threatened could such a tiny unit as the polis survive. But this proved to be the time of the flowering of the Greek genius. If Aristotle could not imagine any community other than this for the best realization of human capacities, perhaps he was right.

But it is clear also that the polis is a very delicate organism, capable of disintegrating from within as well as breaking down under external pressure. All Greek poleis (plural of polis), with their highly local patriotism, and each sovereign in its own domain, would be the natural competitor of every other. As long as this competition was confined to peaceful pursuits, it could do nothing but good; but trade rivalry could lead to attempts to damage the trade of another polis, and in a passionate people quarrels of honor could lead to test by battle. In the absence of any overriding authority, any dispute could lead to war, and any war between the larger and more powerful poleis would drag in those who were bound by common interest or treaties. On the other hand, within the polis itself the common interest must always take precedence of party advantage, which is a lot to ask of human nature. And when the individual puts his interest first, and feels that his wealth, happiness, or prestige is more important than that of the polis, then the polis becomes only an aggregation of individuals, and ceases to be a true community. In fifth-century Athens, when Pericles was leader of the democracy, we have the polis at its best; in the sordid Athens of Demosthenes (385?–322 B.C.) we have it at its worst, disintegrating before our eyes, with the orator himself at times able to bring the city back to its better self by his eloquence, while the intrigues with Philip by their self-seeking politics undermine his work.

The polis appears to be a unique transitional stage between the old tribal and clan society, and the modern administrative state made up of individuals who more or less accept the form of government they have but cannot all participate directly in it, and who have legal rights assured to them by the state, which in turn enforces various
duties upon them. The loss of the feeling of integration within the small society and the development of individual, as distinct from community, interests necessitated a different form of government, even in Greece itself, and nowhere else has it been found possible to revive the Greek ideal, save in certain local communities, as during the settlement of America.

The origin of the Greek polis is still a matter of opinion, since there are no written records. But it is assumed that during the invasions the clan, or group of families with a common ancestor, tended to settle in the same place; that clans united into brotherhoods, and brotherhoods into tribes; and that the union of tribes formed a nation—and we have Greek words for all these subdivisions. It is unfortunate for the theory that we have evidence of quite close kinsmen settling in different areas, but the rule may still have been as described. Coming into a certain area the tribes, or union of tribes, settled in scattered agricultural villages, and joined together around some fortified strong point, the acropolis. Here the leader of the clans, chosen, or holding his position by prescriptive right as the closest in kin to the common ancestor, would be the king. But other clan leaders would be as important as he, and these would form the class of nobles. The villages, needing a means for common defense, would need the fortress, and with the gradual division of labor would come to require a common market. This market—the agora of all Greek cities—would soon grow beneath the acropolis and the fortified place would also be the natural center for assembly.

This general theory fits the circumstances well enough. We know of the hero or divine ancestor of the cities, we know of the division into clans and tribes which persisted even after the full organization of the polis. We know of the tradition of kings whose power was usurped by the nobles, and we know of the occasional assemblies for the consultation of all the people. What is not known is why the development, not a unique one, nevertheless stopped short at the polis. The physical barriers of Greece might favor the polis as the ultimate unit of government, but certainly did not determine it, because even when the barriers did not exist the polis persisted. On the whole it can only be stated that the Greeks found it favorable to their own particular genius, and liked the small unit; and there was no external power at this time capable of forcing a larger unit upon them. Not all poleis, however, moved on to democracy—by progressively limiting the power of the king and the nobles and giving it to the people. Some were ruled by individuals who evidently satisfied their subjects, others were ruled by oligarchies (rule by the few) or aristocracies (rule by the best), or by the old nobles, more or less controlled or accepted by the people. Some had oligarchies, tyrannies, and democracies at different times. And all had parties favoring one or the other form of rule, the foundation for internal rivalries within the states themselves that almost ruined them.

So far we have been speaking only of freeborn citizens. In addition to these there were resident aliens (called at Athens metics) without full rights, and there were slaves. All the cities were too poor in resources to support a wealthy leisure class. Not even by extensive slave labor could enough surplus be produced to give this leisure to any substantial number. So it is entirely inaccurate to imagine any Greek city-state as composed of a small leisure class creating the high culture while slaves toiled to provide the means for it. Almost every Greek, slave or free, had to work for his living, with the possible exception of the inhabitants of Sparta, where the free citizens, or Spartiates, were heavily outnumbered by their slaves, and were required to do a large amount of unproductive supervisory work. There was almost no agricultural slavery outside Sparta. It was difficult enough on most Greek land for anybody to make much of a living, and the slave had to be fed. For the most part slaves worked in industry or in domestic employment. The well-to-do Athenian liked to have one or two
domestic slaves, who could be more accurately described as his unfree servants. The Old Oligarch, a disgruntled aristocrat who did not like the Athenian democracy, complains in his work on the Athenian constitution that in Athens it was difficult to distinguish a slave from a freeman, so it may be assumed that slaves were not badly treated. Nearly all industry in Athens, as we shall see, was small, as was to be expected of a people all of whom liked to be in business for themselves. But factory owners employed slaves, a few each as workers. The slaves also were paid, and beating them was not permitted—another complaint of the Old Oligarch. So, on the whole, it is more accurate to regard the slave as a worker with no political rights, and under a permanent contract with his employer—which contract could be sold to another employer without consulting the worker. While the slavery certainly detracted from the purity of the democracy, it was more of an economic evil, tending to keep the freeman’s wage down to the level of that of the slave, than the social evil it has been elsewhere.

The only great exception to this rule was the worker in the mines, where conditions were terrible and few freemen could be found to do the work.

**Expansion of Greece—Early Colonization**

Before proceeding to the internal development of the individual Greek poleis, mention should be made of the great movement to colonize other lands in which all the peoples of Greece took part. This colonization antedated the political and social reforms in the cities which gave the latter their characteristic shape. Although we know little about the reasons for the colonization movement we do know that at least the early colonies were not trade settlements like those of the Phoenicians, but were the result of land hunger. This suggests: the pressure of an expanding population which could find little outlet in Greece itself. With the nobles in possession of the land, and enslavement for debt the common result of failure to make a living, the younger sons of small farmers would be anxious to leave and try somewhere else. Moreover the polis was not yet the ideal place to live in, and for the poor there was as yet no participation in the community life. If they started again somewhere else, there was always more hope.

Along the shores of the Mediterranean and Black Seas, along the whole west coast of Italy, colonies were planted, each of them
a little Greece beyond the sea. At first the ventures were rather haphazard, and organized by private enterprise. Then the mother cities themselves organized the emigrating parties, often inviting the participation of other cities in the venture. Before a colony was decided upon the participants usually took the precaution of consulting the Delphic Oracle, which acquired much knowledge and experience in colonization and so was able to give useful advice. A colony, however, did not remain subject to the mother city, though it had provided the colony with a human founder and its own gods. One or two cities, such as Miletus and Corinth, tried to keep some control of their foundations, but were never permanently successful. The ties between the colony and its mother city were religious and sentimental; and though these ties counted for much with the Greeks, they were never decisive, and colonies not infrequently in later years joined in wars against their founding cities. This action was never regarded as rebellion, even though Greek public opinion was against it as unnatural strife. At the beginning the colony always had every reason to maintain good relations with its sponsor, especially when it had been formed for trade purposes, since in its early years it had little energy to spare in seeking out new markets for its product.

Many of the colonies became greater and more prosperous than the motherland. The small rocky polis of Megara founded Byzantium on the Bosporus, and Chalcedon on the Asiatic shore opposite; Miletus made the Black Sea area almost a Milesian lake, with ninety colonies in the area according to tradition. She even established a colony at Naucratis in the Egyptian Delta. Corinth founded Corcyra and Syracuse, the latter destined far to surpass her in prosperity. Even Sparta founded the chief city in southern Italy, Tarentum, though there were special reasons for this venture. Athens, how-
ever, developed later and took no part in the early colonization movement. She was more engaged in affairs at home. Having the territory of Attica, larger than that possessed by most cities, to settle, her energies were occupied with this during the formative period.

The results of the colonization movement, though not visible at once, were momentous for the future of Greece. Though the colonies were founded from land hunger, the immigrant Greeks, with their always keen business sense, soon entered into trade relations with their neighbors, who in most cases were inferior in culture to themselves, but had foreign products to sell. Thus a new trade sprang up, bringing prosperity to the motherland as well as to themselves, and providing more employment and stimulating movement to the cities from the overpopulated countryside. Some of the most lasting work of Solon in Athens was his stimulation of the Athenians to look overseas, produce goods suitable for export, and so relieve the pressure on the land. Being eminently fitted for this task, Athens was soon able to compensate for her late start.

SPARTA

The type of the closed society

It has been already remarked that the Greeks, in spite of their ideal of sophrosyne or moderation, tended to go to extremes, and that Athens and Sparta represent the extreme cases of their particular forms of government. The contrast between Athens and Sparta makes an eternally fascinating study. Sparta has been called a classical example of a fossilized static state, a militarist state, a communist state, a fascist state, even an imperialist state, and none of the terms is altogether inaccurate. Yet, on the other hand, such essentially humane non-Spartans as Plato, Aristotle, Xenophon, Plutarch, and Polybius all in some degree approved of her constitution on theoretical and even practical grounds. Did these men, then, approve of fascism, militarism, and the rest?

Toynbee in one of his finest studies presents the history of Sparta as a classical instance of an arrested civilization; and there is no doubt that it fits perfectly into this classification. Sparta was proud of the fact that she had not changed for centuries; she revered as a god her mythical lawgiver Lycurgus. She was ultimately forced by circumstances to emerge from her isolation, and she had to change her way of life when at last her state slaves, known as helots, revolted successively. But the changes were grudgingly made; and in spite of increasingly difficult conditions the constitution was continuously restored, with only minor changes down to the time of Cleomenes iii in the third century B.C. By this time the conditions that gave rise to it had completely disappeared.

For, as will be seen, it is clear for what purpose the supposed lawgiver "Lycurgus" issued his famous laws. What is not quite so clear is on what earlier foundations he was building that the laws should take such a tenacious hold on the people. The Spartans were the most nearly pure Dorian stock in Greece. The Dorians penetrated to the southeastern portion of the Peloponnesus, where they had to contend with the old Mycenean stronghold of Argos. The process of conquest seems to have been slow and arduous, but it was at last successful, and the Dorians finally subdued the whole of Laconia, a fertile plain bounded by mountains. They enslaved the native population, making them, however, not into domestic or industrial private slaves but into state slaves, working on the land and contributing half their produce to the citizens who had charge of them. The Dorians themselves lived in Sparta, and a ring of villages around Sparta was peopled by free inhabitants not belonging to the dominant group and of mixed ancestry. These were called perioeci (neighbors). They were not permitted to intermarry with the true Spartans, called Spartiates, and they had no political rights.

3 It has never been established by historians whether any man Lycurgus ever existed, even though Plutarch wrote his biography, which is mainly an account of the Spartan Constitution.
It will therefore be seen that long before the constitution of Lycurgus, Laconian society was increasingly stratified. It could, however, have developed more on the lines of other Greek cities had not events of supreme importance occurred—the Messenian Wars. At the time of these wars Sparta was well abreast of the other Greeks in artistic production. The Dorian style was more simple and severe than contemporary Ionian, but it was creative and beautiful. Poets and artists still lived in Sparta. There were music and luxury in the city, and the Dorian choral lyric was developed there. Foreigners were welcomed who could entertain and enliven the lives of the highborn Spartiates.

The conquest of the Messenians— Establishment of a rigid militarism

But land hunger attacked the noble lords of Sparta, as it attacked others in Greece, and they were not content with Laconia alone. Colonization was not her answer—the only important colony she sent out, to Tarentum in Italy, was peopled by the offspring of Spartan women and perioeci, an illegitimate union in Spartan eyes—for she had a military tradition, and unlike other Greek cities, a standing army. So she invaded Messenia to the west, a country more fertile and more thickly populated than herself, and conquered it. Many Messenians fled and founded colonies elsewhere; and
Sparta was faced with the problem of what to do with this new territory. She decided to annex it, and made the whole population into helots working for Spartiate masters. We have little knowledge of how this system worked; but we do know that toward the end of the eighth century B.C. the Messenians, allied with Argos and other Peloponnesian cities, revolted, and a desperate and bloody war ensued. Victory at first went to the allies, who pressed on into Laconia. Then, with the death of the Argive leader, the tide of battle turned, and the Spartans, spurred on by Tyrtaeus, their last poet, won the final victory. It had taken twenty years of warfare. It seems almost certain that the laws of Lycurgus date from this time, and were directed to the problem of what to do about Messenia.

The Spartiates were now outnumbered by their subjects by about twenty to one. These subjects would be a constant menace to their masters unless held under tight control—or allowed self-government. In the latter case they would soon have slipped from Spartan jurisdiction altogether. The answer was, to our view, inhuman, but it was strictly logical. The Spartiates, according to the laws of Lycurgus, were to be supported as a professional military class by the helots and perioeci. The perioeci could live in Laconia as before and handle all the economic affairs of Sparta. They were not to become professional soldiers, nor inter-
marry with Spartans, nor have any political rights. They could make an adequate living, but not participate in any Spartan activity, except that in case of war they served with the Spartan heavy infantry. The remainder, the vast bulk of the population, was to be held down by the Spartiates by military force and secret police. Each Spartiate would be allotted a certain number of helots to work for him, and from their produce he and his family would live. The professional military class would devote itself to nothing but war and preparations for war. This class would be rigidly selected. Children who were weak and puny would simply be exposed at birth. Education for boys was to consist of all forms of athletics, military instruction, and physical exercise. Boys were made to go barefoot and ill-clad in winter, to sleep without coverings, and to prepare all their own meals. Girls being fitted to be mothers of Spartans had to undergo a similar regime of athletics and games, and were taught courage, endurance, and patriotism. Boys lived at home with their mothers till they were seven years old. Then they went into military training in groups under the charge of older boys, and lived in barrack. At the age of twenty marriage was compulsory, but the husband continued to live in barracks, and could visit his wife only on rare occasions. According to Plutarch, it was hoped that this continence would serve to procreate more healthy children, and in any case protected the Spartiate from a possible weakening caused by contact with home comforts. From the labor of his helots each adult had to supply his share of the food eaten at the public mess. If a Spartiate for any reason could not supply his share, he lost status, and became an inferior citizen, with reduced political and social rights. To prevent contamination with foreign ideas and people, aliens were rarely admitted to the city; and those who received permits were periodically expelled. To prevent the accumulation of wealth the Spartans maintained a heavy iron currency which was not exchangeable anywhere else.

The helots were not personal but state slaves, as mentioned above. They were therefore possessed of certain elementary rights. They could not be put to death except by the state; though it was customary to allow the Spartiate youths approaching manhood to complete their education by spying on the helots. If the youths found any sign of conspiracy, they were armed with the authority of the state and could put the alleged conspirators summarily to death. A helot, provided he farmed well and furnished his particular master with the necessary supplies, could keep the remainder of his produce for himself. He was personally free, and could raise a family in the normal manner. Though in some respects his life appears less dismal to us than that of his masters, we do know that the helots were constantly seething with revolt. For they were true Greeks, with a Greek detestation of any limitation on their freedom; and it must have been galling indeed to know that all other Greeks were living the full life of the polis, while they were kept under by a military state. Helots were naturally not permitted in the Spartan army except on rare occasions of danger, until the Spartiate population had dropped below the point where it could keep its position in Greek affairs without the aid of the helots. But by this time the helots were on the verge of freedom. It says much for the persistence of their independent spirit that when they were ultimately freed by the Thebans in the fourth century, they were able to set up a Messenian state independent of Sparta, and maintain it until all Greece was subdued by Macedonia.

This logical "Lycurgan" system fulfilled its purpose. The helots were kept under control for more than two hundred years, and Sparta possessed an army which was able to play a noble part in defeating the Persians. Its heavy infantry was unbeaten by any Greek city in battle until the rise of Thebes in the fourth century, and was the most highly disciplined and efficient body of troops in Greece. However, it should be understood that the main purpose of this army was for internal control, and not for
foreign imperialist adventures. The Spartans were always hesitant to go to war abroad for the obvious reason that this would lessen their control over the helots. Besides, Sparta could not afford to lose many of her citizens, for they were irreplaceable. If any sizable body of Spartiate prisoners were taken, as at Pylos in the Peloponnesian War, she would at once sue for peace, and pay almost any price to gain it. Moreover, the leaders of the army, once outside the borders of Sparta, were in full control, away from the social sanctions of the city. Several Spartan generals showed initiative in their campaigns and came at once under suspicion. The Spartans preferred not to take the risk of military adventures away from the Peloponnesian and not until after they had emerged as victors in the Peloponnesian War did they adopt any truly imperialistic policy. And then this policy led rapidly to the freeing of the helots and the breakdown of the Spartan state. The only consideration that could lead the early Spartans to make war was fear of encirclement, or aggression by others. Athenian democracy and the Athenian empire presented a grave threat, not only by reason of their dangerous ideas, but because of the possibility that Athens was aiming at the unification of all Greece. Oligarchies were much safer as neighbors than democracies. The Corinthian envoys who finally persuaded Sparta to make preventive war on Athens played shrewdly upon these Spartan fears; but that Corinth should have been compelled to produce such arguments is conclusive proof of Sparta's lack of interest in further expansion.

Institutions of Spartan state—Kings, ephors, Senate, Assembly

None of the Greek philosophers knew quite what to make of the Spartan constitution, as distinct from her social system. There were two kings from different families, relics of earlier times, who had little power at home but had the hereditary right to lead the army in the field. When with the army, the king had absolute power, unless the two kings were with the same army, in which case one had a veto on the other. In general each king served to limit the power of the other, but at home neither had very much authority, their function being primarily religious. So Sparta, though it had kings, was not a monarchy. The most important ruling body in the state were the five ephors, who were chosen annually by the Assembly. They had supreme power over the helots, handled foreign affairs, interviewed ambassadors, acted as censors of public and private morals, and could call anyone in Sparta to account for his actions, including the kings. The Council or Senate (Gerousia) was composed of twenty-eight members of old and noble families. The Senate acted as the supreme criminal court, and it prepared legislation for the Assembly. With the ephors, it also composed the executive of the state. The Assembly of all Spartiates (Apella) was the legislature; it also elected the ephors. It could not, however, debate, and it did not vote in the usual manner. Elections and legislation were carried by the loudest shout, as in modern radio programs. Aristotle gave up trying to classify this remarkable mixture of new and old constitutional elements, and called it a "mixed constitution." Broadly speaking, it had many of the characteristics of an oligarchy. But the Spartan constitutional forms are of minor importance in comparison with the social system—the laws, as the philosophers called them—which was the really effective control in Sparta.

Social pressures molding Spartan character—Approval of the philosophers

Why, then, did the philosophers approve of this system, and why did so many contemporary Greeks turn to it with a kind of envy, and at most with only a half-hearted disapproval? Probably few of the contemporaries knew of the historical reason for the system, and all believed in the laws of "Lycurgus." There is no reason to suppose that the enslavement of the helots was regarded as a particularly heinous offense. What they did see was the Spartan prowess in war, which, as warlike people themselves,
they admired; at the all-Greek festivals, they saw the Spartans carrying off many of the honors; and they saw the Spartan girls and women, who were famous in Greece for their modesty, physique, and beauty. And they did not hear Spartan grumbling, if there was any. The Greeks of the other cities did not have as high an appreciation of their own art as we do, and the Spartan lack of artistic achievement probably was not considered specially blameworthy, Spartan heroism, however, was proverbial, and undoubtedly real. The social sanctions ensured it, for no Spartan dared go home in disgrace; he dared not even leave the battlefield to take news home. The Spartan anecdotes and sayings recorded by Plutarch illustrate the kind of reception his fellow citizens, and especially the women of Sparta, would give him.

The other Greeks, with their high ideal of civic virtue and duty, recognized that on this score the Spartans were their superiors. Civic duty, though in Sparta it was of a military nature, was nevertheless imposed by the polis and accepted by the citizens. This condition, to them, was not slavery, because obedience to laws was the whole ideal framework of the polis, as obedience to divine laws was a similar duty for the individual. The other Greeks did not think the Spartans lived under a tyranny, but under a regime chosen for them by Lycurgus, and accepted by them. The Athenian would not have accepted such laws for a moment, nor would he have put up with the Spartan food and frugality, which were the object of frequent jests among citizens of other states, frugal as they were themselves by our standards.

It was the privilege of the Spartans to choose their laws and to obey them; and to all appearances they did obey them. We do not hear of Spartans leaving their city to enjoy the delights of Athens or Corinth until after the Spartan victory in the Peloponnesian War (404 B.C.). It was perhaps the heroic nature of their extreme and narrow ideal and the heroic way in which they lived up to it that excited the admiration of their neighbors; while the philosophers admired the way they used their laws to form character and the logical nature of the laws themselves. The vulgarity, boasting, and propaganda of modern fascist states distinguish them effectively from Sparta. It was the Spartan’s pride that he was a man of few words; and the word “laconic” has passed into our language. And a “Spartan” regime means, not an imperialist, fascist, communist, or oligarchic state, but a regime of simplicity and abstinence.

The Peloponnesian League

Sparta with her new professional army became the leading power in Greece after Argos had been defeated in the Second Messenian War. Her power in the Peloponnesus was beyond question. Her late enemies either joined voluntarily, or were forced into an alliance with her. The independent cities of northern Peloponnesus, including the trading center of Corinth, applied to her for protection, which she was willing to grant. Thus came into existence the first and the most long-lived of all Greek leagues, containing all the Peloponnesian poleis except the mountain areas, most of Achaea, and the city of Argos.

Within this league Sparta was the acknowledged leader, but when the members met for discussion, the Spartan vote counted for no more than any of the others. No member was allowed to secede, and there was a binding offensive and defensive alliance between all the states. There was no interference with local government, though most of the states were oligarchic. There was no common treasury and no funds, though all agreed to contribute in the event of war. It was in no sense a Spartan empire, and the variety of separate and largely complementary interests, plus the dominance of Sparta in prestige and military power, prevented most of the internal jealousies which broke up other Greek political organizations. Nevertheless there were weak links in it among the trading cities in the north. The secession of Megara, which put in a democratic government in the early days of the Periclean empire, and the defeat of Aegina in open warfare by Pericles, who forced her into the
Athenian Confederation, gave the Spartans their first serious suspicions of Athenian imperialism, and were an important contributory cause of the Peloponnesian War, even though the seceding states returned to Sparta repentant before the actual outbreak.

**The Athenian Democracy**

**The early beginnings—Rule by aristocracy**

The difference between Athenian political development and that of all other Greek states, as far as we know, was the willingness of the Athenians to go forward to a complete democracy. If the landowners and nobles had insisted on being stubborn and recalcitrant, they might well have prevented this development; then there would have been no Athenian democracy, and probably no Athenian creative achievement. But time and again the aristocrats in Athens gave way, talked things over in a reasonable manner, abstained from violence to gain their own ends—and throughout the great period of Athens it was they who were the accepted, democratically appointed, political leaders. In all Athenian history there is but one real oligarchic revolution, and it lasted for barely a year. It came into existence only on Spartan insistence, when Athens had been disastrously defeated in war.

We do not know even in what century the small villages and poleis of Attica united into the one polis of Athens, nor do we know the name of the statesman responsible for this first constructive political act of the Athenians—though Athenian legend attributed it to Theseus. The union was celebrated by a festival in later times (Synoikia); though not remembered as vividly in Athens as the similar act of "Menes" in Egypt, it was no less important. For it was the real foundation of Athenian greatness.

The date at which kingship disappeared from Attica is likewise unknown, but there was probably a gradual process under which the king became a civilian magistrate. We
find a record of a king with a ten-year term of office; following this period there were chief officers of state called archons, one of whom was called a "king-archon," which title remained to the days of the democracy. Another was the polemarch, leader in war. The legislative and judicial body of the state became the Areopagus, and though in these early times an assembly had a shadowy kind of existence it does not seem to have had much power. Only the nobles, heads of the traditional clans, were eligible to election for office. The next stage was the taking into political partnership of the more wealthy landowners, and a property qualification was substituted for the sole qualification of birth. The law was administered arbitrarily, the large landowners were squeezing out the small farmers, and economic depression was rife. In the absence of colonies the small farmers unable to make their living on the poor soil of Attica were becoming tenants and sharecroppers. They fell heavily into debt; unable to pay the debts, they sold themselves into slavery. Then, as slaves, these former freemen and citizens were kept on the same land which had once been theirs, or were even sold abroad.

The reforms of Solon

About 621 B.C. one of the causes of discontent was attacked when the nobles gave authority to a certain Draco to codify the law. The law he published was extremely severe (Draconian), but at least it was some check on the old blood-feud method of settling murder cases, and was the foundation of Athenian law. Distinction was made between voluntary and involuntary homicides. But none of the other important grievances was settled.

It was at this point that most Greek states, unable to work their way out of their troubles, allowed the situation to degenerate into bloody revolution. But in Athens the aristocrats and wealthier merchants who formed the powerful class in the state realized that something constructive must be done. So they called upon Solon, a merchant and much-traveled man, a poet who had written fiery attacks on greed and injustice and who was noted as a wise man. They elected him as archon in 594 B.C. with full powers to reorganize the state in any way he saw fit.

Solon was a remarkable statesman. He saw the close connection between the economic and social discontent, and set Athens on the path to curing both. Hitherto the Athenians had tried to make a living growing grain in the unsuitable soil of Attica; they had even exported grain for cash, though the price they obtained could hardly cover the cost of producing it. This was the basic reason why so many of the peasants had fallen into debt, why the large landlords had swallowed up the small ones. Unable to make a living on the land, they had been forced to borrow first on the security of their farms and then of their persons. Solon now realized that it was not only "greed and injustice." He at once prohibited enslavement for debt, but accompanied this with a prohibition of the export of grain. He brought back those who had been sold as slaves abroad and annulled all debts for which the security was either the land itself or the person of the borrower. He did not redivide the land as the more radical reformers were demanding. While he dissuaded farmers from growing grain as unsuitable for Attic soil, his experience told him that the olive and vine could be cultivated successfully and required less space; and that the products themselves were more profitable. On the other hand, the specialized agriculture would release more men from the land, who would then, in company with the newly freed slaves and the farmers who could not make a living, need an alternative occupation. The production of wine and oil required containers, giving work to the potters,
but not enough. There must be a large-scale expansion of industry, and foreign markets must be secured. So Solon promised Athenian citizenship to skilled foreign craftsmen if they would settle in Athens, and he decreed that every father must teach his son a trade. Finally he adopted or stimulated the use of the best coinage available in Greece at that time.

The economic reform of Solon therefore was designed to solve the agricultural problem and build up the city at the same time. Dispossessed farmers, or farmers who could no longer make a living because fewer men were needed for the new crops, could go to the city to learn a trade, and craftsmen were to be found who could teach them. Slaves freed by their masters need not return to the country, but could become craftsmen in the city. And the traders would have more goods to sell and more incentive to seek foreign markets. Only the landed aristocracy might suffer, deprived of the easy sale of wheat, wrested from a starved peasantry; and even these might sometime hope to make profits from wine and olives. If they cared to, they, too, could become merchants and traders. That many of them did not become reconciled to Solon’s “New Deal” is shown by the forcible ejection of large numbers of them from their land in the time of Pisistratus, as we shall see.

Though such reforms could not bear fruit at once, and few were immediately satisfied, they laid the basis for all later Athenian prosperity.

Having dealt with the economic problem Solon turned to the political. The new industrial and commercial class required political rights; and all the citizens needed a

Each of these three amphorae is from a different century. The one on the left is from the seventh century B.C. and is a product of inferior technique; also, note that the decoration still shows some Oriental influence. The center amphora is from the great age of Pisistratus when Athens was striving hard against severe competition in the export market. The amphora on the right is from the age of Pericles when Athens was secure and prosperous and these amphorae were often used for the home market; note the ornateness of this amphora. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)
new status, and some sense of participation in the life of the community. The old Assembly was therefore put on a new basis, and apparently became a full legislature. Every male citizen, of whatever class in society, was entitled to sit in this Assembly. The archons, on the other hand, the executive of the state, retained their high property qualifications. But they were now to be elected indirectly by all the people. Each of the four traditional tribes elected ten eligible citizens, and out of these forty, nine were elected by lot as archons. The old Areopagus, which was recruited from former archons, was kept intact, but some of its legislative powers were taken away from it by the formation of a new Council, the Boule of four hundred chosen by lot from an eligible list elected also by the tribes. The poorest classes of the city were not as yet, however, eligible for the Boule. The chief business of the Boule was to prepare legislation for the Assembly.

Finally Solon introduced the popular law court, the Heliaea, which was a large body elected by the whole people to act as a court of appeal from the decisions of the magistrates. It could also try former magistrates for their activities while in office. Since this typical Athenian institution was naturally not used during the regime of the tyrants who followed Solon, it will be discussed more fully in its later form as revived by Cleisthenes.

The age of Tyrants—Pisistratus—Economic advance

Having produced this constitution, Solon then went into voluntary exile from Athens to see how the state would function without him. It soon became evident that this moderately democratic constitution had one serious defect, apart from the time required to put it in full operation with any chance of success. The tribal system of election was a relic of old clan days, and the tribal leaders were sure of election. Moreover, they were situated in definite geographical areas. Thus party politics based on economic interests were possible and to be expected. Two old clan leaders, both nobles, organized groups known as the Shore and the Plain, presumably the traders and the landowners. They then proceeded to engage in a political and family struggle, making government in Athens for a time impossible. A third noble, Pisistratus, then organized a new party of his own from the rural groups, which he called the Mountain; and with this he bid for the support of the Shore. By a number of ingenious devices he succeeded after several abortive attempts at making his political machine supreme and establishing himself in supreme power in Athens with the solid support of the Mountain and the Shore.

His first task was to silence opposition from the Plain. He did not try to liquidate his opponents, but he took hostages, and imprisoned and exiled others. Then he settled down to constructive work. His rule raised Athens to prosperity and laid the eco-

Terra-cotta oil flask, recently discovered in Athens in the shape of an athlete with much of the original paint preserved. The flask gives a good impression of how the Greeks looked in the age of Pisistratus. (COURTESY AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CLASSICAL STUDIES AT ATHENS)
nomic basis for the later political freedom; moreover he was careful also to behave in a scrupulously correct manner toward his fellow citizens, observe the laws, and keep to such forms of the constitution as could be permitted; and he died in his bed. The Greek word “tyrant” merely means one-man illegitimate rule, as distinct from a hereditary monarchy. It was the misuse of Pisistratus’ son, not his own, that gave the word its later meaning which we have inherited.

Having disposed of the largest landowners, Pisistratus divided their lands among the landless and the small holders, stocking them with vines and olives with the aid of funds obtained from new mines which he worked, and from a small income tax on the rich. By these means he satisfied most of his friends of the Mountain. The remainder he set to work on the first great beautification of Athens, with a huge temple of Olympian Zeus which was not finished until the time of the Roman Emperor Hadrian. Among other public works, he gave Athens a new water supply by building a new aqueduct. He patronized the drama, and supported its development into a popular spectacle with annual contests in tragedy.

For his friends of the Shore Pisistratus built a strong navy, entered into foreign commercial alliances, and sent out a few colonies to important strategic points. He maintained a policy of peace and alliance with the Peloponnesian League. Athens prospered under his rule, and fully recovered from her hesitant start. By the time of his death Athens was the recognized leader of the Ionian peoples, and one of the greatest—if not the greatest—polis in Greece.

The Constitution of Cleisthenes—
Establishment of political democracy

Pisistratus was succeeded by his two sons, who for a time continued his policies. But when one was murdered in a private quarrel, the other, Hippias, hired mercenary troops, paid for them by levying high taxes, and became a tyrant in the modern sense. It was not long before a group of exiled nobles was able to enlist enough out-
side support, including Sparta, to overthrow him. But when these nobles attempted with Spartan help to establish an oligarchy and regain their old aristocratic privileges they were met with determined resistance from the Athenians. One of the noble leaders, Cleisthenes, turned against his fellow nobles and supported the people. The Spartan soldiers were expelled, and after some delay decided not to contest the issue further. So Cleisthenes was left supreme, supported by virtually the whole Athenian people. It was a magnificent opportunity for constructive statesmanship, and he grasped it to the full. The constitution of Cleisthenes remained the fundamental constitution of the Athenians; and though it was modified in a few relatively unimportant points later, it survived all stresses for the rest of the period of Athenian independence.

What was primarily needed now was political reform, for the economic base had been securely laid by Pisistratus. The tribal jealousies and the possibility of political manipulation had to be overcome. Though the reform of Cleisthenes looks too ingenious to work, it was made to work by the public spirit of the Athenians and their desire to make it work. The finished system could be abused, and was greatly abused later. But in theory and practice it was probably the most democratic constitution ever devised and put into effect (if one disregards those who, like the women, the noncitizens, and the slaves, were always disfranchised). Its abuse is a commentary upon human nature in the difficult circumstances of later years rather than upon the constitution itself.

The four tribes were replaced by ten new ones, each with a mythical ancestor as patron. But not all the tribes were geographically next to each other any more. Each was made up of about ten demes (townships or parishes), a third of these coming from the Mountain, a third from the Plain, and a third from the Shore. The deme was the real local unit. Each would-be citizen and boy growing up to manhood would have his credentials examined by the demesmen, and they would probably know enough
about the candidate to handle his application. But it was the tribe, that apparently theoretical organization with a fictitious ancestor and no fixed abode, that voted in the Assembly. The members of the tribe, which was composed of its widely scattered demes, would have to sit together in the Assembly.

The purpose of this reform was probably almost as much social as political. Citizens from different areas would learn to know each other, and they were united by their common aims and common citizenship in the Athenian polis. Moreover, the Athenians also now fought by tribes, and dramatic and other contests went by tribes. In spite of their artificiality, rivalry sprang up between them. Indeed the comparison with army regiments is a very accurate one. Regiments in modern wars contain members from every part of the country. Yet rivalry springs up between them and, with rivalry, loyalty.

The next step for Cleisthenes was to restore to full power the Assembly, the Council, and the law courts of Solon, and reform them to meet the new conditions.

The Boule was to be chosen by lot, fifty members of each tribe. It is not agreed whether this meant complete reliance upon the chance of the lot, as there is some evidence to suggest that the demes provided an eligible list to the tribes. But probably this only means that the eligible list contained the names of all who could be elected. Though we know of exceptions, ordinarily citizens did not sit in the Boule more than once in their lives, so that many each year would be ineligible. In practice, in any case, the result was that a considerable majority of all the citizens actually sat in the Boule during their lifetime. The Boule of five hundred was considered to be too large to transact business efficiently. So a committee, composed of all the fifty members of one tribal delegation (a prytany) did the work for one tenth of the year each. Every day a new chairman of the prytany was chosen by lot to be president of the Assembly and titular head of the state for that day. This means that thirty-six out of every fifty tribal dele-

gates would be president of the polis for one day apiece in their lifetimes.

The Boule took care of all administrative matters, looking after shipping, foreign affairs, finance, and public works, and prepared legislation for the Assembly. Individual members would be chosen by lot from the Boule to occupy all the public positions in the state, with a few exceptions. These officers of the state, however, could be excluded from their position before entering on it by action taken against them in the law courts; they had to submit to examination in the law courts after leaving it; and all their accounts had to be audited before they could leave Athens or sell property.

The Assembly (Ecclesia) was the sovereign legislature. It could initiate legislation, but it did not often do so. It met at least once every prytany (later four times), and could be called specially by the Boule in matters of urgency. Though the chairman of the Boule for the day presided, anyone could speak, anyone could make a proposal, and the measure was decided upon by majority vote. The citizens, however, had to be present in person to vote.

The only control over the people was exercised by the Heliaea, or law court. Six thousand members were chosen by the demes each year, and of these the number required for the juries was chosen by lot as occasion demanded. The juries were very large, sometimes as many as 1001, and apparently never less than 101. In these courts the acts of magistrates and their characters were reviewed, private and public cases of all kinds were tried, and in later times even a law could be tried, and sustained or quashed, in spite of the fact that the Assembly had voted for it. There was no public prosecutor, and of course there could be no higher appeal than that to the sovereign people. Anyone was permitted to bring a case against anyone else, whether he was the aggrieved party or not; but he risked both losing his case and then being punished himself by the vote of the jury. There were no lawyers, and the parties to the case had to plead personally; though professional speech
Klepsydra, or water clock, recently discovered in Athens. The jar was full of water when a speaker either in the Boule or Heliaea started to talk. When the water was gone the speaker’s time was up (about six minutes for this clock). “Antiochidos” was the name of one of the Athenian tribes, which held the prytany for one tenth of the year. This jar was evidently used during the prytany of that particular tribe. (COURTESY AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CLASSICAL STUDIES AT ATHENS)

Since these offices required special competence, appointment for them was not decided by lot but by election. The office, furthermore, though annual, could be held by the outgoing general. And indeed it became customary for the generals to be re-elected. No general, however, had the right to command the army or navy in any particular campaign. The Assembly made the decision on the military leader when the time came, but as a rule the command fell to the leading general. Pericles held the position of general for over thirty years, and during this time he was able by his personal control of the Assembly and this position to rule the Athenians almost as he liked. But at any time in the annual elections he could have been ousted, as indeed he was for a brief period at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War.

The other innovation was ostracism, a clumsy device to prevent any man from becoming too powerful and possibly becoming tyrant. Once a year the Assembly might hold a referendum to see whether any citizen should be sent into an honorable exile for ten years. No specific name was mentioned; and any citizen’s name could be written on a potsherd, or ostrakon, by the voters. If any person or persons received more than six thousand such votes he had to go into exile, with no further penalty attached. The last ostracism occurred during the Peloponnesian War, when it was in fact used as a piece of political maneuvering. It was evidently clear to the Athenian people by this time that it was an ineffective weapon for the purpose for which it was intended, and it fell into disuse. Moreover, the people were so thoroughly accustomed to the rule of law by then that a tyrant could hardly be expected to be able to get into power by political manipulation. Far more effective weapons were now available to serve the same ends.

Characteristics of Periclean democracy

When Cleisthenes had finished his work, the democracy was still not quite complete.
Ostraka, or ballots, used for ostracism in Athens in the fifth century B.C. Note the names of prominent Athenian statesmen written on them: Kimon, Themistokles, (A)risteid(es), Perikles, Miltiades. (COURTESY AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CLASSICAL STUDIES AT ATHENS)

The Areopagus retained some power, and the archons who entered the Areopagus after their year of office were still elected with minor property qualifications. They had some important duties to perform, especially the supervision of the law courts and the festivals. But it was in the hands of the Assembly to deprive them of these duties at its pleasure. In the years after the Persian Wars when the democracy was riding the crest of its success, the Areopagus was stripped of all powers except the right to try homicide cases, which were essentially religious offenses to the Greeks; the archonship, moreover, was opened to all but the poorest class in the state and election was by lot. Jurymen were now for the first time paid for their services, so that all citizens were equally able to serve on the juries if elected by their demesmen. Payment for attendance at the Assembly, however, was not instituted until some years after the death of Pericles. Everyone was, of course, eligible to attend and was expected to do so. But when the number of meetings was increased to between 30 and 40 a year, not including special sessions, attendance required a considerable expenditure of time. It seemed only fair to later Athenians to compensate the citizen for attendance.

Unfortunately for the democracy this well-intended reform meant that those to whom the small pay was attractive attended regularly, while busier persons with greater means often stayed away. The regulars included not only retired farmers and others unable to work, but also the city proletariat who knocked off work for the day when the Assembly was sitting. This group of unemployed and low-paid workers in time came
to dominate the Assembly, especially during and after the Peloponnesian War, ensuring some class legislation and exploitation of the propertied classes. Moreover, all the evidence would seem to show that the Assembly took an excessive interest in policies which could be made the basis of emotional appeals, such as imperialistic adventures. The philosophers and conservatives alike regarded the Assembly's susceptibility to emotional appeals as a radical defect in democracy itself. However, during the regime of Pericles, the masses were willing to follow him—but then, as well as being an enlightened statesman, he was also an imperialist, and his empire paid handsomely.

The last feature worthy of mention in this account of the Athenian constitution was the writ of illegality (graphe paranomon), an effective device that was destined to take the place of ostracism. As suggested earlier, the Athenian did not regard his fundamental laws as alterable for any temporary reasons of expediency. His respect for law was too great for the laws of a polis were the expression of its ideals. Anyone who proposed a law could be attacked in the courts for proposing an unconstitutional law. If he were acquitted, the law was passed; if not, the proposer was fined or otherwise punished according to the will of the jury. This procedure not only effectively discouraged rash innovators but gave the people a chance to think again, since the law could not be put into execution until the case had been decided. It should be understood that there was no definite criterion as to whether the law was really unconstitutional or not, though the proposer would also try to produce evidence that it was not contrary to previous laws and customs. Such evidence would be weighed by the jury together with all other considerations and the verdict rendered accordingly; the device therefore amounted substantially to a judicial review and a trial of the law itself.

The details of the constitution of the Athenians have been gone into at such length because this was the system under which Athens in the great “Classical Age” of Pericles lived, and the system survived for several hundred years. Even under the Macedonians the Athenians still kept substantial self-government though the franchise was restricted. During the Classical Age all the great Athenian masterpieces of art and literature were produced. Such a constitution would be unthinkable in the modern world; indeed, except in the special circumstances of the polis it could not succeed at any time. In spite of its defects even in Athens—and there were many, especially during the Peloponnesian War and in the fourth century B.C.—its many virtues probably outweighed them.

The constitution was predicated upon the belief that every citizen both wished to take, and was capable of taking, an active part in political life, that the judgment of one citizen was as likely to be right as that of another, that nearly all offices of state could be administered as easily by one citizen as another. It gave no consideration to the specialist—and indeed the Athenian ideal was of the gifted and versatile amateur rather than the specialist, as being nearer to the whole man. At least a majority of the citizens under this system held administrative office in the Boule at some time in their lives. It has been estimated that at any given time at least one sixth of the citizen-body was engaged in public activity of some kind, either in the Boule, in the juries, or in one of the numerous minor administrative positions in the state—apart from the Assemblies, where all citizens were expected to be present. This political activity was the real breath of life to the Athenian citizen; it was something that suited his temperament, with his love of talk and social intercourse. And this explains his extreme attachment to the form of the polis, and why no other kind of state was thinkable for a freeman, as Aristotle understood. It also explains why the polis could not absorb other poleis, and why no representative system could be developed, as this would rob the citizen of what he valued most.

It made for strength under adversity, as a general rule. Though the Assembly
might be subject to occasional emotional sprees, every man in it knew that his decisions in the Assembly would affect him personally. There was no idea of "they" and "we" about his attitude toward the government. Time after time in the hard years of war we see Athens recovering from a defeat, even after the disastrous Syracusan expedition—though on this occasion there was a brief period of fear and a brief suspension of full democracy. Almost miraculously she then produced a fleet and citizen sailors to man it, aristocrats and slaves rowing together. Even in the decadent fourth century B.C., when Athenian fighting was mostly done through mercenaries, the eloquence of Demosthenes, his strong sense of patriotism, and the democratic tradition of responsibility were able to recall the Assembly to its duty, and create a citizen army. Though the errors of judgment of the period were enormous, and Athenian power had dwindled, the soul of the city remained. It took defeat by Philip, Alexander, and Antigonus Doson to quell the democratic spirit; and even then it died slowly, and never altogether until the coming of the Romans.

The usual criticism of the Athenian democracy—that it rested on foundations of slavery—is based upon a misunderstanding, as is also the second line of attack—that women were disfranchised. The theory of the Greek polis was that it was an enlarged family, an association of kinsmen. A Greek slave could therefore ultimately hope to be freed and become a citizen, while a barbarian slave—in the Greek view—could never understand the working of a polis. If the latter were freed, he must remain an alien. The slave could not exercise the functions of a citizen until he had been freed and educated. If slavery had been abolished, in spite of the economic conditions that bred it, then political rights for the Greek freedmen would have followed as a matter of course. Slavery cannot therefore be regarded as a blot on Greek democracy as a political ideal, whatever we may think of slavery as an economic and social evil. Metics, or resident aliens, could win full citizenship on occasion, but to do so was difficult. As foreigners they were not expected to understand the concept of the polis as an enlarged family until they had been resident in it for a considerable time. They had rights, but they could not perform the duties of a citizen without understanding very fully the relationship of these duties to the whole ideal of the polis. The enfranchisement of women was, of course, unknown in the Greek world, though we can infer from the fact that Aristophanes devoted a whole play to a lampoon on women in government (Ecclesiazusae) that it was an issue of some interest to the citizens. The position of women in Athens will be discussed later. Here it need only be said that the duties of men and women were rigorously circumscribed. If the status of women had been different, the logic of the situation would have demanded that they be given a vote; but it was their social status that determined their political position. It would have been quite alien to Greek political conceptions that the vote should be, or could be, used to improve social status, as in our own age.

It is fortunate that the entire ideal of the Athenian polis and political life can be inferred from the institutional evidence without touching what is perhaps the most eloquent expression of a political ideal ever made—the Funeral Speech put into the mouth of Pericles by Thucydides. In this speech in honor of the citizen soldiers who have been killed in the first year of the Peloponnesian War, Pericles, instead of praising the dead as was the custom, praises the ideal for which they have died. So his speech becomes a panegyric of the Athenian polis. An Athenian citizen, he says, "does not neglect the state because he takes care of his own household; and even those of us who are engaged in business have a very fair idea of politics. We alone regard a man who takes no interest in public affairs, not as a harmless, but as a useless character; and if few of us are originators, we are all sound judges of policy.... When a citizen is in
any way distinguished, he is preferred to the public service, not as a matter of privilege, but as the reward of merit. Neither is poverty a bar, but a man may benefit his country whatever be the obscurity of his condition.  

It is impossible to deny that these virtues are to be found in the developed Athenian constitution. Within all Greek states there were oligarchic and democratic factions, even in Athens; though in the days of her greatness the aristocrats, on the whole, supported the democracy, and one of its most outstanding members led it. During the Peloponnesian War the oligarchs twice came to power briefly, as we shall see; but only because the democracy had discredited itself through failure in the war. There was always a natural antagonism between the cities with democracies and those with oligarchies, the latter tending to concentrate in the Peloponnesus. The other cities and colonies usually had their parties fairly equally balanced. The result was frequent revolutions, with the oligarchies appealing to Sparta and the democracies to Athens, for help, which was usually given. This situation accounts partly for the divisions and antagonisms between the cities. Trade and other rivalries also caused local wars. Spartan fears of encirclement and Athenian imperialist policies in the fifth century also made for dissension, and local, followed by general, war. There is hardly any period when the Greek cities, each claiming and maintaining full freedom of action on foreign policy, were not engaged in some hostilities against other cities. These intercity rivalries and quarrels are a sad commentary on the Greek political systems which gave rise to them, but they do not compel us to say that the form of government was a failure when it obviously had so many merits in the eyes of its own citizens and was able to manage its internal affairs with such marked success. The national state also has not so far succeeded in abolishing wars.

7 Thucydides, 11, 39 ff.

- **Intercity relations**

**UNIFYING FORCES IN GREEK LIFE—THE RELIGIOUS LEAGUES AND FESTIVALS**

But there were also unifying forces in Greek life. All Greeks looked with contempt upon barbarian kingdoms as unfit for free men, and, as we shall soon see, some unity of purpose was achieved against the attacks of Persian "barbarians." There were several all-Greek festivals, the best known of which were the Olympic games. Here Greeks forgot they were citizens of different poleis, and sat together in amity. Though each city had its patron god or goddess, the great gods were gods of all the Greeks equally, as were the Orphic and other mysteries. The great oracle of Apollo at Delphi in Phocis was a neutral, giving advice impartially to all comers, protected by its sacred position, with even its treasure safe until the late fourth century B.C. Though the Delphic Oracle was in Phocian territory, a league called the Delphic Amphictyon made up of the different states and tribes of Greece was responsible for its protection, and a kind of international law prevailed, neutralizing the sanctuary in the event of war. Even this Amphictyonic League, however, was later manipulated for political purposes, especially by the non-Greek Philip of Macedon. Another league of Ionians protected the sanctuary of Apollo at Delos. On the whole, the political leagues accentuated the division between the states rather than helped to unite them. The great political failure of the Greeks was unquestionably in interstate relations, and it was not until more than a century after the conquests of Macedonia that there appeared any serious likelihood of unification brought about by the free efforts of Greeks themselves.

**THE PERSIAN WARS**

**Unity in face of external danger**

The only occasion in classical times that a majority of Greeks made an important
united effort was in the early fifth century against the Persians.

The campaign of Marathon.

The struggle began with the revolt of the Ionian cities of Asia Minor against Persian expansion under Darius the Great. Darius and his Persians had already expanded into Europe and conquered Thrace, and suppressed some of the liberties of the Ionian cities conquered from Lydia by Cyrus.* The moment for the revolt was badly timed. Though the war lasted a long time, Darius at last was able to bring his superior forces to bear, especially the Phoenician navy, and defeat the cities. He destroyed the ringleader Miletus; but the remainder he treated leniently, even allowing them to have democratic governments if they desired them. But he did not forget that the Athenians and Euboeans had sent a small expedition to help their Ionian kinsmen. The expedition had returned home after aiding in the destruction of the local Persian capital, Sardis; but, according to Herodotus, the historian of the Persian Wars, Darius cherished thoughts of revenge. Urged on by Hippias, the exiled tyrant of Athens who was at his court, Darius prepared an expedition against Athens and Euboea, and sent heralds to other Greek cities demanding submission. Several, including Thebes, sent the token earth and water to the Persian king.

In 490 B.C. the expedition set sail for Athens across the Aegean Sea, under the command of the generals Datis and Artaphernes. After chastising the Euboeans the Persians anchored in the Bay of Marathon, only a few miles to the northeast of Athens, intending to land troops and march directly to the city. Few preparations had been made to meet the Persians, though the young Athenian democracy had a well-trained citizen infantry under the polemarch Callimachus, with an experienced general, Miltiades, a hater of Persia, as strategic adviser. When they heard of the landing at Marathon, and apparently not before, the Athenians sent a runner to Sparta requesting aid, which was duly promised. Unfortunately, however, the omens in Sparta were not favorable and the army was not sent immediately. The result was that Athens had to face the Persian host with the aid only of fewer than a thousand men from the neighboring city of Plataea. The total army facing the Persians was at the most ten thousand; and the Athenians might not have even engaged in battle if they had not thought that Spartan help would soon arrive.

However, the Persians were so sure of victory that they did not trouble to throw in their whole force. It has also been suggested that the account given by Herodotus can be explained only on the assumption that the Persians were awaiting a signal from traitors in Athens sympathetic to the exiled Hippias. However this may be, it seems that the Persian fleet with a large part of the army watched the battle without taking part in it, prepared at the first sign of victory to make for Athens by sea. Nevertheless, the Athenians, assisted by superior knowledge of the terrain, and superior tactics, inflicted an overwhelming defeat on the Persians; then, immediately the battle was over, without waiting to bury the dead, they returned to Athens and marched straight through to Piraeus, the port of the city, a few miles to the southwest. They arrived just as the Persian fleet made its appearance, and the latter, not anxious to engage the victors of Marathon in battle so soon after their own defeat, returned to Persia. Darius died soon afterward, and the Greeks had a breathing space of ten years before Xerxes, his son, could prepare a really formidable expedition, this time not only to punish Athens but to conquer the whole of Greece.

The interval was marked in Athens by the rise to power of Themistocles, who realized the extent of the danger and the only way to combat it. He persuaded the Assembly to use the profits of a new silver mine for the expansion of the navy. Thus, when the Persians struck, Athens had an efficient, well-trained navy, which was to prove one of the decisive factors in the war.

* See above, Chapter 4.
The full-scale invasion of Xerxes

In 480 B.C., Xerxes, at the head of a huge, motley army, and accompanied by a navy, partly Phoenician in origin, which hugged the coast ready to lend support, marched through Thrace to the borders of Greece. Sparta, for once taking the initiative, called a congress to consider a joint defense. Thebes followed her previous policy of immediate submission to the Persians (called "Medizing" by the Greeks), other cities wavered, and ultimately submitted when the Persians approached. Nevertheless this congress at Sparta was attended by delegates from almost all the major cities of Greece, an impressive demonstration of unity never again duplicated. The results, however, were not equally impressive. In view of her naval commitments, Athens found it impossible to spare men to help defend the passes into Greece. Ultimately only three hundred Spartiates with some auxiliary helots, and several more or less unwilling allies, marched to Thermopylae under the
leadership of Leonidas, king of Sparta. This army nevertheless withstood the Persians for several days until a traitor revealed a side path which was inadequately guarded. Sending most of the allies home, the Spartiates fought to the last man in one of the most famous and heroic defenses of history. The army of Xerxes poured through the pass, the Spartans and the Peloponnesian League proceeded to build a wall across the Isthmus of Corinth, and Themistocles and the Athenians prepared to evacuate Athens and Attica and take to the ships. The army of Xerxes entered Athens, sacked and looted it, and burned the temples.

The navy, meanwhile, under the command of Athens but not manned entirely by Athenians, was having trouble in arriving at a decision. The allies wanted to retire to the Peloponnesus, as did the Spartans. But Themistocles threatened to take the Athenian part of the fleet and sail to the west and found a new colony. This sobered the Spartans and the allies, and Themistocles was reluctantly given permission to engage in naval battle with the Persians at once. Baiting a trap with a supposed traitor who succeeded in deceiving Xerxes, he lured the Persians into the narrows of Salamis, where the Greek fleet won a resounding victory. Xerxes returned home, leaving Mardonius with his brother-in-law to carry on the campaign. He retired north for the winter, but again advanced on Attica in the spring. Athens appealed frantically for help to the Spartans, who were now safely holed up in the Peloponnesus; and after much delay the Greeks decided to take the offensive north of the Peloponnesus. At last a really representative allied army brought the army of Mardonius to battle on fairly equal terms. The discipline and valor of the Spartan hoplites won the battle of Plataea (479 B.C.) and Mardonius and almost the whole of his army were killed. This was the decisive battle. The allied fleet won, traditionally on the same day, the final victory of the war at Mycale.

8 According to Herodotus, one man alone escaped, who was held by the Spartans in such infamy that he sacrificed his life in ostentatious deeds of valor later at Plataea.

off the coast of Ionia, and the Ionian cities were freed.

The Persian Wars revealed, as usual, the prevalence of local jealousies and the extreme difficulty of obtaining any kind of unity, even in the face of the overwhelming threat of submersion within a barbarian empire and the loss of all Greek liberties; nevertheless, by the end of 479 B.C. there had been an impressive cooperation and a unified command. Although more than half of it was Athenian, the allied navy had submitted to the control of a Spartan admiral, and won the final victory under his leadership. But no one in Greece after Mycale would have dared to prophesy a permanent unification of all the city-states for any purpose; and indeed, as far as we know, not one man ever thought of such a thing. The nature of the polis, as we have seen, precluded any more effective arrangement than glorified leagues; the kingdom or empire was universally regarded as a barbarian form of government. The Spartans were only anxious to go home; they had done their duty and had won their glory, but more pressing needs were now paramount.

THE CONFEDERATION OF DELOS—ATHENIAN IMPERIALISM

In general all the other mainland city-states except Athens were of the same opinion; but the Ionian cities of Asia Minor, just freed from Persian rule, and the islands of the Aegean did not feel themselves so secure. All Greeks knew that an expedition of the type manned by Xerxes was impossible for years to come, and in any case could probably be beaten off by improvisation as before. But it was not too difficult for Persia, with its immense financial resources and the seamen of Phoenicia at its disposal, to put together a fleet which could do severe damage in the Aegean. So when the Athenians proposed to keep the maritime part of the recent league in being, the islands were willing. The guiding spirit behind the naval policy was undoubtedly Themistocles, the hero of Salamis. He alone among the statesmen of Greece had a clear vision of the future
and prepared for it, converting the Athenian democracy in the years after the wars to the understanding that its future lay on the sea. But the league itself was organized by Aristides the Just, a more trustworthy person, with a reputation for incorruptibility which was accepted by the cities of the new league.

So came into being the Confederation of Delos under the leadership of Athens. The purpose and constitution of this league were admirable in theory; but one clause was capable of abuse, and led the way to Athenian domination and empire. In any case Athens was always the dominant power, and could have made the league an empire, with or without the legal rights on her side. But the league itself would probably never have come into being in this dangerous form had the allies not trusted Aristides, who made the naval and financial assessments for each member. The Confederation was more than the offensive and defensive alliance of the Peloponnesian League; it was a full collective security program backed by a joint navy, and under the protection and sanction of the god Apollo. Those members who were wealthy enough to provide ships could do so; the remainder could contribute money proportionate to their means. The money was to be deposited in Delos, a small island sacred to Apollo, and at Delos was to be held every year a congress, in which each state would be equal, each having one vote. Athens guaranteed the independence of each member, including its foreign policy, and freedom to rule itself under whatever form of government it wished. But, no state could withdraw without the consent of all. 10

The form of this constitution is, of course, democratic enough. But in substance the Athenian veto on withdrawal and the right of the Athenians to make the assessments, combined with her command of the allied navy, gave her a power too great to be opposed by anything except the alliance of all the members together; and this was impossible. In any case most of the members profited by the alliance, and their trade and wealth increased; and they could hope, each individually, that they would not incur the displeasure of Athens nor have their taxes increased. As time went on, almost all the members found it more convenient to pay money instead of providing ships; and this, too, played into the hands of Athens, since the ships bought with the money were built by the Athenians and commanded and manned by them.

In 467 B.C. the Persian navy ventured into Aegean waters and was soundly defeated by the confederation at the battle of the Eurymedon. Thereafter the Aegean became a Greek lake. And though the fleet was used in other imperialist ventures by Pericles later, the real danger was over. It was therefore not unnatural that some of the members should seek to withdraw. The Athenian democracy under all its leaders set itself against this trend with stubbornness and determination, and never in any circumstances gave its consent. When a member seceded, the joint navy, partly paid for by...

10 An instructive modern parallel is the 1834 Zollverein of German states under the leadership of Prussia, which emerged as the German Empire.
THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR

Though Pericles was a high-minded statesman, and a true democrat as far as his own polis was concerned, his foreign policy was that of a confirmed imperialist. Moreover, his consistent anti-Spartan policy was bound to bring him into conflict with the greatest Greek land power and with the maritime cities in the northern Peloponnesus which found their trade slipping from them. When he tried to interfere in the Peloponnesian League itself, and force and cajole members away from that alliance, it was clear that he was aiming at a complete domination of Greece and that Sparta was indeed in danger. There were several clashes on land before the Spartans could be finally convinced by her allies that war was inevitable, and that she must really enter into it as wholeheartedly as the Corinthians and others who were directly threatened by Athenian aggression. But on the outbreak of full-scale war she sent her incomparable army directly against Attica.

The Athenians knew that it would be impossible to defeat the Spartans in open battle. But the city and harbor were now encircled by the Long Walls, built by Themistocles; and as long as Athens maintained command of the sea she could not be starved out and no Greek army could breach the Long Walls until the fleet was conquered. But the policy of keeping all citizens within the Long Walls meant the loss of Attica, and it could not be expected that such a policy would prove popular. In the crowded conditions of the city plague broke out, and Pericles and his policy were briefly repudiated by the people. He failed to be re-elected as general, and peace was considered. However, the tide soon turned, since the people found they could not do without him, and he was given supreme powers to carry on the war as he saw fit. But he died a year later, and soon afterward the Assembly fell into the hands of Cleon, the villain of Thucydides' history, advocate of a strong policy toward the doubtful allies and the counteroffensive against Sparta on land.
The details of this long war are no longer of importance to us, though the incomparable history of Thucydides has made it of perennial interest both to military historians and to all those fascinated by the behavior of human beings under the stress of war. The Athenians built up their army and were able to defeat the allied Peloponnesian forces, even if not the Spartan army itself; though on one occasion the feebleness of Spartan strategy and tactics allowed a fairly large force to be surrounded and captured. Thereupon the Spartans made overtures for peace on the basis of the status quo of the beginning of the war, which terms were rejected by Cleon and the Athenian Assembly. The cities in the empire, as a whole, remained loyal, though evidently with increasing reluctance. The war was none of their making, and did not concern their vital interests. The Athenians at the height of their power sent an expedition to Syracuse, the powerful Corinthian colony in Sicily, and might well have captured it had
it not been for the incompetence of the commanding general. A Spartan adviser was instrumental in helping the Syracusans to the decisive victory; and the Persian king saw his chance to break up the hated Athenian empire as well as recover the Ionian cities. Thereafter he supported Sparta with the money she had been lacking, and Sparta found in Lysander an able admiral. The Persian navy, with Phoenician and Peloponnesian sailors, proved too strong for the Athenians and their now largely disloyal empire. In 404 B.C. Athens was decisively defeated by sea at the battle of Aegospotami, and her resistance was over.

The Spartan army prepared to enter the defenseless city, and the Spartan fleet entered Piraeus Harbor. Terms were dictated to the Athenians. The Spartan allies, Thebes and Corinth, wanted to raze the city to the ground, but the Spartans refused. Athenian services to all Hellas during the Persian Wars, they said, had been such that they could never be forgotten (a nasty and typically Spartan reminder to the Thebans of their disgrace in having “Medized”). The terms, however, were severe enough. The Long Walls were to be pulled down, Athens was to lose all her foreign possessions and to keep only twelve ships, and she was to submit to Sparta as a subject ally. Moreover, the democracy was to be replaced by an oligarchy, which afterward became known in Athenian history as the rule of the Thirty, and, in its last stages, the Ten, Tyrants.

These oligarchs, long unused to power, created a reign of terror, and maintained themselves only by the aid of Lysander and the Spartan army. A group of Athenian refugees won some local victories, and other small towns expelled their Spartan garrisons. Sparta, whose losses in the war were serious, realized that it would be either perpetual war or the restoration of the democracy. She chose to permit the latter, and Athens was free again. But she had yielded supremacy in Greece to Sparta, and, though she was able in due course to rebuild her navy, she never again became the leading power in Greece.

Corruption and Decline in Fourth-Century Greece—Hegemony of Sparta and Thebes

Fourth-century Greek history is a sordid tale of intrigues, first by Persia and then by Macedon, that effectively prevented Greek unity, which in any case few in Greece were looking for. Spartan supremacy was marked by the excesses to be expected of a people only just released from isolation, and whose leaders could not be controlled by the ephors and their social system when beyond Spartan borders. As the price for Persian support Sparta allowed the Great King to take back the Ionian cities in Asia Minor, which remained subject to him till the expedition of Alexander; and he dictated a peace to Greece. His money, however, was spent in intrigues of all kinds. For a time he transferred it to Thebes, and Thebes became the leader in Greece, thanks also to the ability of two of the greatest generals in Greek history, who defeated Sparta decisively in the open field and freed the helots. But Thebes, too, lost Persian support, her generals were killed in battle, and leadership in Greece fell into the hands of the semibarbarian Macedonians. But the fall of all Greece to Philip of Macedon, and the expansion into Asia under Alexander will be left to a later chapter.

The economic basis of Athenian imperialism

Agriculture—Colonization, Cleobulus

In the course of the preceding survey mention has been made where necessary of the economic foundations of Athenian society. Though the empire was not of as much benefit to the farmer as to the merchant and manufacturer, and though he was the first to be hit by the war, he must in general have supported the imperial policy of Pericles, or have been unable to vote against it through the requirement of Athenian democracy that he vote in person. Agriculture remained the foundation of Athenian life. There were probably as many small farmers in Attica as there were permanent inhabitants of the city.

The poverty of the soil and the small
size of the farms always made living on the land difficult. Large farms were very rare; a farm of sixty-five acres in the fourth century was considered enormous. After the reforms of Solon little wheat was grown in Attica. More than two thirds of the whole grain supply had to be imported, mostly from the Black Sea area; and 90 per cent of the grain grown in Attica was barley. Vines and olives remained the principal crop. Slavery on the farms was almost negligible. Few farmers could afford the price; and a slave had to eat and could not produce much more than his keep in return for his labor. But though life on the farms was hard, it at least assured economic independence and prevented the working for wages, which was disliked by all Greeks except in the service of the state.

During the imperial period a new policy, already found for the first time at the beginning of the fifth century, was encouraged, which took some notice of the permanent land hunger of the farmer. It has been seen that Athens was backward in overseas colonization because of her late development. But it became the custom in imperial times to establish small colonies called cleruchies, in the conquered lands, which played a similar part to the Roman republican colonies to be discussed later. These cleruchies were outposts of the Athenian empire, and their inhabitants retained their Athenian citizenship and, of course, were always ready to support Athenian policy. Pericles sent over six thousand colonists or cleruchs to members of the Delian Confederation which had seceded and required to be disciplined. While some of these cleruchs were traders and merchants, the cleruchies were definite allotments of land, and they were sufficient for the small Athenian farms. As well as helping to solve unemployment in Athens and Attica, they provided a means of military control. The cleruchs were usually well able to take care of themselves and at a pinch could always call on the Athenians for support. All through the Peloponnesian War the policy was continued, and was revived occasionally afterward. It was one of the few uses to which the otherwise usually barren military victories were put.

The agriculture of Attica was, however, not necessarily primitive. Though we do not possess much information on agriculture in classical times, the high production of wine and olives, especially the latter, could not have been obtained without very considerable knowledge and intelligent management of the soil. We know that when the Greeks went into Egypt after the conquests of Alexander they were able to introduce there far more scientific soil management than had been known before. As early as the time of Homer we know that vine management was understood, as a famous descriptive passage in the Odyssey makes clear. It was the grain farming that was inefficient and unprofitable rather than the specialized crops. But on the small farms which were expected to provide a living the cultivation had to be highly intensive, or even this meager living would not have been possible.

COMMERCE AND TRADE

There is no doubt that the Athenian empire was highly profitable to the individual Athenians, and to the state. Empire was not indulged in for the sake of prestige. In spite of their enjoyment of glory, it is improbable that any Greek cities would have thought it worth while to quarrel over which should first set up its flag on a stretch of barren desert or a swamp, or to prove to themselves or their enemies that they were better men than their opponents; least of all would they have indulged in imperialism because they thought that barbarians were entitled to the privilege of being made Greeks, even against their will, or should be made to worship Greek gods. We must remember that the Greeks, though passionate, were rationalists, and modern excuses for imperialism would not have moved them. Greek imperialism was as rational as other Greek activities. They were willing to fight to preserve their independence—meaning, ultimately, for their self-government and social order; and they also fought for material gains without bothering to apologize.
All the Greek maritime cities needed their trade. The country as a whole was not self-supporting in foods; and Athens, after the reforms of Solon, had deliberately chosen not to be, as England chose after the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. Grain was mostly imported from the Black Sea area, where Persia could always be a danger. In addition Athens was dependent on outside sources for hides, for most metals, for timber for ships, and for hemp for ropes. With a constantly increasing population to be fed, grain imports had to be rigorously controlled, and both its price and its sale were regulated. Protective tariffs were unknown. There was only a regular 2 per cent customs and excise duty for revenue purposes. But to encourage the export of grain to Athens, regular quantity shippers of grain were not required to pay import duty on all their other exports to Athens. Cleruchs and metics were not permitted to ship grain anywhere except to Athens. Very heavy penalties fell upon all who speculated in grain, and the officials who regulated imports were made to report ten times a year to the Assembly. These measures show something of the importance of the grain trade for Athens; they show also that the problem was simply to ensure the physical supply of grain rather than to make the trade profitable for the grain merchants. It is true that most of the evidence dates from the fourth century after Athens had lost her empire. But it suggests at least one of the chief reasons for the existence of the Athenian imperial navy and the empire itself.

In order to pay for grain and a large variety of minor imports Athens in the Periclean age had little enough to export. The physical import trade was far larger than the export, and the problem of return cargoes for the grain ships must have been important. Hence the need for some kind of coercion. During imperial days Athens kept a consular officer on the shores of the Hellespont.
to see that grain ships were headed in the right direction. While she was mistress of the seas, no doubt grain went safely to Athens, and was paid for not only by exports but from the imperial treasury of the Delos Confederation. There was no possibility of substantially increasing the exports, which consisted of olive oil and various olive products, pottery, marble, weapons and armor, artistic metalwork, and similar luxury products, in addition to some wine, though probably at this time more wine was imported than exported. The only other valuable visible export was silver from the Laurian mines. It is clear, therefore, that with such an enormous trade deficit Athens either had to compensate with an equally large invisible export or had to increase her production of industrial products and sell them. In the age of Pericles she did indeed possess this invisible export—her shipping services, and the protection she extended to the Aegean islands for which she was handsomely compensated by the expropriation of the treasury of the Confederation.

INDUSTRY

As far as we know, if Athens had decided to increase her industrial production by importing raw materials and manufacturing them, as England did in the second half of the nineteenth century, she might well have been able to find a market. But, as in so many other phases of Athenian life that we might wish to criticize, there was a very good social reason why she did not. Every man wanted to control his own business. Not only was it regarded as derogatory to the dignity of a citizen to accept private employment, but if he worked for someone else he was being cheated out of something that gave him great pleasure, namely, running his own business. For a people with such a passion for any form of creative activity to work for another was to work at a disadvantage. Even the building of a great temple, as we know, was carried out by thousands of small contractors, not by one large contractor working efficiently with a gang of workmen, nor by the direct activity of the state. If an Athenian had decided to enlarge his business to make it more efficient and to take better advantage of the division of labor he would have been forced to employ large numbers of slaves, which might have been possible; but he would also need citizen overseers, all of whom would have preferred to be in business for themselves. The largest industrial concern known to us from Greek sources is a shield factory owned by a metic, with 120 slaves; and the largest for the fourth century that we know of employed only 60. One considerable area of Athens was devoted to the manufacture of pottery, but again in small separate concerns. The marble quarries and the silver mines belonged to the state but were rented out in small concessions. In the fourth century the evidence shows a greater division of labor, a fact mentioned with approval by the great philosophers of the time; but the number of slaves in fourth-century Athens also increased, and examination of the records shows that in the factories both foremen and workers were usually slaves. Probably this fourth-century development was forced on the people by the loss of their empire; but there can seldom have been a city of comparable size which had so many citizens working for themselves. This is just one more aspect of the way in which the Greek polis was able to satisfy, by its peculiar social and economic system, the needs and desires of its citizens. But the result unquestionably was that the total product was remarkably small for such a large population; and in Periclean times there was even less than usual to export because the artisans worked for the city, and almost their whole industrial production was consumed at home. For even the most ardent individualist who would refuse to work for a fellow Greek employer was happy to work for the state. In the next chapter we shall see something of what these men accomplished.

BUSINESS ORGANIZATION AND PUBLIC FINANCE

Most of the improvement in business methods dates from the fourth century, when
the need for better methods was greater. There was a considerable development in banking. Not only were more mines being exploited but the subsidies of the Persian kings kept a constant flow of money into the Greek world. In earlier times there were always money-changers who used to sit at a table near the harbor of Piraeus, changing the coins of different states. The value of these coins was largely determined by the intrinsic worth of the coin itself. The Athenian "owls," however, were acceptable almost anywhere in both the fifth and fourth centuries at their face value, for the Athenians were very careful never to debase their currency. It was boasted that foreign merchants were always content to take payment in cash at Athens, knowing they could use it elsewhere. Bankers replaced the money-changers to a large extent, especially during the fourth century, accumulating supplies of money and lending it out, usually at 12 per cent per annum paid by the month. Loans on voyages in which the ship had to face many dangers were at much higher rates. But this was also a kind of insurance, since the money did not have to be repaid if the ship were lost. Bankers also furnished letters of credit, and sometimes financed large transactions and contracts with ready money.

There was no regular tax system in most of the Greek cities. Taxation was on a hand-to-mouth basis. Temple treasures were frequently borrowed, but usually they were carefully repaid. Special assessments were made in times of emergencies, and the rich were expected to make "voluntary" contributions, which in time became compulsory. Athens in imperial days had many extra expenses for public works, but the wage paid by the state was very low, and was the same in nearly all cases for all kinds of work. In later times after the empire, when civic spirit was declining, a new expense had to be met, the pay for the mercenary soldiers who largely replaced the citizen armies. Direct doles to the poor and the unemployed also increased. Moreover, the old system whereby ships were voluntarily contributed by the wealthy was rapidly disappearing, so that recourse to higher taxes was necessary. Sales taxes and a heavy income tax seldom filled the fourth-century Athenian treasury, and the state was constantly in arrears with tax collection, and not infrequently on the verge of bankruptcy. Nevertheless, as soon as efficient and honest administrators were appointed, the city quickly became solvent again, suggesting that some of the tax money went into private pockets.

### Athenian society

#### Daily life in Athens

The whole social life of Athens, and indeed that of all other Greek cities, reflects, above all, the extraordinary poverty of material resources, which was not only accepted philosophically by the Greeks but regarded as the natural, and even desirable, order of things. The ordinary man remained a frugal liver, both in imperial times and in the fourth century. Even what he considered luxuries would be to the imperial Roman very little indeed. Everything must be judged by Greek standards. When Pericles boasts that luxuries from the whole world stream into Athens we must set this against the background of the known national income, and the known social life as shown by the inscriptions, by the artistic remains as well as by the literature. All Greeks wore clothes of the utmost simplicity at all times, an undergarment fastened with a safety pin, and an outer garment draped about their person. The same garment served as a blanket. Beds were usually planks, without springs. The average house, unlike the temples, was made of sun-dried brick, and houses were built closely together. The walls were not decorated, the furniture was crude and utilitarian. When Pericles insisted that Athenian homes were beautiful and elegant, he may have been speaking the truth, because the artistic decorations that the Greek knew so well how to make may have been in use. If so, we know nothing of such decorations; but a list of the furniture in the house of the most fashionable young man
of Athens in his day which we do possess is singularly unimpressive. The houses themselves were adequate for living in, but bear no comparison at all with those of pre-Greek Minoan Crete.

The reason for this utter lack of luxury in the private homes of the Athenians is simple enough. The Greek lived primarily in the open air. More hours of the day were spent in the gymnasion, the agora, or the streets than in his house. When it was dark he went to bed, and at dawn he usually rose and went into the street, without breakfast. We hear nothing from any source of any great mansions of the Roman type in classical times, nor of palatial private gardens and pleasure grounds. Rich men contributed their wealth to the polis, and did not use it so much for their own pleasure; but even their riches were small enough by Roman or Minoan standards. There were no gargantuan feasts; food was scarce and lacked variety. Meat was rarely eaten.

The truth seems to be, hard as it may be for us to believe, that the Greek really did not care for luxury, or not enough to give up his leisure to gain it; and it was frowned upon by public opinion. A contrast sometimes made between Athenian luxury and Spartan simplicity is extremely relative. Both lived simply; but the Spartan cultivated simplicity, wearing only one garment in winter and going barefoot, while the Athenian had sandals. The Athenian was able to decorate his city superbly because he cared for it rather than for his home; and to the service of his gods and his city he devoted all his unparalleled artistic talents. No doubt it was a temptation to distribute, as a dividend to all citizens, the hundred talents unexpectedly gained from a city-owned silver mine; but he was also willing to spend it, as he did on the advice of Themistocles, on a navy instead.

The kind of freedom that resulted from this doing without is one that is unique in history, and can never be repeated. But if one delights in free talk, assemblies, festivals, plays, the development of the mind and the body, self-government, and civic glory, the logical thing to do is to avoid cluttering one’s self up with possessions useless to this kind of life. But the loss of the city life—not necessarily even the city itself, for this could be rebuilt—would be irreparable. The life of the expatriated Greek in Alexander’s empire was such that he could gain luxury without difficulty; but from the evidence it appears that he was lonely, rootless, bored, inclined to suicide, to the worship of Tyche, goddess of chance, and to mystery religions, even though he tried his best to re-create the forms of the polis around him.

CLASSES IN ATHENIAN SOCIETY

The classes in Athenian society were definitely marked out on the basis of property, not birth. The three main subdivisions, of course, were the citizens, the metics, and the slaves. From the time of Pericles, citizenship was limited to those Athenians both of whose parents were also citizens. This restriction was later to some extent relaxed, though the officials of the demes who examined credentials were naturally jealous of the privilege of citizenship, which meant much to the citizens and was a considerable expense to the state, for citizens, as a rule, were more lightly taxed than metics. The Assembly, as sovereign body of the state, could, of course, grant citizenship in certain cases, sometimes en masse, as to the inhabitants of Samos who remained faithful to the Athenian alliance under adversity.

About 6 per cent of the citizens were enrolled in the two highest classes of the state, the nobles and the knights. The majority of the population were small farmers (zeugitae), a solid middle class which served to balance the radical democrats of the thetes, or lowest class, who possessed little or no property, and were mostly artisans and other city dwellers. Some state offices, such as the archonship, always had a property qualification, and the thetes were excluded from them.

Ordinary temporary residents of the city had no rights in it and no privileges. After a certain period of residence an alien could be given the official status of metic, which
entitled him to pay taxes, serve in the army, and perform the other duties of citizens. He was not permitted to own land, nor plead in the courts except through citizens. But metic were on a level of social equality with the Athenians, could take part in the festivals, and in certain circumstances could hope to obtain citizenship. Aristotle was never an Athenian citizen, but was able to study and teach there as long as he wished. His ultimate exile as a friend of the hated Alexander could have been imposed with no more difficulty on a citizen.

The position of women in Athenian society has given rise to some controversy among scholars. The literary and legal evidence is clear enough. They could not attend the Assembly or hold office; they could not hold property; they could not plead in the courts. In all public affairs a man—her husband or her nearest male relative—had to act on behalf of a woman. If she were an only child and her father died intestate, her nearest male relative could claim her in marriage, even being permitted to divorce his own wife for the purpose, or he became her guardian. The Athenian houses were divided into men’s and women’s quarters, marriages were arranged between parents without consulting the girl, women were not formally educated; and, finally, Aristotle claims that “by nature” men are superior and women inferior, and Pericles, in a famous passage, advised the women in his audience that their “best reputation is not to be spoken of for good or evil.”

But much of the literary evidence can be construed differently. Pericles’s advice may mean no more than that women should not provide food for gossip, an unexceptionable and common sentiment in all societies. When Xenophon shows us a middle-aged man giving advice to a young girl while she makes approving and respectful noises in return this may be only a piece of wish-fulfillment on the part of the middle-aged writer. The whole evidence taken literally seems to conflict with the happy pictures of family life shown in the tomb reliefs and on decorated vases; and other indications from the literary sources suggest different conclusions. There are noble heroines in Euripides, and Sophocles’ Antigone is one
that family life was not as normal as elsewhere. There is, however, certain evidence that romantic love was not a Greek ideal, at least as between man and woman. Passionate love between men and women is treated by the serious writers as if it were a dread disease, as in the Hippolytus and Medea of Euripides. On the other hand, there is much evidence that love between members of the same sex was treated as an ordinary and natural thing, and no Greek writer condemns it as likely to lead to the same tragic disturbances as passionate love between man and woman.

EDUCATION

The standard education of the Athenian boy consisted in reading, writing, and practical numbers. This included the learning of much of the best Greek poetry by heart. Musical training was given, especially in the lyre, to those who could afford it. This was accompanied by games, contests, and physical exercises, directed not as in Sparta, to military ends, but toward the development of a healthy body and physical beauty. Up to the age of fourteen the boy was under the direction of a paidagogos, a private tutor, usually a slave, who also tried to instill moral principles into his charges. From fourteen to eighteen the boy’s education was primarily physical and conducted in the public gymnasia where athletes were also trained for the games. Here he had his first real opportunity for contact with older men; in the gymnasia he engaged in the public discussions so dear to the Athenians. At eighteen the youth became a citizen by taking an oath to obey the laws and the constitution and not “to disgrace my sacred weapons.” From ages eighteen to twenty the first three classes of citizens engaged in compulsory military training from which, as in early Rome, the poorest class was exempt.

13 In the time of Pericles the Sophists also taught for money, much to the disgust of the more conservative Athenians. The subjects they taught were more “practical.” But, of course, the Sophists were not sponsored by the polis. Socrates, incidentally, though accused of being a Sophist, was not a professional, and always refused to take pay.
This kind of education, it may be noted, was not suitable for women, who received such education as they had privately. Since they were permitted to go to the theaters and take part in festivals, and as the theater, at least, required a considerable understanding, it may be supposed that feminine accomplishment was, in such matters as reading and writing, not far behind that of their sons and husbands. In the matter of education, as in everything else, the polis was realistic. It sponsored what it deemed to be useful, and, for the rest, it left the citizen entirely free. It provided athletic instructors and gymasia, but private persons contributed the paidagogoi. But the men who talked and discussed in the gymasia did so from the love of it, and the youths took part if they wished. It was probably entirely possible—but very boring—to be as badly educated in Athens as it is now. What on earth would one do when all that one could see at the theater was a performance of the Frogs?

Suggestions for further reading

There is no substitute for the reading of as many Greek works as possible in translation, and secondary sources should always take second place to the Greek writers themselves. Some useful works of interpretation will be suggested in this and the following chapters, but attention will also be drawn to those translations which seem best fitted for the student. In reading Homer, one should remember that the Iliad and the Odyssey are magnificent heroic poems; and the present writer is unsympathetic to the modern tendency, to be observed, for instance, in the Penguin and Mentor editions destined for a large public, to treat them as if they were merely tales, almost the equivalent of modern novels. On the other hand, self-consciously archaic language goes to the other extreme and is often irritating to the modern student. In the author’s view the most satisfactory translation of the Iliad is R. Lattimore, The Iliad (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951). For the Odyssey the student may select any that suits his fancy. The present writer will make no recommendation.

In general, the translations published in the Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press) are the most accurate and reliable, though they are sometimes pedestrian. All the Greek works mentioned in the text are available in this series, though of course other editions exist. New translations of Herodotus and Thucydides have recently appeared in the Penguin Classics series which are both modern in diction and, as far as I have checked, accurate. These are almost certain to supersede the older nineteenth-century translations, which were difficult to read: Herodotus, The Persian Wars, tr. Aubrey de Selincourt, and Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War, tr. Rex Warner (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1954). These works, being written in prose, do not suffer so much as the Iliad and Odyssey from colloquialism, which is in any case not so marked. For this chapter the treatise of the aristocrat known as the Old Oligarch should be read. It is to be found in G. W. Botsford and E. G. Sihler, Hellenic Civilization (New York: Columbia University Press, 1915), pp. 222-239, although the nineteenth-century translation, even when revised by Sihler, leaves a good deal to be desired in certain places and is distinguished by excessive and unnecessary circumlocution. Some of the biographies of Plutarch should also be read, especially those of Themistocles, Pericles, Cimon, Alcibiades, Aristides, and Nicias. Aristotle, Constitution of Athens (tr. K. von Fritz and E. Kapp; New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1950), is a succinct account by the great philosopher of the political history of Athens, and should not be missed.

Hellenic Culture

The originality of Greek thought · Wonder about the world · From religion to philosophy · Religion: early forms, maturity · Philosophy; the advance of rationalism; philosophy becomes science · Hellenic art of the Classical Age · Literature

The originality of Greek thought

CONTRAST WITH ORIENTAL THOUGHT

Many efforts have been made to trace Greek thought back to its origins and relate it to its Oriental forebears. The Greeks themselves had a great respect for Egyptian thought and science; certain elements in Greek mystery religion obviously derive from Oriental conceptions. Early Greek art shows traces of Egyptian, and certainly Minoan and Mycenaean, influence; gods and goddesses, myths and legends, are also often of foreign, especially Minoan, origin. But when all is said and done there is something definitely and clearly new in Greek thought, something which is not present even in the profound and important Hindu philosophy (most of which does not in any case certainly antedate Greek thought). The new element is wonder and curiosity about this world and everything in it, particularly man.

The Hebrews, the Hindus, and the Chinese were all interested in discovering what man’s position was in this world, and his proper behavior toward the gods. The Hindus saw clearly man’s possibility of self-development, but they lacked admiration for man. They examined his psychology, but their emphasis of his immortal part above his mortal led mature Hindu thought to conceive of earthly existence as maya, and the body as a prison house. Self-development therefore to the Hindu was a process of freeing one’s self from earthly desires, and becoming as far as possible a spiritual being while still on earth (the Atman). The Greeks, on the other hand, respectfully and admiringly inquired into the nature of man on earth, admiring both his body and his mind. The union of body and mind (or soul) was perfection. Hence a culture of this world was created, and the next world was pictured as a shadowy existence, hardly imaginable, without solidity, and no substitute at all for the joys and sufferings and growth of this.

THE ATTEMPT TO FIND ORDER AND PATTERN IN EARTHLY PHENOMENA

Since man was anchored securely in this world, everything about this world was of interest and importance to him. The great questions why and what were always on his
lips. No one thing should be examined alone, for this was specialization and meant neglect of all the other good things to which his attention might turn. "We have a happy versatility," said Pericles. All the great Greek philosophers were men of action, or willing to be; all took the whole realm of knowledge for their field of inquiry, or tried to find huge universal explanations which covered all phenomena, and explained the whole, not only the small visible parts. They were fortunate in that a great deal of empirical material existed as the heritage of previous civilizations, and into this they attempted to put order. Later philosophers such as Aristotle tried to put order also into the speculations of their earlier Greek predecessors. But the great characteristic of all Greek thinkers is an attempt, consistently pursued, to find order and pattern, to discover the real harmony in things by the use of their minds, to replace the recalcitrant phenomena of sense perception by the precise and orderly mental conceptions which form their counterpart. In this Plato and Aristotle are at one with the Ionian cosmologists, as well as with Aeschylus and Sophocles, who strove to fit the deeds of men into the framework of human destiny.

THE GREEK LANGUAGE—ITS UNIQUENESS

The Greek genius is reflected in its remarkable language, which is in many ways unique among the languages of mankind, as an instrument for expressing all the different possible shades of meaning. It is the most fully inflected of languages, the inflections being used where we employ the less effective and less precise auxiliaries "to have" and "to be," accompanied by participles. In the Greek language, unlike the Latin, there are no missing forms—there are, for instance, present participles in the passive, and active participles in the past. There are three voices, the active, the passive, and the middle, the last reflecting the shade of meaning required when something is done on behalf of the subject, not unlike the French reflexive verb. There are three numbers, the singular, the plural, and the dual, for every verb and for every noun, reflecting the shade of meaning which distinguishes acts done in company with many from those performed with only one companion. There are a host of particles used to create an internal balance within a sentence, and to point to the logical connection between one sentence and the one which follows it. Perhaps the most useful feature of the language for all later peoples who have borrowed words from it is the multitude of prepositions, which can be used also as prefixes for verbs and nouns, to reflect slight changes in meaning, as, for instance, between psychology (psyche—soul, and logos—discussion, both Greek words) and parapsychology (by the side of psychology), a word needed in the English language when the suggestion had to be voiced that certain new theories in psychology did not strictly belong to the original science. The vast bulk of our scientific terminology is Greek in origin, and daily we add new compounds, usually formed from the Greek.

Wonder about the world

PRE-SOCRATIC COSMOLOGISTS—SEARCH FOR THE UNDERLYING SUBSTANCE—MONISM

It was in the Asiatic Greek cities that speculation about the natural world first arose. Though there were certainly thinkers before Thales of Miletus, he is the first of whom we have knowledge. He has therefore been called the father of philosophy, although, in view of the object of his speculations, we should prefer to call him the father of natural science. He is said to have traveled in Asia and Egypt; he was a practical man and a statesman.

Thales (born about 620 B.C.) is credited with several theorems, including the proof of the proposition that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal to one another, and that a circle is cut into two equal parts by its diameter. The particular theorems, however, are of secondary importance. But it is of the utmost significance that at last, and apparently for the first time, a universal mathematical proposition was
formulated and proved. No longer would it be necessary to draw triangles and measure them, as the Egyptians appear to have done until the close of their civilization. The truths of geometry hold good for all triangles, whether drawn or merely existing in the human mind. It is impossible to believe that any triangle could ever be drawn that would prove an exception to the general rule. It was the Greeks who first perceived this fact, and geometry is undoubtedly the greatest scientific achievement of the Greek genius.

But Thales is of great importance also in the history of science for his speculations on the subject of change, speculations in which he was followed by a whole series of thinkers who came up with different answers to the question he posed. It was, of course, obvious to Thales that there was a great diversity in all perceivable phenomena. But, he asked, is there some fundamental substance which merely changes its form in the different phenomena but remains in essence the same? Thales assumed that there must be one such substance, and he suggested it was water, or moisture, perhaps on the basis of a correct observation that water does appear on earth in solid, liquid, and gaseous form. In postulating one substance, Thales, like the other Ionian thinkers, was a “monist” (Greek—monos, one).

It may be added that the kind of speculation initiated by the Ionian Greeks was totally different from any thought on the physical world that preceded them. All these Greek thinkers, though not necessarily rejecting the idea of God, rejected the gods as an explanation for earthly phenomena. Hesiod and earlier poets had explained the world solely in terms of the activities of gods, and in his account of the creation of the world there is no natural causation. But the “water” of Thales changes its form by evaporation or solidification, and the explanation is self-subsistant without need for the agency of gods.

Anaximander (born about 630 B.C.), also of Miletus, was not satisfied with the fundamental substance proposed by Thales, though he agreed that there must be such a substance. He suggested that it must be indeterminate, and not any recognizable earthly “stuff.” This he called the “boundless thing,” an indeterminate substance, “ungendered and imperishable.” All phenomena periodically returned to the condition of indeterminacy, and then evolved into new forms. Anaximander, in pursuance of this thought of evolution, produced an imaginative picture of how one animal evolved from another which has remarkable similarities with the modern Darwinian theory, although of course the Milesian had little evidence on which to base his theory.

Anaximenes (born about 590 B.C.), the last of the three great early Ionian thinkers, was dissatisfied with the “boundless thing” of Anaximander, since to him it was a mere verbal explanation without real meaning. He preferred to return to a more real substance which, as he could see, did change on earth. He chose air for this substance, which at its rarest became fire, and at its densest became earth. A stone was the most condensed form of air, and even the stars are “pushed by condensed resisting air.”

Rather later than these early pioneers came Heraclitus of Ephesus (born about 530 B.C.), many of whose dark and cryptic sayings have survived and have exercised the ingenuity of numerous interpreters since his day. It is difficult indeed to reconcile all his statements into a coherent and consistent whole. In his search for a fundamental substance underlying all changing appearances he hit upon “ever-living fire, which is kindled, dies and then is kindled again.” But, though he stated this unequivocally, he concentrated more than his predecessors on the changes in form rather than on the attempt to find the substance which changes, drawing attention to the fact that “everything is flowing,” and that “you cannot step twice in the same river.” This led him to the understanding that beneath all change and disorder is the great underlying order of the Divine Intelligence or Logos,
which he also did not hesitate to call God, seeming to see it as the power which harmonizes all opposites in the universe. There is a hidden harmony between opposites: "From what draws apart results the most beautiful harmony."

From such fragments as we possess it would seem that Heraclitus was filled with admiration for the world as an orderly process, with opposites being harmonized, the unlike acting as the complement of the like, not dissimilar to the thesis, antithesis, and synthesis of Hegel, who was certainly influenced by him. But it was not yet possible to express such an idea in an abstract manner, so that he was forced to fall back upon fire as an inadequate but suggestive image for what he was trying to convey.

Though he is sometimes called a dualist because he spoke of the principles of the world as being the unit and the infinite, another virtual monist was Pythagoras (born about 590 B.C.), of whom we know very little, though we know more of the work done by his school in Italy. To these thinkers number was the essence of all things, and they thought and experimented with numbers to the exclusion of ordinary physical inquiry. They discovered the mathematical laws of musical harmony, the relationship between the length of the string of a lyre and the sound produced by it, that a string of half the length would produce the same note an octave higher. Certain combinations and numbers were harmonious, they found, while others were not. Harmony itself was therefore mathematical. There is no reason to suppose that they arrived at the practical conclusion that everything in the world was capable of being numbered; it seems rather that they devoted their attention exclusively to discovering the mathematical relations between the phenomena of the world (a similar approach to that of the seventeenth-century astronomer and mathematician Kepler) and regarded the ordering activity of God as expressing itself in the numerical harmony of all things created. Pythagoras, of course, is also universally credited with the famous theorem that bears his name.

The last of the early monists was Parmenides of Elea in southern Italy (born about 515 B.C.), who did not attempt to define any fundamental substance but contented himself with calling it "the One." The basis of Parmenides' thought was that it is manifestly inconceivable that there should be such a thing as nothing. There can be no coming into existence or passing away, since the one must have arisen in nothing, and the other must end in nothing. Matter is uniform and indestructible, or it would have to be mixed with nothing. Change does not really exist and must be an illusion —for since there is no creation and there will be no end, everything is as it has always been, whatever the appearances may suggest. This theory had important consequences. Sense perception, which gives untrue information, must be untrustworthy, and only thought, which can perceive the truth, is real. Hence reason is superior to sense perception as a means of knowing, and what is known in the mind can alone be considered true, a fundamental assumption in Greek mathematics, and the basis of Euclidean geometry. When Plato considered the archetypal heavenly ideas, to be perceived by the human Nous or Mind, as the source of all earthly knowledge, the inferior copy of which can alone be perceived by the senses on earth, he was showing himself a disciple of Parmenides.

Moreover, the logical criticism of Parmenides put an end to the attempt to discover a single underlying material substance which changed its form. Since Parmenides' argument that there was no such thing as nothing was accepted, everything must then be made up of combinations of already existing things, which neither came from nothing nor dissolved into nothing, but merely changed their forms by making different combinations. Now, therefore, we have the pluralists, believers in many substances, of whom the earliest was Empedocles (born about 510 B.C.)
PLURALISM—THE SEARCH FOR MANY SUBSTANCES IN CHANGING COMBINATIONS

Empedocles posited the existence of four basic elements, earth, air, fire, and water, and two types of motion, Love and Strife. Love unites these elements together into compounds, while Strife forces them apart. Empedocles’ pluralism was criticized by the Ionian Anaxagoras (born about 500 B.C.), on the grounds that he had not properly explained how any objects of sense could come into being from these elements, nor how they combined. “How can hair come from what is not hair, and flesh from what is not flesh?” Anaxagoras accepted the suggestion that there was such a process of combination, but it was of an enormous number of separate seeds, each homogeneous, flesh being made up predominantly of flesh “seeds,” in combination with other invisible seeds of different substances. These seeds were combined by the activity of Mind, which was responsible for all motion.

This speculation left the way open for the atomists. Leucippus, a contemporary of Anaxagoras, may have been the first to suggest the theory; but as we possess no certainly authentic fragment of his, the theory is usually credited to Democritus (born about 460 B.C.), a considerable number of fragments of his work being extant. Democritus, still trying to solve the problem of how there was so much diversity in the world of phenomena, while reason seemed to suggest that there could be no real change, no coming into being and passing away, came to the conclusion that there was nothing in the world except atoms and the void (filled space and empty space). The atoms differed not in quality but in shape and size and they combined into different observable phenomena on a simple quantitative basis. They could move, because there was space to move in, and they could be separated from each other by space, thus altering their visible appearance in combination. Democritus did not apparently try to account for motion, but his imagination suggested many different kinds of combinations of atoms and space to account for the various qualities of all phenomena. The theories of Democritus were elaborated by Epicurus (born about 342 B.C.), who used them as a basis for a moral philosophy, and by the Roman Lucretius, whose ideas will be dealt with in a later chapter. The atomic view of nature was not accepted, however, by Plato or Aristotle, and, as a materialistic philosophy especially as developed by Epicurus and Lucretius, was hardly likely to be acceptable in its own or later ages for a long time to come. As a physical theory, however, even though it was only a guess and could not be supported by experimental inquiry as in our own times when atomism has been revived, it was a respectable answer to the questions raised by Thales, and no better one was provided by any of the Greeks. Interest in the problem itself became dormant as philosophers and thinkers turned to other problems.

From religion to philosophy

RELIGION—EARLY FORMS

Pervasiveness of religion in all Greek life

In studying Egypt we found it impossible to separate religion from government; and there was almost nothing that could be studied in Egypt without an understanding of the religious framework. The Greeks are usually thought of as a secular people—indeed as the founders of secularism because of their exclusive interest in this life, and their special interest in man. If this interest be conceded, we still should not confuse Greek secularism in this limited sense with modern secularism. All religion is not concerned with the next world, and all religion does not require a canonical book, churches, and priests. The sole necessity for religion is the belief in gods or divine powers which are concerned with man and the universe. And this religion was not only present among the Greeks but suffused all their activities until late in Hellenic times.

Disregard for, and disbelief in, the gods was uncommon before the fourth century B.C. even among intellectuals; and a truly
secular attitude to life can be detected only from the middle of the fifth century B.C. at the earliest, concurrent with the rise of individualism and the decline of the polis. At this time art became to some degree emancipated from religion, and the tragic drama, not only religious in origin but providing the deepest of religious experiences for all those privileged to be present, came to an abrupt end. The Sophists questioned the very basis of all received beliefs, and Socrates and his followers Plato and Aristotle tried to build a new ethic upon the ruins. The communal life of the polis, based upon beliefs and rituals held and performed in common, slowly gave place to self-seeking and the pursuit of personal wealth and happiness.

The decay of religion should not be thought of as the reason for the decay of civic life and other manifestations of the secularist revolution, but as its necessary accompaniment. It will be misleading, however, to study the religion in total isolation, as if it were kept for Sunday and were not a central element in Hellenic culture. We shall therefore in this chapter study first the early and fifth-century Greek religion, paying special attention to its most mature expression in the tragic drama, and then deal with the Sophists and thinkers of the later period under the general title of philosophy. Then we shall return to Greek art and such of Greek literature as has not hitherto been considered, and when necessary relate these also to the dominant religious conceptions. It is hoped that this unorthodox procedure will be justified by a greater understanding of the total Greek spirit than is provided by a study of each realm of achievement in isolation.

Our understanding of Greek religion and appreciation for it has been seriously dulled by the way in which most people have learned of it; and this applies to the Romans as well as to ourselves. When the Greek religion ceased to be a living force, the scholars and storytellers began to find it naïve and amusing, and to tell not very edifying stories of the Greek gods on Olympus. Though there was still a substratum of the original myth left, the story was heightened by the art of the teller. We heard of the amours of Ares and Aphrodite, and of the many wives, children, and grandchildren of Zeus, the rape of Persephone, and the story of the pomegranate seeds—there are thousands of them, and most of them appear in the Metamorphoses of the Roman poet Ovid. But those stories that become "cute" in Ovid are not cute in Homer or even in Euripides. We have tended to present the story of Greek religion according to the tales of Ovid or the scholarly investigations of the Alexandrians, but not often enough as the Greeks themselves looked upon their gods. It is certain that they never snickered at them. We have said that the common people needed a popular religion, and no doubt they and not the intellectuals believed in the gods of Olympus; but it is too often forgotten that the same common people were able to appreciate the tremendous tragic drama of Aeschylus and Sophocles, and awarded a first prize to that comedy of Aristophanes (The Frogs), the heart of which was a technical discussion of the poetry, meter, and thought of Aeschylus and Euripides. Aristophanes continued to win prizes to the end of his days. Can it be imagined that the little people who built the Parthenon and carved the friezes snickered at the stories of the gods and heroes, the subjects of their work?

The nature of Greek polytheism—The gods as powers of nature

As with other polytheistic peoples, the gods were powers. Some of the older myths about the ancient gods and Titans were concerned with the creation of order out of chaos, and the supersession of this order by another, which was more moral than the first. Of such a kind is the story of the ancient sky-god Ouranos, who was defeated by his son Chronos, when Time first came into existence, and then his later defeat by his son Zeus. The vast bulk of the Greek gods were associated with special places; and with the conquests of one people by
another it is possible that the old god and
the new united, and a myth told of the fusion
of peoples as of their gods. Few gods were
ousted altogether, for Greek religion was
very hospitable to gods; but at all times they
were kept in order by Zeus, and belonged
to his family—tribal gods, river and place
gods, and even abstractions like Themis
(Justice), and Dike (Law). All gods were
regarded as more powerful than men, like
them insofar as they had mortal passions, and
unlike them insofar as they were immortal.

We can only write vaguely about the
beliefs of the Greeks in their gods because
such beliefs, as is evident from the dialogues
of Plato, vary markedly from man to man.
But their ritual and manner of worship did
not vary to the same degree, and from
them we can realize the general respect in
which the gods were held, whatever the
individual belief. The god is both a power
who can bestow help and a being worthy
of man’s worship. The Greeks do not seem
to have propitiated their gods or even asked
favors of them; on the contrary, they hon-
ored them, and waited for the blessing of
the gods in return, without presuming to
make suggestions to them. Temples were
built not for worship but as homes for the
gods. At a festival the citizens made a sol-
emn procession to the temple, and expressed
gratitude for all the god had done for them.
They did not kneel, but stood upright, with
hands outstretched. The Greeks never abased
themselves, before either god or man.

The belief in destiny (Moira)
To thinking peoples, however, the gods,
even in the time of Homer, were never all-
powerful. There is a greater power behind
the world, the force of Destiny (Moira).
To this even the gods are subject. Human
life follows an inevitable destiny; man can-
not understand it, and neither the gods nor
man can change it. This is the true order
in the universe. It is not arbitrary, as with
the Mesopotamians; it is merely incompre-
prehensible by man. Oedipus had no say in his
fateful destiny. It was decreed before he was
born; it was foretold, and those who knew
of it tried to avoid it—but the destiny was
fulfilled. Yet to mature Greek thought Oedi-
pus was in no sense the plaything of the
gods. He had to live as a man within the
framework of this destiny, and his nobility
lay in the human qualities he showed in
facing it. In time Moira became incorpo-
rated among the powers of Zeus who “orders
fate,” but this did not alter the conception
of fate itself.

Apollo and Dionysus—Mind and
emotion
Beneath Zeus were the great powers of
Apollo and Dionysus. Apollo was the serene
god of light, supreme patron of the arts, of
beauty, and of music; his ideal was mod-
eration, self-control through the mind,
sophrosyne, everything the Greek wished
to be. Upon the shrine of Apollo at Delphi
were inscribed the words “Nothing too
much.” Through his knowledge of destiny
and of the hearts of men Apollo knew what
was to come. At Delphi he could be con-
sulted through a priestess whom he inspired.
Any devotee could inquire the future from
him and ask his advice. But he could not
be petitioned or asked to change the future.
There was an old legend that for three
months in the year Dionysus should rule at
Delphi, and not Apollo. This was a profound
psychological perception of the Greeks, for
they knew as well as anyone else that man
is not always ruled by reason and modera-
tion, but often by passion. And Dionysus
was the god of passion and inspiration. The
worship of Dionysus is closely connected
with the Orphic mysteries, a form of reli-
gion which does not seem, to the traditional
way of thinking, characteristically Greek,
and was certainly known under various
guises in the Orient. Throughout Greece and
the Near East were mystery centers where
individual human beings were initiated
through ceremonies, rituals, and trials, into
the knowledge of death, resurrection, and
immortality which was otherwise unknown
to them. Unfortunately our own information
on these mysteries must be inferred from the
representations in Greek art, and the type-
myths which were enacted during the celebration of the mysteries. Plutarch spoke of the initiation of his own day, centuries later, as an unforgettable experience, after which no initiate could ever be the same again. Innocent happiness dwelt in the darkness, we are told, and no one should receive knowledge which he is not strong enough to bear; hence the preparations and trials before initiation, and the well-kept secrets of the knowledge imparted there.

Dionysus, we know, had a miraculous rebirth after being torn to pieces (reminding us of the Egyptian Osiris myth); Demeter (celebrated at Eleusis) mourns the loss of her daughter Persephone to Hades, king of the underworld; Orpheus goes to the underworld to rescue Eurydice who had died on her wedding night, and by his sweet song so charms the lords of the underworld that he is permitted to rescue her on condition he does not look back. He fails to fulfill the condition, Eurydice returns, and Orpheus is torn in pieces by the Bacchante.

All these myths suggest the trials of initiation and the knowledge of immortality. Pindar, the Theban poet, was deeply influenced by these mysteries, as was Plato, and, traditionally, Aeschylus the tragic poet, who was accused of betraying them in his plays and was forced to take sanctuary and clear himself before the Areopagus by swearing he had never been initiated. We cannot at this date reconstruct the mysteries. From its representation in Athenian art we know of the procession of the initiates along the sacred way to Eleusis, and we know from Pindar of the certainty of immortality given there. It was the only really personal religion of ancient Greece, and to those who could take part it must have offered something that even the most beautiful of civic festivals could not match. But it was at the great annual festival in honor of the god Dionysus that the last great religious creation of the Greeks came to full expression, in which all the people participated to gain that catharsis of the emotions through pity and fear of which Aristotle spoke—the tragic drama of Aeschylus and Sophocles.

GREEK RELIGION AT ITS MATURITY—THE TRAGIC DRAMA

The beginnings of drama—Relationship of man to the gods—Aeschylus

There is an extraordinary certainty about the drama of Aeschylus and Sophocles that reveals a profound faith in the divine moral order of the universe, and the framework within which man must live, that suggests an accepted and unquestioned faith among the Athenians of their day; though there is nothing of the idea of immortality associated with the mysteries, as found in the poetry of Pindar. Aeschylus is concerned only with the great problem of man on earth and his relationship with the gods; not with man’s ultimate fate. The Greek tragic drama had only recently emerged from its beginnings in the dithyramb or sacred hymn to Dionysus, and the sacred dance. But with Aeschylus it has now become a true drama, with few characters and long, beautiful choric odes. For sheer magnificence it has not been surpassed by any later drama. The human beings are drawn on a heroic scale, never individuals such as one would meet on the streets, but types of all humanity. And in what is perhaps his profoundest play, the Prometheus Bound, there is no human being at all. A Titan, or demigod, is the hero.

The play, the only one we possess of the original trilogy, is simple; it is only in its religious implications that it can be comprehended at all. Prometheus has stolen fire from heaven and given it to man; he glories in his deed, refusing to submit, even though Zeus threatens him with endless tortures. He has a secret which Zeus would know. But he refuses to divulge it, though Hermes comes from Zeus with threats, though Oceano bids him submit for his own good because it is useless to fight with Zeus, and though Io, driven endlessly over the earth from jealousy of the gods, visits him on her journey. The play ends with the descent of Prometheus to the underworld, still defiant, and still glorying in his deed.

At one level of thought Prometheus is
the type of rebellious, proud, and independent man, who cannot be coerced by threats, though the gods threaten to destroy him. The will of man, sovereign on earth, cannot even be compelled to submission to the gods when they are unjust. But at another level of thought it is also clear that we have not yet exhausted the meaning of Aeschylus, and that the secret that Prometheus knows and Zeus does not is the heart of it. It is impossible to interpret this play in strictly rational terms. It is a long meditation on the theme of the creation of man and his purpose in the world; it has its Hebrew analogy in the story of the Tower of Babel which tells how man tried to ascend to Heaven, and God was jealous and destroyed the tower and confounded the tongues. The thought of Aeschylus seems to be that man, by the use of his freedom, is potentially equal to the gods and can even destroy them; and for this reason they withheld that gift which ensured freedom to man—they withheld fire. So Prometheus stole the fire and gave it to man. The gods cannot take away the gift from man, once he has received it; but they can still punish him for his presumptuousness, and man will remain in the power of the gods—Prometheus will not be freed until one of the immortals sacrifices himself, giving up his immortality to free him. Though we do not possess the Prometheus Unbound, the myth is known, and the play must have contained something of it. Surely these teachings about immortality and the relationship between the gods and man are close to what must have been imparted in the mysteries; and if tradition is correct this was probably the play which brought the dramatist to trial before the Areopagus.

In the trilogy of the Oresteia, the theme is not so much the presumption of man which leads him to madness and destruction, though this is also implied when Agamemnon treads on the purple carpet, forgetting that his deeds of valor are granted him by the gods and are not his own. Returning from Troy, Agamemnon is murdered by his wife, Clytemnestra, her excuse being an earlier crime of Agamemnon in sacrificing their daughter Iphigenia to ensure the success of the expedition to Troy. Orestes, their son, is instructed by Apollo to avenge his father by murdering Clytemnestra and her paramour. He obeys, but is pursued by the Furies, beings whose task it is to pursue those guilty of matricide. Orestes flees over the earth before the Furies, at last appealing to Apollo to save him. But Apollo is powerless. Orestes was indeed right to murder his mother; it was an ancient duty to avenge his father. But by the laws of the universe he incurred the penalty of pursuit by the Furies. The case, however, is tried before the Athenian Areopagus, the votes are equal, and Athena, the judge, gives the casting vote to Orestes. The Furies refuse to accept the verdict until they are pacified by the gift of a new home at Athens, and they are now to become the kindly ones (the Eumenides), and henceforth act as guardian deities of Athens.

Clearly Aeschylus tells here of the passing of an old order. The crime of Orestes has been forgiven, and the sequence of murders is at an end. But it is significant that the avenging deities have now become the guardians of law and order in the city of Athens. The sanctions on a man’s actions are still divine; but they are no longer arbitrary. Punishment does not follow automatically; it is no longer a law of the universe, crime breeding punishment and the punishment itself entailing another crime. Order has been made out of chaos, and the gods withdraw a step, leaving punishment to the laws of the city, sanctified by Athena and the old gods.

But presumption against the gods still earns its punishment as a law of the universe. Man is not a god, and he must not think that he is. In the Persians, the history of the Persian War is made into a drama of man’s presumption against the gods. Xerxes has been too fortunate, he is king of the world. He experiences koros or satiety, and he presumes upon it by attempting to conquer Greece without divine sanction. This is hybris. He is led into folly (ate) and the result is nemesis, or destruction. This theme of the sequence of koros, hybris, ate, neme-
sis, which runs through the bulk of Greek tragedy (it is even implicit in the Prometheus), through the poetry of Solon, and through the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides, is essentially the Greek conception of sin. In Herodotus the Persians commit hybris, while in Thucydides it is the Athenians. The good fortune of Athens leads her to the sin of hybris in barbarously destroying the neutral and unoffending Melians, thus denying the power of the gods to punish, and the common laws of humanity. This leads to the expedition against Syracuse with its grand folly of deposing the general who urged the expedition and appointing as general its chief opponent, and the inexcusable delays out of sheer superstition—this was ate; nemesis followed when the entire expedition was destroyed. The dramatic juxtaposition of these events in Thucydides shows the way his mind was working.

Sophocles—The human drama—Search for the meaning of life and purpose of suffering

With Sophocles we are at the height of the human drama. The gods are always present, but no longer on the stage, while man moves within the framework of his destiny. In the Ajax, the hero is presumptuous, he thinks he has the better right to the arms of Achilles, which are awarded to his rival Odysseus; he plans to murder his enemies and rivals, but a god sends madness upon him, and he only butchers the animals belonging to the Achaeans army. When Ajax recovers he is so ashamed that he dies by his own hand. He had not the right to boast of his own prowess, and claim the arms, and it was this presumption that led to his madness and destruction.

In the Oedipus trilogy Sophocles moves on to an even more profound problem, the problem of human suffering, and its relation to human destiny. And to this problem he was unable to give any solution until in his old age he completed the trilogy with the Oedipus at Colonus. In the Antigone, the first of the plays to be written—though the last in the sequence of events—Antigone refuses to accept the right of the tyrant Creon to make a law which infringes "the immutable, unwritten laws of heaven." For this she has to die, and she meets her death nobly. Yet her death is not meaningless, for she has vindicated the sacred rights of humanity and earned a glorious name, while, on the other hand, Creon, in trying to change the divine law, has committed hybris. In folly he condemns Antigone and spurns the pleas of his son, and destruction comes upon him with the suicide of his wife and son and the abandonment of his throne.

In the Oedipus Rex the hero has been destined to murder his father and marry his mother; but he commits these crimes in ignorance, and in any case he could not have avoided them since they were decreed by his destiny. Nevertheless, after he discovers what he has done he blinds himself, and wanders through the land, led by his daughters. What, asks Sophocles, is the purpose of such a destiny? He gives us the answer in the Oedipus at Colonus. Oedipus has now grown old, and is ready to die, and an oracle has foretold that the land in which his bones rest will be blessed. He chooses to die near Athens, whose king, Theseus, gives him his own tomb. Theseus accompanies him into the tomb and leaves him. And suddenly Oedipus is no longer there, and a great wonder falls upon the messenger who relates that fact. The sufferings are no longer meaningless. The king has been purified by them, and his bones will bring good fortune upon Athens.

These plays have not been described for their dramatic quality, nor has any mention been made of the wealth of imagery in the poetry, nor of the extraordinary dramatic irony, especially in Sophocles, nor of the spectacular effects and the tragic atmosphere created in these masterpieces; rather has Greek tragedy been described here to bring out the religious nature of the whole. The audience knew all the stories, there were no surprises for them; plot was of little importance. The purpose of this drama was, as Aristotle stated it, to win a catharsis through pity and fear; to arouse apprecia-
tion of the moral grandeur of the universe, ruled by the unalterable moral laws of the gods. The audience was made up of the ordinary men and women of Athens, but they were present at a festival, the festival of Dionysus, god of inspiration. Time and again they awarded the prize to Sophocles; he gave them the kind of experience they expected of a drama. When Euripides began to exhibit his plays, the Athenians consistently refused to award him the crown. They did not want plays about ordinary people; however pathetic; they did not want to question the gods, doubt the myths, and be generally left with a feeling of mental discomfort. They wanted to appreciate the nobility of man in the face of his destiny. Tragedy is only possible when a good man meets misfortune undeservedly, or beyond his deserts. If a villain receives his just deserts or a good man finds happiness, what of it? And the contrary would be morally repellant, as Aristotle points out. But if a good man suffers, the gods are at work; the laws of the universe are being manifested, and there is a mystery. In short, man can rise above his suffering, and in so doing he shows himself worthy of his position as the crown of creation—a true man.

Transition from religion to philosophy—Euripides, the questioner—Are the gods unjust?

Into this world enters Euripides and he has lost his faith. The gods do play their part in earthly affairs, they do punish man; but without reason. The gods have authority and power but, according to human standards, no justice—and yet this fact appears to be a law of the universe. Heroes do not really suffer nobly. They are human, like you and me, and they rage against the tyranny of the gods. They have to make the best of things, but do not call that justice. There is no such thing, says Euripides, as absolute justice, or god-directed justice. Man is the measure of all things.

But Euripides is a man of deep feeling. He realizes the pathos of a human being who is afflicted by destiny and arbitrary misfortune. He shows how some characters bear misfortune nobly, like Polyxena, Iphigenia, and Hippolytus, while others rage against it like Hecuba, queen of Troy, and Medea. He is acquainted with all the human passions, and does not hesitate to show them on the stage. His plays are problem plays, appealing to the mind, not to religious feeling. Not a single play is really a tragedy in the sense that it purges the emotions, leaving the audience in a religious awe at the nobility of man in the face of his destiny. There may be awe at the gods, as in the Bacchae; but the question at the end is always, What kind of gods are these?

The real tragedy is that Euripides himself did not know. His is a work of the critical, rational mind, a destructive work which was necessary in the process of human evolution, and ushered in the age of individualism and reliance on the mind alone, without benefit of gods. His drama concerns the behavior of men in an unknown world, a world without morality, in which men are not rewarded for their good deeds nor necessarily punished for their evil ones. Heracles in the Madness of Heracles is a much-tried man who has been obeying the orders of the gods, but through no fault of his own has incurred the anger of Hera, who sends madness upon him so that he murders his own wife and children. Even Madness herself complains of her task but is forced to perform it. Similarly, Hippolytus is a virtuous young man who wants to devote himself to Artemis, but in so doing incurs the jealousy of Aphrodite; the Trojan women, in the play of the same name, are victims of a war which was none of their making and in which they had no say; Pentheus, in the Bacchae, does his duty as king and warns the women of his country not to indulge in the orgies of Dionysus, and after the god has induced a frenzy in him he is torn in pieces by the women; Medea is a violent murderess but escapes through her magic powers. So the list could go on.

1 Polyxena and Hecuba appear in the play called the Hecuba; Iphigenia behaves nobly in the play called Iphigenia in Aulis; Medea and Hippolytus are in the plays named after them.
Euripides has a vast pity for man in these circumstances, but only very rarely does this become respect. Man, according to his experience, is not dignified by his sufferings; on the contrary, he usually becomes querulous, though sometimes he may have twinges of conscience for evil deeds he may have committed. Indeed, the first use of any Greek word for conscience is found in Euripides—interestingly enough, in a play where we can make a direct comparison with Aeschylus. In Euripides' *Orestes*, after the hero has murdered his mother, he wanders over the earth; but there are no Furies following him. He is just ill at ease. Menelaus asks him why he is troubled, and he replies: “It is my *synesis* [the Latin word *con-scientia* is an exact translation of this word], because I realize I have done terrible things.” No longer are there Beings sent by the gods of the universe to pursue him; on the contrary he is inwardly troubled.

The tragedy of Euripides is that he is not an atheist, he cannot deny the gods; he has lost the old faith and has acquired no new one. Though a destructive critic, he cannot be a complete rationalist. He is still searching for a solution. And to crown the tragedy there seems to be only one immortality that he can recognize—the immortality of the individual man through his children. But children in the plays of Euripides are shown as defenseless, and time and again they are murdered uselessly. There is a vacuum in the thought of Euripides that cannot be filled. It was left for Socrates to fill it, to show that conscience could take the place of external sanctions, that if all the baggage of the old gods were discarded and man searched himself he could find the good and the just; that the intellect was the crown of man's faculties, and man could live and die by his own inner light.

So religion became philosophy.²

² For this interpretation of Euripides, which, incidentally, necessitated a re-reading of all his plays, I am greatly indebted to the masterly monograph by A. Rivier, *Essai sur le tragique d'Euripide* (Lausanne: 1944), which seems to be far too little known.

THE ADVANCE OF RATIONALISM

The Sophists—"Man is the measure of all things"

About the middle of the fifth century B.C. wandering teachers called Sophists, began to visit Athens, already the center of Greek culture, and at the height of her prosperity. They were given a mixed welcome, for they struck at the roots of traditional thought; moreover, contrary to the accepted Athenian notion that talk was free and that the best education for the young was listening to the wisdom of their elders in the gymnasium, these newcomers taught for pay. They were, in short, professionals in an amateur world. It was often suggested that they should be expelled from the city. All manner of offenses were charged against them. They taught how to make the worse case appear the better, without any regard for what was just; indeed, they questioned the very idea of any justice. They were said to ridicule the gods, and to give purely physical explanations of the world. Anaxagoras had publicly stated that the Sun was not the god Helios but an ignited stone, the moon had hills and valleys, and all the planets were of the same substance as the earth. They were quick witted and could catch the unwary in verbal contradictions, and make fools of them in public. The old wise talk of the gymnasium, when boys sat listening to their elders, was being replaced by clever brilliant talk without substance. But the young intellectuals flocked to the Sophists to learn and gladly paid the fees; these young men were able to acquire the tricks which were of great use to them in the law courts, and they learned professional rhetoric—how to make convincing speeches in the Assembly and elsewhere. But in addition to this they also learned something of inestimable value—criticism; above all, criticism of the validity of all received knowledge and tradition, even when this went so far as the statement ascribed to Alcidamas: "The gods made all men free, nature has made no man a slave," and that there was
therefore follow what seems to be best for man. Socrates and Plato, in denying that knowledge is merely the possibly inaccurate data of sense perception, and trying to find an absolute and heavenly knowledge attainable by the human mind, as distinct from his senses, are thus engaged in an all-out struggle with the relativism of Protagoras and the Sophists.

There can be no doubt that the influence of the Sophists was primarily destructive. That it was not wholly so is at least partly due to the presence of Socrates; we have seen what influence Sophistic teachings had on a man like Euripides of great human feeling, but with no similar power of constructive thought. The Sophists were a typical product of their time. The imperial splendor of Athens had created a confidence in Athenian superiority that was rudely shattered in the Peloponnesian War. Imperialism itself obviously created ethical problems; an aggressive policy, though unquestionably hybris, according to the old manner of thinking, nevertheless did seem for a time to pay off. It is one of the purposes of Thucydides, himself a rationalist, and understanding very well the arguments of ethical relativism, to show that the gods do not forget, and laws cannot be flouted with impunity.  

At this time there was in Athens a growing tendency to seek for individual wealth. There was a loss of faith in the old communal ideals of the polis. There was a growing disrespect for age. Theories of communist utopias were rife. All these signs of the moral disintegration of the old polis were pilloried in the comedies of Aristophanes, usher of the old order, who hated to see it passing and blamed the Sophists in large part for its deterioration. In his play the Knights, Cleon is the villain, a typical representative of the new style of Athenian politician, trained in demagogic rhetoric and without moral principle. In the Clouds Socrates and the Sophists come under direct

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There is doubt as to whether Protagoras himself used the Greek word meaning "that they are," or "in what manner they are," for different writers quote him differently.

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4 See especially the dialogue between the Melians and the Athenian envoys, Thucydides, v, 85 ff.
attack for undermining public morality and teaching sons how to get the better of their fathers. Yet it is hardly fair to blame the Sophists for all the ills of their time. Representative of the new order they may have been; but the soldiers of fortune, the mercenary armies, and the corrupt politicians of the fourth century can hardly be considered the offspring of the Sophists so much as of the loss of social control within the polis first observable in the stress of the Peloponnesian War.

Socrates—Search for a new ethic through self-examination

The insight of the oracle of Apollo at Delphi into the intellectual current of the age can never be sufficiently admired. For it declared publicly that Socrates was the wisest man in Greece, and second to him was Euripides. That Socrates, the son of a midwife and a stonemason, who never wrote a line, who spent all his life talking in the streets of Athens to anyone who would listen, only leaving it twice to perform his military duty, should have been thus singled out is nothing short of a miracle of clairvoyance. Plato tells the story that, because of this encouragement from the oracle, Socrates started out on his quest for a man wiser than himself, a quest which led him to the conclusion that he alone was wise because he alone knew that he knew nothing. This profound paradox is the heart of Socratic thought. It is, of course, already implied in the dictum of Protagoras; and insofar as Socrates stresses the ignorance of those who profess to know, and the unproved nature of all traditional thinking, he is one with the Sophists. But he goes further than they; and this marks his constructiveness as a thinker. We must not indeed take received opinion on trust; but man can know through self-examination.

In order to discover this truth, which every man knows inwardly, it is necessary to bring knowledge to birth. For this purpose Socrates developed a method of question and answer, ever since associated with his name, by which it is gradually discovered first what is not true; and thereafter the truth is built up stage by stage, allowing no definition to stand until it has been examined, and no questionable statement to pass without criticism. When the process has finished, the questioner will then find that he really knows something, however little, that he was not aware of knowing before. Socrates thus calls himself the "midwife" of knowledge in that he has brought knowledge to birth through the labor of the dialectic (the technical term given to the Socratic method).

Clearly this method is above all applicable to the realm of ethics; and the greater part of the Platonic dialogues where Socrates seems to be himself and not the mere mouthpiece of his pupil is devoted to inquiry into the nature of the good, and how it can be pursued by man. Furthermore, can virtue (arete) or moral excellence be taught? If the code of right behavior is not to be dictated by tradition, received opinion, and the supposed will of the gods, then it must emanate from man. An individual ethic based on man's own best knowledge must replace the traditional one. It is Socrates' belief that if we rid ourselves of all prejudice and previous thinking on the subject, then by constant criticism followed by constructive thought we can obtain an idea of the good which will be the same for all; because the human being is so constituted that he can know the good. And, knowing it, he can follow it; for no one who truly knows the good would deliberately choose to follow the evil. This is a typically Greek notion, and is attractive to all rationalists. The greatest medieval rationalist, Thomas Aquinas, goes with Socrates as far as knowledge of the good is concerned; but, being a Christian, he also stresses the infirmity of the human will, which, being evil as the result of original sin, cannot carry out without divine grace what the intellect indicates as the good. And most medieval Christians would not even allow a true knowledge of the good without grace. It follows, therefore, that virtue is knowledge and ignorance is the root of moral evil; from which conclusion Socrates and his pupil Plato drew out the full consequences.
In dealing with the Sophists, Socrates deliberately points out the inadequacy of their aim of teaching "useful knowledge." He asks pertinently, "Useful for what?" and has no difficulty in showing that the only truly human aim is the pursuit of the good, to which all else is subordinate. He denies their premise that knowledge is relative; but he admits that it must be tentative. No one knows, or can know, the final truth about anything (Plato excepts mathematics); and the frequency with which Plato shows him as dissatisfied with his preliminary destructive criticism, and the tentative conclusions that fill the vacuum he has created by it, suggest the real humility before knowledge which entitled him to the accolade of Apollo of Delphi, god of wisdom.

In spite of his apparently individualistic ethics, Socrates was a profoundly social being, and lover of his polis. He had a high opinion of the truth that lay behind the religious traditions of Greece, though he always interpreted them in his own way, as spiritual rather than physical truths. It was not his task to destroy the law and government of his polis, even though they were based on tradition; he fully accepted the right of the democracy to put him to death under its laws. These laws provided the whole framework for his social life; they were not unchangeable and their ethical content might no doubt be improved. But if it happened that he was the victim of the laws in their present state, then it still behooved him as a citizen to abide by them.

Within himself he only answered to the call of his own inner knowledge. He understood very fully that others might be moved by tradition and prejudice; but this was no excuse for him to follow their example. Very gravely and accurately he describes the activity of the human conscience which never tells him what to do but only what not to do. And he calls this his " daemonion," his little god—as indeed for him it was, since it took the place of the sanctions of the gods and the traditional piety associated with them.
His teachings may have been too heady for many who were not of the highest moral fiber. Alcibiades, traitor and loose liver, was one of his pupils; so was Critias, oligarchic leader of the Thirty Tyrants who instituted and carried out a bloody proscription of the democratic leaders—though it is not altogether reasonable to blame the master for the human frailties of his pupils. We can see in the Platonic dialogues how easily Socrates’ method lends itself to misconception, and how quickly an enemy could take his gently objective criticism as personal disbelief. In the _Meno_, for instance, Socrates has been showing that no virtuous man has been able to teach virtue to his son. Anytus, one of his accusers at his trial, at once jumps to the conclusion that Socrates is maligning these men instead of using them to prove his philosophical point. In the political conditions of the restoration of the democracy after the oligarchic revolution, it was difficult to believe that any man could be searching for philosophical truth. Yet Socrates continued in the only activity that for him made life worth living.

In 399 B.C. his enemies brought him to trial before the people’s jury on a charge of atheism and corrupting the youth. It was a clever charge, for it was, in appearance, true. Socrates took part in all the festivals and performed all his religious observances, but he did speak of his daimonion, a strange god, and he did teach—indeed the whole of his teaching led inevitably to the conclusion—that a new dispensation had come when man was to be free, to rule himself, not be ruled by the gods. And insofar as this was his instruction to his pupils, then he “corrupted the youth.”

The account of his trial in Plato’s _Apology_ shows his moral courage and his confidence that his own path was right. He defends himself against the charges only by affirming them. Convicted by a small majority and asked for a suggestion as to what punishment he deserves, with the same serene confidence he tells them that he ought to have a pension and be supported at the city’s expense for the rest of his life. This irony is too much for human endurance, and by a larger vote the jury condemns him to death. Instead of going into exile as his friends urge, an exile which would undoubtedly have been winked at, he accepts his sentence, not in stoical resignation but with dignity, tenderness for his friends, and good humor. While he awaits the fatal hemlock he discourses on immortality, still with the same calm reason that he had shown during his life. There is, he believes, an inner self in man, his divine part; this, being of the same nature as the divine, cannot die, and will dwell forever with the gods. But he will soon know. He shows no fear and no regrets. And so he drinks the hemlock; and by the manner of his dying he truly ensured his immortality on earth. For it was a turning point in the life of his pupil Plato, then a young man of about twenty-eight years of age.

Plato—The "idea" and its application in life

Plato, unlike Socrates, was an aristocrat by birth, and had lived through the later years of the Peloponnesian War and the oligarchic revolution. He tells us himself that he had lost all personal political ambitions by the time of the death of Socrates. Disgusted equally with democracy and oligarchy, he went abroad to Egypt and Italy before returning about 387 B.C. to Athens and founding the famous Academy, in which he taught with occasional breaks for over forty years. All his known works have survived, and there is no other Greek mind which we have been permitted to explore so thoroughly. While his thought has evidently been influenced by Oriental and Orphic mysticism more than that of any surviving writer of the classical period, and for this reason there are some things in his works which seem to us un-Greek (for instance his condemnation of poetry and music and especially his contrast between soul and body), nevertheless the main line of his thought, with its emphasis on the supremacy of the mind, is characteristically Greek, and
he follows the lines of investigation traced out by Socrates.3

Plato presents his thought in the form of dialogues, often very dramatic, with Socrates as protagonist discovering knowledge by means of question and answer. In other dialogues, however, the device only thinly conceals Plato’s own thoughts; and one or another of the characters will then lecture on the subject, with the interposition only of a few expressions of assent or enjoyment. This art of the dialogue has been imitated frequently in the years since, but it is a very difficult one to master; at its best, as in the Republic, it is incomparably more effective and alive than straight exposition. But it is clear that we can never be quite certain what is Plato’s own thought. Did Plato himself, for instance, really believe all that he puts into the mouth of Timaeus in the dialogue of that name? Since we shall never know, we must in our ignorance call the whole “the philosophy of Plato,” though it is never classified or organized into a comprehensive system.

The heart of Plato’s teaching stems from the original conception of Socrates that the human being can know the good; and that, knowing it, he can do it. What Plato seeks to discover is how he can know it, and what it is exactly that he knows. And by using the dialogue form he shows us the whole process by which he arrived at his conclusions; hence the endless stimulation that Plato has afforded to all subsequent mankind. All that we must do is hitch up to his thought at one place, and either follow him to the same conclusions, or, by casting aside some of his thoughts as based on assumptions which we will not accept, proceed to arrive at different conclusions.

Assuming, then, that man can know the good, with what faculty does he know it, and what is the object of this faculty? To this Plato answers that man is possessed of the power of thinking (Nous), and that this spiritual element in man can recognize the spiritual element akin to it—the Idea. And this Idea is not in the physical world, but in the spiritual world, forever hidden from every faculty in man save the Nous. Following this thought further, he concludes that everything we see in front of us is a particular, a single example of something, the Idea or archetype of which is really spiritual, and not to be found on earth. We see, for instance, a single plant; but the Idea of the plant is in the spiritual worlds. From this it is but a short step to the value judgment that the earthly example is necessarily an inferior copy of the ideal plant. That the spiritual reality is more beautiful, more worthy of contemplation than anything on earth.

The next step is to consider how we can recognize this earthly copy as indeed a copy of an Idea. And to this Plato’s answer is that the soul, with its active faculty, the Nous, existed before incarnation on earth in a human body. Before it descended to earth it glimpsed these Ideas, which were implanted forever in the soul. Thus knowledge of the universal behind the particular appearance on earth is simply recognition. This, it will be seen, completely accounts for man’s possession of innate knowledge, which Socrates had shown man did possess.

Here then, in a different, more spiritualized form, and serving different ends, we find the Oriental (Mesopotamian) thought that the earth is a copy of the heavens; and therefore it is no surprise to find also in the cosmogony and physiology of the Timaeus the thought that man is a microcosm, an earthly human counterpart of the heavenly macrocosm. The crucial—and typically Greek—difference was that for Plato the heavens themselves were endowed with a body, a soul, and Reason.
It is clear that this "idealistic" philosophy gives an enormous scope to the philosopher. He is not compelled to examine the phenomena in front of him but may reason a priori; indeed, since it is only human thinking that can perceive the Ideas, there is no other method of reasoning than a priori. Thus by reasoning, the moral and political philosopher must try to discover for himself the ideal good, and not the practicable good. It is for this reason that Plato placed on the door of his Academy "Let no one without geometry enter here," for this is precisely the method of geometry. The mind at once perceives the universal Idea, which is true (the axiom), from which the consequences are deduced by the reason. And it is the same thought when Plato says: "God geometrizes without end."

The Republic is the Platonic masterpiece of this kind of reasoning. But by this it should not be thought that Plato had no practical ends in view. He tells us specifically that he has. No political state of which he has knowledge has been thought out; all are defective. But in his view these defects need not be inevitable. For if men know the good they will not deliberately prefer the evil unless they have been warped beyond cure. Since "virtue" may be taught, men can be educated to admire the best, and not choose a second-best polity to live in.

His method, then, is to discover what is the bond which holds society together (justice), and then try to arrive at a definition of justice. He comes to the conclusion that justice in the citizen and in the state is identical, and that if each man is given a position in the social order which enables him to do that for which he is best fitted, and he performs this task properly, then the ends of both the citizen and the state will be fully served, and the society will be a just one. Plato then proceeds to inquire into how human potentialities can best be realized in a social framework, and what will be the nature of the social institutions required.

Given his premises, the whole work, built up on these lines, is logically impeccable. Its value in all ages has been its sug-

gestiveness, and the joy of following the thought of a truly creative mind, willing to pursue the argument wherever it will lead, without deference to conventional Greek notions, as, for instance, on the inequality of women. It is not native conservatism or a preference for oligarchy—though these may have been present, they are irrelevant—that forces him to the conclusion that the enlightened despotism of a board of professional guardians (philosopher kings and queens) is the only possible "best" government. These alone have been able to discover the good, and they must be dedicated utterly to its pursuit, without the warping of judgment which would arise from the possession of either material goods or family. With such a body of truly scientific professionals there would be no need for laws or for the exercise of power; for at all grades in the society each man would have received the education, and held the position, for which he was best fitted.

It has often been pointed out, justly, that Plato makes a number of assumptions which are extremely questionable—for instance, that public and private virtue are identical, and that a state made up of good individuals will be able to function harmoniously as a state. But it will usually be found that these assumptions are the result of his fundamental belief that no one, knowing the good, would deliberately choose to do evil. If the state is a just one, its duties will be just and good; the individual, if he is good, will desire to do this duty. Duty and inclination must coincide. If they do not, then either the state needs to be corrected or the individual needs to be improved—by development and adjustment, not by repression and force.

Plato may also be accused of neglecting the psychology of man, as it must have been known to him from experience. What was the use of theorizing about an ideal state when he knew of its impossibility in real life? Again the answer must be that by showing men the ideal good which was, for him, having regard to his assumptions, not impossible of realization but only extremely
difficult, he was pointing out a direction for the aspirations and endeavors of man. And that it was not his last thought on the subject is shown by his later works, the Statesman and Laws, in which he outlines the "second-best state," the state ruled by laws, laws which are directed to the ethical improvement of man, but cannot be as scientifically impeccable as the personal guidance of the philosopher kings. And elsewhere he shows that he is not unaware of human psychology. He recognizes the irrational part of man, but does not consider it incurable. The desires are controlled by reason, which, in the light of its knowledge of the good, will give man the power of evaluating his desires at their true worth.

As with the state, so with man. The harmonious functioning of all the parts that go to make up the full man, this is self-realization under the guiding power of the Nous. It is a psychology the truth of which would be vehemently denied by both Christians and Freudians, who both deny the power of the mind to control the will unaided. Perhaps to these the psychology of Plato would seem naive; but it was the fullest and most complete expression of the Greek ideal of harmony and sophrosyne, and of the Greek belief in the efficacy of human thinking. If it is a glorification of the one specifically human power, this to the Greeks would have been a recommendation. Oedipus to the Greeks was not a complex but a human being, proud and erring but undefeated; and they were glad to be considered of his company.

PHILOSOPHY BECOMES SCIENCE—ARISTOTLE

The universality of his genius

Aristotle was the son of a Chalcidian physician in the service of Philip of Macedon. He studied at the Academy of Plato and was unquestionably his most brilliant pupil. He was tutor of Alexander, son of Philip, for several years, returning to Athens and opening a school himself (the Lyceum), where he taught for twelve years. Forced into exile on the death of Alexander, he died a year later in 322 B.C. at the age of sixty-two.

Thus Aristotle stands at the end of the Classical Age of Greece before the great emigration to Asia that followed the conquests of Alexander; and in a very real sense he completed it. While he left one or two things undone which were repaired by Theophrastus his pupil and successor (for instance, a work on plants and another on human character) and he contributed nothing to Greek mathematics, which followed an independent course, in other respects he took all the varied speculations of his Greek predecessors, brilliant and disorganized as they were, and by the giant force of his capacity for system, order, and classification, discharged them from his hands as sciences, a body of work that could be communicated to others in comprehensible form. Once he had laid down the principles of scientific inquiry, the work would not have to be done again. He was the first true scientist in the history of mankind; and few who have really studied his work would dispute his title to be the greatest the world has yet known. And now that we have passed beyond recovery into a world of specialists, there never will be anyone again who will be able to lay claim to the universality of his learning. Any one of half a dozen of his mental achievements would have entitled him to an undying fame. The sum total is almost beyond belief.

The laws of thinking—Logic

If this seem excessive praise, let us consider for a moment a few of Aristotle's achievements. Basing his observations upon Plato's theory of ideas, he formulated the laws of thinking, the relation between the universal and the particular, the formal procedure required for arriving at conclusions and correct reasoning, giving in passing a different solution to the problem of the origin of the universal; disturbed by the way in which objects are described without including all their features, he formulated a method for describing them inclusively (the "categories of being"); stimulated per-
haps by Socrates' remark that he himself knew that his will prevented him from going into exile and not "his bones and sinews," as Anaxagoras would have claimed, he formulated a system for dealing accurately with causation and had to invent a new vocabulary for the purpose; faced with a mass of biological data, he evolved a system of classification into genus and species which has been followed with modifications ever since.

The foundation for classification of phenomena—Genus and species

Aristotle is usually praised in these days rather patronizingly for his excellent and careful observation and description of the animal world, and his early recognition of facts which modern science with its greater knowledge and improved instruments has shown to be true—as if anyone with the time and the patience could not observe correctly! And he has been criticized for premature guesses on the basis of insufficient information, for his doctrines of purpose, for his denial of the atomic theory, and in general for having held back medieval scientists from more correct theories while they elaborated on his incorrect ones instead. But insufficient attention has been paid to the gigantic mental effort required to create order out of chaos, and to make the world intelligible, which was his primary purpose. No one before his time had seen the need for a method of inquiry, or classification of knowledge. Philosophers had speculated, and looked for universal principles, every now and then carrying out a few desultory experiments; but always jumping to theoretical conclusions of little value beyond their aesthetic appeal. But to watch Aristotle at work trying to determine how to deal with zoology with no previous guide, as in the first book of his Parts of Animals, is to see the enormous difficulties that faced him in the struggle to order the material; and to read any part of the Metaphysics is to realize his extraordinary ability to handle the most difficult abstractions of thought with the utmost delicacy and sureness—in which again he had no predecessor. Plato charms us because of his artistry and imagination, and because there is no word that we cannot understand, no thought that we cannot follow. He flatters our ignorance, making us believe we are not as ignorant as we are; in reading Plato we all imagine ourselves philosophers. But Aristotle is hard work, and he makes no concessions to us; even when we think we have grasped one of his thoughts it quickly eludes us again. Then suddenly it becomes clear and fruitful and applicable in a hundred other ways, and we possess a tool for understanding the world.

In following the Aristotelian method as we have all followed it since his time without acknowledgments, our work has been made easy. But it was not easy for him. He had first to invent the tools of analysis, and then with these to set to work on all the phenomena of knowledge available to the Greek world. Both parts of his work he largely accomplished. His nephew went with Alexander on his expedition, and Alexander himself sent back data that he thought would be of interest to his old tutor. His students collected material for him, and he analyzed and classified it, no doubt with their assistance. For his Politics he analyzed and digested the constitutions of 158 different states, this analysis enabling him to classify the different kinds of states on the basis of evidence. He viewed the plays of his own age and the tragic drama of the great era, and in his Poetics classified the results, together with his findings in general terms of the requirements of tragedy. He did the same thing for the animal world in his three great works in zoology, the History of Animals, Parts of Animals, and Generation of Animals; and so on. Certainly in some cases he generalized and theorized too soon; but only very rarely did he fail to offer good reasons for the theories, and for his acute criticisms of his predecessors. And never did his analysis fail. His successors could have built always upon his foundations, and revised his theories when necessary.

It was a tragedy that Aristotle of all men should have been regarded as an au-
thority and the last word on any subject, he who was the most ready of all the ancient investigators to base his theories on the observed facts. And it is now the prevalent opinion that when at last the late medieval scholars did begin to work on his findings at the University of Padua without accepting him as infallible, then they only had to revise his groundwork, and criticize some of his conclusions on the basis of their improved knowledge of the facts, and it was possible for Galileo, who studied at Padua, to lay the basis for modern science. Aristotle was not abandoned, save by the ignorant; but adapted, improved upon, and commented upon until at last he emerged as the great pioneer he was, but no longer "the master of those who know," which he was not.

If we examine the conclusions reached by Aristotle in all the numerous fields of inquiry to which he gave his attention, we shall find that they were almost always inspired by common sense, which has not been regarded as a useful tool in modern exact science with its powerful mathematics and instruments of research. Almost none of the findings of modern science, from the electron to the Copernican theory, from the physics of Einstein to the corpuscular-wave theory of light is validated by common sense or direct sense observation. For this reason Aristotle’s conclusions in the physical sciences have to be interpreted very sparsely and charitably if they are to be in any way acceptable, while his conclusions in the social sciences may be as valid as in the days they were written.

The physics of Aristotle—Excessive reliance on common sense

From the observed motion in the world Aristotle concluded that all motion was communicated from the moving agent to the thing moved. The movement of the sun and planets around the earth was accounted for by motion communicated from the "sphere" of one planet to the next. This had the important logical consequence that there must be an ultimate mover, the origin of all motion, itself unmoved. This he was willing to call God. This God, however, was not personal; and medieval philosophers, followers of Aristotle, were not content with his treatment of creation. It appeared that the world had always existed, though not always in the same form.

The metaphysics of Aristotle—The final cause

Having taken back all motion to its origin, Aristotle then had to account for motion within the world, or change. For this he used a human analogy—purpose. He reasoned that if man takes an action, the beginning of the action is the purpose or intention of the person. This he called the Final Cause, that "for the sake of which" a thing is done. Logically prior, then, to all change is the thing into which it changes, not the thing from which it changes. The new form was always present, but previously it was potential. Change, therefore, is the actualizing of a potential; and the cause of the change was the necessity for the new form to come into being. The reason, for instance, that an object falls to the ground is that this is its natural place; acceleration is due to the increasing operation of the final cause, i.e., its natural place (perhaps by analogy of the horse when it gallops the last mile to the stable).

Throughout the world of living things, purpose, the Final Cause, is operative. The egg, the whole, is logically prior to its parts, the protoplasm, and so on. The form of the complete egg governs the organization of the constituents; they were, in other words, organized in this way in order that they might become an egg. The egg was of such a nature in order that it might become a chicken by actualizing its potentialities, the chicken that it might become a hen, the hen that it might take its necessary place in the world scheme—feeding of other animals, and so on. Thus the organization of all things in the world, living or dead, was

*The theory was not original with Aristotle, but was taken from the Greek mathematician Eudoxus. The logical conclusions, of course, are his own.
orderly, each fitting into its natural surroundings. It can be seen how well this scheme would fit into the Christian teaching of Divine Providence, and how it gave a natural and metaphysical explanation for Plato’s mystical teachings concerning divine creation. “Nature does nothing in vain,” was Aristotle’s aphorism, setting his followers to the task of discovering reasons for the existence of natural phenomena which conform to human conceptions of purpose, rather than seeking with the moderns the efficient causes, i.e., the immediate how or sequence of events by which the egg becomes what it is, and the material causes, i.e., the constituents from which it is made up; while the moderns deny the ability of the human reason to determine “that for the sake of which” the phenomena are as they are. But it will be admitted that Aristotle’s procedure, invalid as it may be, does create an orderliness in the phenomena which they seem to the common sense in fact to possess.

Political observations of Aristotle—Practicality and empiricism

Where purpose really rules, and common sense is of more value than theories and conclusions, in the realm of the social sciences, Aristotle is at his unequalled best. In his Politics, under the influence of Plato, he first tackled the question of an ideal state, and at once discovered the formidable practical difficulties. While admitting that the purpose of the laws and the state is to train citizens, it is also to ensure good government. Which brings him to the question, Good government for whom? And from this point on he examines carefully all forms of government known to him, classifying them here and seeing similarities there, taking into account the advantages and disadvantages of each and how each works, the relative importance of property and human rights, and so on, until order begins to emerge. The constitution of an ideal state is then abandoned, and he gives his rules for the best kind of state practicable, bringing in here his favorite biological analogy of the plant which needs the right soil and the right cultivation if it is to realize its potentialities. Even here, however, his conclusions are tentative, for he recognizes that circumstances always alter cases. While his study is confined to the polis, as the only kind of state adapted to develop the potentialities of men, he also informs the tyrant how to rule and keep his power. No later student of political science has ever attempted such a comprehensive work, backed up by such a multitude of examples; and Aristotle’s method of first studying the constitutional history and from this formulating conclusions on the structure and functioning of states in the light of this history and his contemporary observation has been the model followed by most competent political scientists since his time.

Ethical observations of Aristotle—The supremacy of reason

His (Nicomachean) Ethics was a work of similar nature; though his primary data were the observations he had made of human beings in society, he had also to consider the nature of the human being, his possession of soul and body, and his highest faculty, the Nous, which alone distinguished him from the animals. His principal conclusion is that man must seek for happiness, which consists in the fullest development of the Nous, and is the Final Cause which draws out all the potentialities of man. The Nous, to Aristotle, is not only intellectual but moral. All ethical values are determined by reason; good acts therefore depend upon their motivation. Since all parts of the human being need to be developed and used for the highest happiness, they must be developed harmoniously. The mean between two extremes is the best kind of harmony; one should be neither timid nor irascible, but good-tempered. The ability to love or feel friendship toward another depends upon the development of the self. Excessive altruism is as bad as excessive egoism; the
mean between the two is necessary for a communal good in which we all share.

**Aristotle**—The culmination of Greek desire to know and understand

These descriptions of various parts of Aristotle’s work are intended only to suggest the universality of his genius, and something of the scope of his mind. Both Plato and Aristotle had an advantage over later thinkers in that the known world was small, and the whole range of knowledge was not very great. So it was still possible for one man to try to encompass it. Frequently throughout the work of Aristotle we find him making the statement that any science or art ought to cover the whole of a subject; and it is true that he makes the attempt. But not only this; he tries also to cover the whole of all subjects, using his key of logical analysis and systematic organization. This no successor has ever been able to do, and few have tried—though the medieval friar Roger Bacon was to make the effort again. But even he did not find it necessary to go over a subject again once Aristotle had “completed” it; though toward the end of Bacon’s life he suggested that a corps of specialists should be organized for the purpose of producing the necessary compendium. It is certain that no single person will ever try again.

This work of Aristotle was therefore unique, a last and most complete expression of the Greek desire for an orderly and harmonious whole, one of the greatest intellectual monuments in the history of mankind. If the highest praise is to be given, let us say that his work is worthy of the Greek genius.

**SCIENCE—HIPPOCRATES AND THE BEGINNING OF SCIENTIFIC MEDICINE**

The age that followed Aristotle was an age of science rather than philosophy. Even the chief philosophical schools were primarily interested in ethics and consolation, and speculation itself became less disinterested. This notable flowering of science will be discussed in the next chapter, and reasons for it will be suggested. With the exception of mathematics, which will be dealt with as a whole under Hellenistic science, only the practical art of medicine can really be said to have flourished in the Classical Age.

It is here called an art (or craft) intentionally since this was what the Greeks themselves insisted it was. They objected very strongly to premature attempts to establish it as a systematic science until enough material was available for proper theorizing. In this they were very much in accord with modern medicine, as were the methods employed. Until very recently medicine always seems to have stood somewhat apart from the other sciences, and owed little to them. This also seems to have been the case in Greece of the time of Hippocrates, although Empedocles the Sicilian, with his four elements derived from his philosophical speculations, provided medicine with a theory of four humors which persisted in various forms even into modern times, and was accepted by the school of Hippocrates.

Early Greek medicine began in the temples, as probably also in Egypt, and much of it returned there in the Hellenistic and Roman ages. Here the patient, under the direction of the priest, lay down to sleep; and while he was asleep the god Aesculapius approached him and healed him. Charms, spells, incantations, and other forms of magic were also practiced by the priests.

Hippocrates of Cos founded in the fifth century an outstanding school of medicine, breaking away from the priestly traditions in which he himself had been reared. His chief principle was that “every disease has a natural cause, and without natural causes nothing ever happens.” He and his students and followers made it their rule to study the progress of every disease very carefully, note the symptoms, and use previous experience in diagnosis and therapy. Most of the therapy of this school seems to have consisted of proper care and improved diet; for, as Hippocrates insisted, “nature is the best healer.” Nevertheless, most of the herbal healing drugs were known, and presumably used when necessary. A large body of so-
called Hippocratic writings have survived, some of which are probably by the great doctor himself; though others are polemical tracts which read more like the work of professional orators with an interest in medicine (evidently this species was a pest then as now). The famous Hippocratic oath, a masterly formulation of the ethics of doctors, is still taken by medical students on their graduation as doctors.

**Hellenic art of the Classical Age**

**FULFILLMENT OF IDEAL OF MODERATION AND HARMONY**

The Greek ideal of balance, of sophrosyne, and harmony found a perfect expression in art—perhaps its most perfect expression. For in art alone the human being has not to contend with the difficulties in the everyday world of a too complete idealism. In art man is a creator, not a discoverer. His materials are at hand; they are the given world, but as yet without necessary form. It is he that gives it its form; as the soul, in Greek thought, is the form of the body, so the Greek conceived that he must give soul to the as yet inanimate material. To do this was to repeat, as far as it was possible for man, the act of the Creator.

The Greek of the Classical Age did not dream of art as useful; and he was content to live in houses that were singularly uncomfortable by the standards of any of his successors. This was not because he was poor, though he was; under a democracy the fruits of empire could have been distributed to the citizens, and the same artists could have designed a graceful home as well as a temple. Rather was it because artistic creation was a sacred act, reserved for the service of the gods.

This is not to deny the artistic creations of the Greek world in the production of humbler objects than temples or statues. But even these are as perfect as they are because of the dedication of the artist to his task. The Greek did not self-consciously set out to create something “artistic.” Though the Greeks are supposed to have a word for everything, they do not have a word for our conception of the “artistic” as something somewhat higher than, and to be distinguished from, the “useful.” The Greek word for art is Techne, which is nearer to our conception of craft. It was the product of craftsmen, ordinary hand workers. But even in painting a vase for export to a Persian barbarian king the Greek always knew he was creating, giving form to material according to the nature of the material and the purpose for which it was used.*

We know that the Greek artisans all received the same low wage when they were at work for the city, just enough to maintain their wives and families for one day. And we also know that it was the highest honor to work for her; and those who scorned private employment as unworthy of free men welcomed the opportunity. And—a very strange thing indeed—the masterpiece among all Ionic temples, the Erechtheum at Athens, dedicated to Athena, protectress of Athens, and to Erechtheus, her first ancestral king, was built in the last days of the Peloponnesian War, when the expedition to Syracuse had been defeated, and there were no longer any spoils of empire and victory available. The love of the Greeks for their polis and their reverence for their gods combined to make the building of a temple the very highest expression of all that was in them as men.

**CLASSICAL ARCHITECTURE—THE TEMPLE AS HOME FOR THE GODS**

At first the Greeks worked within the framework of tradition and inheritance from other cultures. We can see this process with the early Greeks, the Doric temples built like the Mycenaean palaces, the stiff sculptures in the Egyptian style with square shoulders and one foot slightly advanced, and the crude anatomy. Then, suddenly, as early as the tyranny of Pisistratus, the Greek spirit breaks through, and first the detailed representation of hair and drapery and then the human form become true to life. And away

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* Vases and a bow-case destined for export are illustrated in Chapter 7.
in Ionia the Ionic temple takes shape, and the sculptured figures become mobile and graceful. Then come the Persian Wars, and Athens is sacked and destroyed, leaving to a new generation a new city to be built.

The city was the work of Pericles and his democracy, the full flowering of the Greek genius in works of harmony and beauty that have been the despair of later ages, imitated but never equaled. For, whether we like it or not, it is impossible for machines, however skilfully directed, to do the creative work of man; and never again shall we have the compelling religious desire to create beauty, nor the skill of hand and integrity of purpose of those unnamed craftsmen at a drachma a day. The economic resources came from the new commercial prosperity of Athens and her empire, and from the surplus treasure of the Delian Confederacy; the human resources, the architects and the sculptors, were free men of Athens who had experimented and worked on lesser masterpieces until the city could recognize them as the supreme exponents of their art.

The style of the Greek temple was one of the simplest structural forms known to man. Essentially it was composed of the cella, a rectangular chamber, the dwelling place of the statue of the god; the columns surrounding the cella and forming a porch; the lintel which rested on the columns and supported the roof; the gabled roof itself; and the pediment, the triangular section under the roof. The difference in the style of temple is determined by the column, of which three were in use—though the third was not known in Periclean Athens. The Doric column is a strong, heavy, sharply fluted column, crowned with a plain capital. The Ionic is more slender and graceful, with flat flutings,
Model of the Parthenon, now a semi-ruin, constructed by The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Note the Doric columns. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)

Church of La Madeleine (Paris), constructed in the reign of Napoleon I, showing the persistent copying of Greek design. Clearly this church is modeled after the Parthenon, though Corinthian—more ornate—columns were preferred.
Part of the temple of Hephaistos at Athens, formerly called the Theseum. This is the best-preserved temple on the Greek mainland. Note the Doric columns. (Built 449-444 B.C.)

(Courtesy American School of Classical Studies at Athens)

Doric triglyphs and sculptured metopes on the Temple of Hephaistos. The frieze is Ionic. (Courtesy American School of Classical Studies at Athens)
and a scroll or volute capital; while the Corinthian has similar flutings and a very ornate capital. The Corinthian order appealed to the Hellenistic Age and to the Romans.

The temple, then, is the house of the god. Unlike the medieval cathedrals, it is not intended for worshipers, and the god or goddess is not lighted except by such sunlight as penetrates through the transparent marble of the roof. The frieze and the pediments of the temples are decorated with scenes from mythology or history, and it was in these reliefs that the sculptor joined hands with the architect to build a fitting home for the god.

Though his work was not confined to the Acropolis of Athens, the hill which stood in the center of the city, it was the restoration of the temples that was the crowning work of Pericles—above all the Parthenon, the temple of Athena, the protecting goddess of Athens. This unique building is constructed entirely of marble, with eight Doric columns at the ends and seventeen along each side. There are also six internal columns at each end. But the Doric columns are more graceful and slender than usual in this order. One of the wonders of the Parthenon, noble still in its ruins, is that it is made to live by the slight curves given to every part of the building, from the columns which lean slightly inward and taper toward the top, to the steps leading to the temple. The temple itself was the work of Callicrates and his younger contemporary Ictinus, the bulk of the work being ascribed to the latter. The sculpture was directed by Phidias; and the marvel of his work lies not only in the general design, which is a long continuous theme in glorification of Athens and her goddess, but in the way in which each part fits so perfectly into the whole. There is no dullness or monotony in it, with the horses prancing, and their young riders in perfect control, or Athena springing in full panoply from the head of Zeus while the other gods are calm and commanding, having not yet heard the momentous news. Some of these reliefs many feet above the ground were not meant to be seen by any mortal, but they are all executed with the utmost honesty.

SCULPTURE—HARMONY OF BODY AND SOUL.

The human body for the first time was appreciated, indeed loved, by those sculptors, great and small, of the Hellenic Age. Every muscle is perfectly rendered, whether in tension or repose. There was no striving after effect, as indeed there was no realism in the sense of contortion and strain as we find it in real life. There were ideal figures, harmonious and perfectly proportioned, the Greek ideal of man as a harmony of body and soul. Everyone who examines any of the smaller sculptures—the large sculptures for this age are all lost—is at once struck by the way the artist has been able to suggest life, and somehow conjure it out of his marble or ivory. In their original forms all the sculpture and the buildings themselves were painted, and it is difficult to imagine the effect the whole must have created, especially when we always view what remains to us in the cold white of the original marble.

Phidias is generally considered the greatest sculptor that Greece produced. In addition to his statue of Athena for the Parthenon,
he is known for his forty-foot figure of a seated Zeus at Olympia in Elis in the Peloponnesian, which is described in detail by Pausanias, a Greek traveler of the Christian Era. No work known to be by him survives, though the Parthenon friezes give some indication of his style of work, and some of them may be by the hand of the master. The only sculpture by one of the really great Greek sculptors which is certainly identified is the Hermes of Praxiteles, an Athenian of the fourth century B.C., when art had been modified from the complete idealism of the Age of Pericles. This is a real youth, alive, though in repose. Though he is called a god, no one could mistake him for one. Many of the great sculptors, however, are known through Roman and later Greek copies. This at least serves to suggest the kind of sculpture and the methods and character of the sculpture of a particular artist. From this we know how great a loss we have sustained in having none of the genuine work of Lysippus, whose

Marble relief of a Maenad. Classical period, fifth century B.C. (Courtesy the Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Two slabs from the Parthenon frieze known as the Elgin marbles after the English lord who carried them off to England. Note the mastery of the riders in the Panathenaic procession, and the absence of any sense of the strain which is noticeable in some of the realistic sculpture of the Hellenistic Age shown in the next chapter. The riders are caught in a moment of eternity rather than individualized as riders taking part in one particular procession at one particular moment. The frieze was designed by Phidias and carried out at his direction though by different craftsmen. (Courtesy British Museum)
portrait of Alexander the Great, known in a copy, has fixed his features and demeanor indelibly upon later generations.

PAINTING

Of painting, as such, unfortunately we know only what Roman and Greek tourists have told us. We know of the great Polygnotus of Thasos, who was invited to Athens before the time of Pericles to do frescoes, and who depicted scenes from the Trojan War with Athenian notables in the likeness of their Achaeans' forebears; and we know that in the individualist fourth century was the beginning of portrait painting, with stress on fidelity to nature. Zeuxis and Apelles were the great masters in this genre.

But though all the great painting is lost we possess thousands of examples of vase painting from the earliest times, examples which are of great value for the information they give of life in the Greek cities, as well as for incidents of mythology and religion. It was a kind of specialized miniature painting, and often done with great skill. But this art was already decaying before the fourth century, and the later pottery was more strictly utilitarian; but, as always in Greek art, a special effort was made to draw each figure with full regard for the group in which it appeared, and for the shape of the vase itself. The vases are painted in red and black, and are made of clay turned on the potter's wheel.
Literature

LYRIC POETRY—THE CHORAL LYRIC

In the classical Greek period there was, as far as we know, no literature produced for the sole purpose of entertainment, and none that was not intimately connected with the social and political life of the polis. There were no self-conscious “men of letters” until the breakdown of this social life after the conquest of Asia. Several of the more important writers have therefore already been dealt with in the course of these chapters, leaving only formal classification and a few supplementary remarks for this section.

Epic poetry inevitably suffered a decline after Homer. The heroic deeds which it celebrated were now far in the past, and new forms of poetry were better fitted to express the great deeds of the present. There was no attempt to recover it until the Hellenistic Age, when some scholars made the effort to tell the legends of the past again in a manner fitted for contemporary consumption. But Hesiod, a Boeotian farmer of the seventh century B.C., is known to us from two long poems, Works and Days and the Theogony. The latter is our chief source for the Greek myths and legends about the gods, and was, with Homer, often learned by heart by later Greeks and taught to every schoolboy. The former is a conservative peasant’s glorification of his own way of life, and a sustained and bitter attack upon the new power and importance of commerce and trade, and the exploitation of the farmer that results from it. The poems are marked by few graces of style or poetic feeling. They are more important to us, and evidently also to the later Greeks, for the subjects treated; as yet there was no Greek prose writing, and Hesiod therefore naturally wrote in verse.

Greek lyric poetry, as such, belongs preeminently to the age before the Greek genius had reached full maturity. The great choral lyrics of tragedy and comedy thereafter took its place. Very little of these earlier lyrics survive; but enough to tell us of the incalculable loss sustained. Most of them are known to us only through quotations by later scholars and critics which have been assembled by modern Western scholars into a collection substantial enough to give us some idea of the richness and variety of this almost lost treasure.

This poetry can best be classified into the elegy and the personal lyric. The elegy was not pre-eminently musical, though many varieties of meter were used, and was closely connected with the social life of the time. Calls to action were sounded in elegy, and social criticism by Solon and Theognis. This later developed into the epigram, which was used extensively for epitaphs and dedicatory offerings in the temples. These are short, and often packed with thought and feeling, especially when composed to honor the glorious dead.

THE PERSONAL LYRIC—PINDAR AND THE EXALTATION OF THE GREEK GAMES

The personal and choral Greek lyrics were sung to the music of the lyre or cithara. Many of them, such as the passionate poems of Sappho, sing of love; others, of the beauties of nature. The greatest work makes a marvelous use of the musical Greek language, which was perfectly fitted for song. These poems have given inspiration to thousands of poets in other tongues who have copied their meters, their themes, and their images without ever being able to approach the originals. Nevertheless, those odes of the Roman Horace which were inspired by the Greeks are among his best work in spite of the different virtues of the Latin tongue. The personal lyric developed into the great odes celebrating the winners in the games, which reached their climax in the Theban poet Pindar, who was able with a wealth of images and often profound thought to elevate the whole theme of glory and victory into a paean of praise of man and the gods, and the life of man upon earth among the beauties of the natural world. The Greeks acclaimed Pindar as their greatest poet after Homer, and Alexander, when he razed Thebes as a terrible example of the fruits of rebellion, spared Pindar’s house in deference
A lady playing a cithara, popular Greek musical instrument. This fresco is from Boscoreale, a southern Italian city destroyed in the same earthquake that destroyed Pompeii and Herculaneum. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)

to this esteem. For us, our ignorance of the music that accompanied the odes is a loss that cannot be fully overcome; but if we imagine the atmosphere of the games, and can enter a little into the Greek spirit that animated them, it becomes possible to understand the honor in which the poet was held, why he was the most honored poet in Greece during his lifetime, and why he became a classic at once when he died.

The choral lyric found its early home in Sparta, and was designed to express the spirit of a civic festival. Usually it glorified the mythical or historical past of the city, its ancestral hero, and its god; and for this reason was specially suited for martial Sparta, though it was equally at home at Athens in the days of her glory. It found a natural continuation in the tragic drama and the Old Comedy; both Aristophanes and the great tragic dramatists were all wonderful exponents of the choral lyric, the singing and the dancing enhancing the atmosphere of the festival, and the lyrics themselves giving the
poets opportunity to point to the universality of the solemn themes which were the heart of their plays.

THE OLD COMEDY—ARISTOPHANES

Of Greek drama, which has already been dealt with extensively, it only remains to treat more fully Aristophanes, the master of the Old Comedy. Fragments exist from other writers of comedy, although insufficient to enable us to form a judgment on his competitors; but Aristophanes failed to win the first prize at the annual festivals often enough for us to surmise that the works of other dramatists were of the same high standard as the extant works of the master himself. To appreciate Aristophanes today it is absolutely necessary to re-create in the imagination the circumstances of the time. Notes on the meanings of the great number of allusions to current events can hardly take the place of this knowledge. He was an extremely acute social critic, with a love of Athens which shines through all his work. He has been called an arch-conservative, incapable of understanding the changing times; but this is a one-sided judgment. He understood the changing times only too well, and he did not like the change. Spending his youth in the bright days of the Periclean empire, and living through the Peloponnesian War and the oligarchic revolution, he was in a position to estimate the magnitude of what was being lost; and his comedies should be read in conjunction with the history of his contemporary Thucydides, as a parallel picture of the disintegration of the democracy under the scourge of war—and Thucydides is not usually accused, after his famous Periclean Funeral Speech, of being a hater of democracy.

Aristophanes saw Euripides destroying the tragic drama (the Frogs); he saw Cleon and the demagogues destroying the balance and order of the Periclean democracy (again the Frogs, but especially the Knights); he saw the dignity of the law courts being destroyed by corruption and blackmail (the Wasps); he saw faith in the old gods and the old unquestioned basis of society being destroyed by the Sophists (the Clouds); and he saw from the beginning that imperialism was not worth the price and would lead to what in fact followed (the Acharnians). With an unsurpassed gift for caricature and comic invention and a rich sense of verbal repartee, he brings forth his satires, one after another, criticizing his polis and its leaders unsparingly—and yet the Athenian comedy was produced out of public funds. The plays make use of dozens of different meters chosen with such obviously meticulous care for the effect they create that we could recognize a master poet in spite of his medium, even if we could not see this from the exquisite choral lyrics.

They were rich entertainment for a politically alert citizenry; but once the social and political conditions of the old polis had changed, this kind of comedy had outlived its purpose and there was never any serious attempt to revive it. In the so-called Middle Comedy of the fourth century B.C., the old uproarious satire takes on gentler tones, and the ordinary foibles of private life come increasingly to the fore, to emerge in the comedies of manners and character which reach full fruition in Menander and the New Comedy of the Hellenistic Age, which will be dealt with in the next chapter.

PROSE

The historians—Herodotus and Thucydides

Prose writing finds its beginning in the two great histories of the Classical Age. Enough references have already been made to Herodotus, the "father of history," for the reader to be already familiar with his work and methods. Ostensibly his book (the Persian Wars) deals with the Persian Wars; but he was also so much interested in the peoples who took part in them, even remotely, and he traveled so extensively and made so many inquiries, that his work is almost a universal history. The customs and history of Persia

*The English-speaking reader in need of a translation should always use those of B. B. Rogers, who catches beautifully the spirit of Aristophanes, as well as rendering the lyrics into the same meter as the original.
and Egypt, as far as he was able to ascertain them, fill a large portion of his work, which is a mine of interesting stories as well as material for social and cultural anthropology. For the age in which he wrote, before the advent of rationalism and the critical spirit of the Sophists and their followers, he was not especially credulous, as has sometimes been stated. The trouble was that he had as yet no proper tools for criticism. When a story was told him, he either accepted or rejected it on the grounds of its own inherent credibility or lack of it. He could not check it by comparing and evaluating sources, but only by making more inquiries from more people, so that the problem of credibility remained unsolved. The story of the Persian Wars itself is told in a masterly narrative form, and primarily as an example of the destruction that awaits the presumptuous. From this point of view the Persian Wars were indeed a tragic drama, and Aeschylus, as we have seen, used it as a theme for one of his own. Written in the days when faith was still unshaken in the justice of the universal order and with an incomparable theme to celebrate, the later part of his book has unity and solidarity; and with its charming style and the fund of delightful as well as heroic stories, it is a work of perennial interest, and has never failed to find appreciative readers in all the ages since.

But with Thucydides, son of Olorus, we are in the presence of one of the great minds of the world, one of the greatest that has ever turned to the writing of history. The defects, from a modern point of view, are easily stated, and detract little from its value. His book (History of the Peloponnesian War) is too little concerned with economic and social life, and too much occupied with politics and political psychology; and it says nothing of the great Greek art and the flowering of Athenian culture. And occasionally the style is artificial and crabbed (a characteristic also of his great English pupil Gibbon). But it was not the purpose of his work to deal with Athenian culture. He was not even writing a formal history of Athens during the Peloponnesian War; but of the Peloponnesian War itself, the interstate rivalry and imperialism that caused it, and the defects and virtues of Athenian democracy that caused it to take the course it did. If we grant this framework as the legitimate field for a historian, and further take into account that he was writing the most difficult form of history, the study of the contemporary scene, the magnitude of his achievement remains without parallel in the whole field of history.

Thucydides himself was at one time an Athenian general, but because of ill success in a campaign and suspicions arising from it he was exiled, and while still in exile he wrote his History. He made it his business to gather together all the information he could, and he is severely critical in his use of sources. But most of the facts he recounts were quite familiar to him, and only needed his interpretation. As a true Greek he always tries to see the universal in the particular, and on almost every page we find magnificent generalizations which have remained permanently true, and make his history a mine of wisdom for the politician and the soldier and the citizen. He is so impartial and objective in his descriptions and criticisms that he sometimes seems like the voice of the Greek gods themselves commenting on the presumptuousness of man, the overconfidence born of success, and the madness and destruction that follow. Intensely dramatic in the structure and emphasis of his writing, Thucydides, as no historian has ever done since, laid bare the psychology of a whole people perfectly—the Athenian ideal as proclaimed by Pericles, the cold realities of the rule by the people, the oratory that moved them and the considerations of power that shaped their imperial policy, the party strife between oligarchs and democrats that destroyed the polis from within and was finally responsible for the follies of the war.

The drama is revealed especially in the speeches, not heard by Thucydides himself; but the emotions felt and the arguments used are those of the occasion, re-created by the imaginative understanding of the historian, heightening the drama and relieving the
somber realism of the narrative. The Peloponnesian War may have been a small one between small states of little political importance in the history of the world, and (unfortunately) later wars greater in magnitude have sometimes suggested that this was a lot of fuss about little; but it was, like other Greek experiences, an archetype, the history in miniature of all other wars. And because it found its historian of genius it has remained till our own times, with its warning and its lesson, as vivid as in the day it was written.

The orators—Demosthenes, Isocrates, Aeschines

Another form of prose writing sprang up in the fourth century, the written and published speeches of professional orators. The Sophists, as has been seen, first showed the value of careful professional training in speaking, which already with them in practice meant the careful planning of the effects of the speech, the use of a carefully calculated diction, the building up of dramatic effects as well as the employment of doubtful arguments of the kind satirized by Plato and Aristophanes. The effect of this self-conscious examination of what had always no doubt been applied half-consciously in practice is to be seen in Thucydides; but the full impact of this new education was not felt until the fourth-century schools of oratory attained their maturity and their resounding success. No longer could a pleader hope to win his case in the law court or a speaker command the attention of the Assembly without the assistance of planned artifice; and by the second half of the fourth century almost every politician of note had been trained by the orators. But in addition to public speaking the demand also arose for publicists, men who could make their appeal to an informed public by the written word.

All fourth-century prose writing was dominated by the art and craft of the orator. It was apparently impossible to find an audience for anything except fine writing, artificial, perhaps, but carefully balanced and elaborated, thoroughly orderly in the Greek manner, and thought out, rather than merely poured out, in words. Even the appeal to the emotions was planned, though with such an orator as Demosthenes the fire of his patriotism and the real emotion behind his words removed any hint of the artificial. Because he himself and his art were so intermingled that the masterly technique is concealed, he has been regarded as the greatest exponent of political oratory in history; and his speeches remained the model for Romans and Western Europeans until very recent times.

Isocrates is the great example of the scholarly orator, who wrote his speeches and rarely delivered them because, as he explains, his voice was too weak to be effective in public. His was for the greater part of the century the most influential school of oratory, and the most promising students of the Greek world came to study with him. While not aloof from politics he strove to look at them with a detached eye, and he alone of Greek publicists recognized that the future of the world did not lie with the individual polis, and that the necessary unity of Greece could best be attained by a joint expedition under Greek leadership against the barbarian world of Persia. From early in his long life till almost the end he urged this policy and his Letter to Philip, in which he exhorted the Macedonian king to undertake the leadership of the Greeks against the Persians was an act of political courage in the days of the ascendancy of the superpatriot Demosthenes. Isocrates always seems to have had a circle of friends around him who held similar views, though they were men of little political influence. But their very existence and the way in which the independent politicians were able to find thoroughly respectable arguments to justify the appeasement of Philip are a commentary on the detached and excessively rational attitude of the Athenian democracy in its declining days.

A considerable number of orations, private and public, are known for this period, but most of them are hardly to be classed as literature, valuable though they are for the insight they give us into the social conditions
of the time. Aeschines was a brilliant writer and a brilliant speaker, though lacking sincerity and without profound political insight. If he had not been a contemporary of Demosthenes he, instead of his implacable enemy, might well have become the model for later times. When we read his speech against the man who had proposed a crown for Demosthenes, we marvel how he could have failed to win his case. Then when we read Demosthenes afterward we see why there could have been no other verdict. Demosthenes had every art of the orator at his finger tips in addition to a burning sincerity. On whether his policy was a wise one in the circumstances there can be difference of opinion; but on whether he was a worthy exponent of it, and of his passionate love of and belief in the idea of the polis and of Athens there can be none at all. But of this the reader will better be able to judge when the struggle between Demosthenes and Macedonian imperialism has been considered in the next chapter.

Suggestions for further reading

Again, the same observations should be stressed as in the suggestions for the preceding chapter: there is no substitute for reading as widely as possible in the primary sources. Many translations are available of the works of all the writers mentioned in this chapter; if no specific translations are recommended, the reliable Loeb Classical Library translations are always available. As mentioned in the text, translations of the plays of Aristophanes by B. B. Rogers are reprinted in the Loeb series, and should certainly be used for this writer. There are several good collections also available containing the works of several writers. Strongly recommended are T. F. Higham and C. M. Bowra, eds., The Oxford Book of Greek Verse in Translation (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1938), and W. J. Oates and Eugene O’Neill, Jr., eds., The Complete Greek Drama (2 vols.; New York: Random House, 1938). The introduction to the latter volume by O’Neill is especially valuable. F. R. B. Godolphin, ed., The Greek Historians (2 vols.; New York: Random House, 1942), is a comprehensive work, but the Penguin translations of Herodotus and Thucydides referred to at the end of Chapter 7 may be preferred. M. C. Nahm, ed., Selections from Early Greek Philosophy (3rd ed.; New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1947), with a useful introduction by the editor, collects in one volume a substantial number of the fragments of the writings of the pre-Socratic philosophers which are difficult to find together elsewhere in English. Until very recently the most easily available complete translation of the works of Plato, that of Benjamin Jowett, led many students astray in their attempts to understand exactly what Plato had said. In spite of the real excellence of Jowett’s work as a whole, much fault could be found in detail. Now, however, a new edition of Jowett’s work has just been issued, substantially revised where necessary by a number of distinguished scholars. This new edition, B. Jowett, The Dialogues of Plato, revised by D. J. Allan and H. E. Dale (4 vols.; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1953), should certainly be used when available. The standard edition of the works of Aristotle, on which most other editions have been based, is that of W. D. Ross, who also edited an abridged version for students, The Student’s Oxford Aristotle (6 vols.; London: Oxford University Press, 1942). There are many convenient anthologies containing some of the more important works of Aristotle. Among the most useful is R. McKeon, ed., Introduction to Aristotle (New York: The Modern Library, 1947).

It would be a hopeless task to attempt to make a list of even all the first-rate works on different aspects of Hellenic culture. All that will be given here is a list of a few books that the author thinks are specially relevant to the exposition he has offered in this chapter. On Greek tragedy, contrary to much modern opinion, he is inclined toward the view of Nietzsche, which emphasizes the relation of tragedy to Greek religion, and regards it as having been destroyed by the rationalism of the Sophists. This view has been eloquently expounded in Nietzsche’s The Birth of Tragedy, which is excellently translated by Clifton Fadiman, in C. Fadiman, ed., The Philosophy of Nietzsche (New York: The Modern Library, 1927). For a careful analysis of the extant plays, with a standpoint differing substantially from that of the author, the reader is referred to H. D. F. Kitto, Greek Tragedy (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1954), an Anchor book. A well-organized history of philosophy which gives, on the whole, a very fair summary of all Greek thought is W. T. Jones, A History of Western Philosophy (New
The Hellenistic Age

The end of the independent polis in Greece • The career of Alexander the Great • Results of the conquests • The Hellenistic Age in Greece • The Hellenistic Age in Egypt • The Hellenistic Age in Asia: Pergamum and the Seleucid Empire • Hellenistic culture • Transition to the Roman world: Hellenistic "conquest" of Rome

The end of the independent polis in Greece

DIVISIVE CITY-STATE POLITICS VERSUS THE UNIFIED IMPERIAL STATE.

The struggle between the polis and Macedonian imperialism deserves more space than is usually given it in a textbook. Looking back from this distance of time it is clear that all the advantages were on the side of Philip, and that Demosthenes and his party were always fighting a losing battle. The polis as a unit of government had outlived its usefulness, and as a social unit it had outlived its creativeness. The weakness of the barbarian empires, possessed of a potential power that the Greek poleis could not command, had allowed the latter to make their outstanding contributions to civilization. Now again it was the turn of the great empires, and the future lay with them, until once again the civilization of Europe was destroyed by primitive barbarians unfitted to manage their inheritance of empire.

All this may be so, but it did not seem so to Demosthenes; nor even, so far as we can tell, to Aristotle, who, as tutor of the young Alexander, ought to have known better. The social organization of the polis was dear to its inhabitants; the collaborators with Philip were probably not pining for a great strong master and an enlightened or powerful despotism. They were merely shortsighted self-seekers who failed to see the danger. And in fact the polis in Greece did survive for a couple of centuries more, even though it had lost its full political autonomy. It is thus as a case history of unpreparedness, political ineptitude, and the willingness of a democracy to be hoaxed that this period has a melancholy interest, rather than merely as a struggle for an inevitably lost cause.

The Greek political genius had not been fully spent, even if the leadership of Greece had passed from Athens. There are sporadic attempts at federations and leagues of cities, each maintaining its social autonomy and yielding some of its political autonomy. The problem was again not dissimilar to our own in the twentieth century, with the political unit in ancient times being the polis, and
in modern the national state. The heart of the matter in ancient times was that the cities wanted to eat their cake and have it; they wanted to remain the arbiters of their own destiny and at the same time to have the advantage of "collective security"; they did not want a different social organization from that of the polis, nor to give up the patriotism associated with it. As it turned out, events were too strong for them, and the more hopeful leagues had only brief moments of growth and prosperity before being destroyed from within by traitors or unredeemed polis patriots, or from without by armed force.

THE RISE OF MACEDONIA—PHILIP II AND THE PIECEMEAL CONQUEST OF GREECE

One of the most interesting of these attempts at intercity organization led directly to the rise of Macedon, and so is worth a brief mention here. About 387 B.C. the democracy of the city of Olynthus in the Chalcidian peninsula at the borders of Macedonia suggested to the local smaller cities that they hold certain well-defined rights in common, in particular those of property and intermarriage. There should also be a league citizenship in addition to the citizenship of the individual polis. All citizens would therefore hold a dual citizenship, one of their own polis and one of the league. The league and its new idea quickly spread outside the original peninsula and began to incorporate other local cities against the will of their governments. It also began to make military advances with a joint army, capturing the Macedonian capital of Pella. Macedonia at that time was only a semibarbarian kingdom with a weak army and constantly beset by dynastic feuds. The two Greek cities with oligarchic governments within the sphere of influence of Olynthus naturally appealed to the chief upholder of oligarchies and the leading power in Greece at that time—Sparta.

The Spartan government decided to take action, backed as usual in the early fourth century B.C., by Persian gold, proceeded to besiege Olynthus, and after four years forced her capitulation. The league was nominally dissolved. Shortly afterward, however, Sparta
herself was defeated by Thebes, and the
league came to life again. But the Ma-
cedonian king, Amyntas, a minor victim of the
Olynthian expansion, had learned his lesson
and proceeded to re-establish his kingdom,
build up an army, and try to ensure that he
would be able at least to defend his kingdom
against a few aggressive cities of Greece. At
his death the kingdom was rent for another
ten years by internal struggles until his third
son, Philip, came to the throne in 359 B.C.

In his youth Philip had been taken to
Thebes as a hostage and there he had taken
careful account of the Theban improvements
in military organization, and had gained a
firsthand knowledge of the internal weakness
of the Greek city-states. This knowledge he
was to put to good use in his drive for
supreme power in Greece. This remarkable
man, who has never received from history a
fame commensurate with his achievements;
succeeded, in the comparatively short reign
of twenty-three years, in converting Mac-
donia from a weak, disunited, and unimport-
ant kingdom which had remained on the
fringe of Greek civilization and taken no
part in its affairs, into the dominating power
in the Greek world, with every state save
Sparta submissive to him, and with a strong,
well-trained body of troops which under the
leadership of Alexander was to conquer Asia.
All his life Philip seems to have been a
genuine admirer of Hellenic culture, though
he had nothing but contempt for its out-
moded government. Time after time his
knowledge of Greek political weaknesses
enabled him to divide and rule; but even
when he had won his final victory he im-
posed easy terms on Athens, and did not even
demand the banishment of his unyielding
opponent Demosthenes. He seems genuinely
to have desired the cooperation of the Greek
states in his Asiatic venture, and probably
hoped for it till the end. Even though he
knew the lukewarm nature of Greek support
he took the trouble to organize a league for
the conquest of Persia and had himself
elected its leader.

In his dealings with the Greek city-states
he showed himself master of the art of power
politics. He was completely faithless, he
regarded a treaty as a move in the game, to
be abandoned whenever it seemed advisable;
he knew equally the value of a well-placed
bribe and soft and soothing words. He knew
exactly what his ultimate aim was, and, be-
ing one of the most brilliant opportunists
in history, he could always take advantage
of a momentary weakness or division among
his opponents. To assist him he had a per-
sonally trained professional army, by far the
finest in the Western world of his day but
small in size; he could use it exactly when
and where it was needed, confident of its
loyalty. He was altogether too formidable an
opponent for the Greek cities, even though
the material means were usually in their
favor, and at any time in his career until
the last, a united front must have over-
whelmed him. Even after the Athenian defeat
by land at Chaeronea in 338 B.C., the Athe-
nian navy could and did defeat singlehanded
any navy he was able to put together.

Philip’s first need was money to pay his
army. He looked covetously at some gold
mines which belonged to Amphipolis, a city
which did not exploit them properly. Some
shrewd diplomacy to hold off interference
from Athens, a lightning blow of his army,
and the gold mines were his. With these
funds he organized the famous Macedonian
phalanx, a new and effective formation which
remained the master military unit of the
Western world until the Roman legion de-
feated it. The Chalcidian cities and Olynthus
barred his way to the sea, and with the con-
siderable resources of the revived league,
they presented probably the most formidable
single opposition in Greece, far too strong for
a direct attack at this point. Thebes was still
a strong land power, with the best army.
Athens had the best navy. But Athens in the
fourth century had grown accustomed to
using mercenary soldiers under generals of
fortune, and her reputation for regular pay-
ment was not of the best.

The Athenian, in fact, at this time had

1 It will be realized by the student that the
detailed account of the strategy of Philip given here
is intended to draw attention to an instructive
modern parallel.
a good reputation for nothing. When the Assembly, under the influence of some war-minded demagogue, decided to engage in a military expedition, the usual procedure was to appoint a general and tell him to go out and raise some troops on credit. This he might do if he were otherwise disengaged; then someone else would offer a higher rate or more swift payment, and Athens would suddenly find herself at war but without an army. And as the war was usually to be fought with some ally, the ally would then be left in the lurch. Even the navy was semi-professional and dependent upon spasmodic outbursts of generosity by the citizens or upon a good orator to urge its support. The ready cash accumulated in the city treasury from the good years, which were rare enough, was put into a so-called festival fund which was sacrosanct, not to be touched; for out of it the poorer citizens were given money to attend the festivals, and the poorer citizens were in full control of the Assembly by the late fourth century B.C.

The incessant struggles between the city-states brought Philip actively into Greece for the first time. Thebes accused Phocis, the custodian of the Delphic Oracle and its treasures, of some sacrilege, and proceeded to invade the small state. The Phocians, who no doubt thought they might as well be hanged for the sheep as the dog, then became really sacrilegious, and stole the god’s treasure, with which they purchased the bulk of the unemployed mercenaries in the country. They started to expand northward; and Thebes, frightened at the hornet’s nest she had stirred up, appealed to Philip for assistance. Delighted to oblige, he descended with an army and inflicted a decisive defeat on the Phocians. At this point he was almost in the center of Greece; and the Athenians, suddenly scared, sent an army to Thermopylae. Philip, not having secured his rear and not yet ready to take on a major foe, retired gracefully. His services to the god Apollo were rewarded by an invitation to take the place of the sacrilegious Phocians on the Amphictyonic Council, which meant that Philip was now a Greek by adoption—and, more important, if another “sacred” war could be incited, he was the proper agent to defend the god and his property.

At this juncture Athens found herself a leader—Demosthenes, who had realized before his countrymen what a danger the Macedonian king represented to all Greece and her cherished liberties. He proposed in his first *Philippic* (his speeches against Philip have received this name from posterity) the creation of a national army, citizens as well as mercenaries, and a policy of uncompromising hostility to Philip, and he gave exact indications as to the number of men required and how they should be financed. But the Athenians thought he was taking the situation too seriously. No one questioned his figures, but they said that Philip was just a kind, cultured gentleman; in any case he was “far away”—and, besides, he might die.

Back in Macedonia, enriched by a little privateering against Athenian vessels, Philip suddenly struck at his real enemy, Olynthus and the Chalcidian League, in the meantime fomenting a small rebellion in another Athenian dependency nearer home. Demosthenes in his *Olynthiac* orations now urged the use of the festival fund for troops; the opposition, some of its members now probably in the pay of Philip, countered with the usual arguments. Philip made short work of the confederate cities and laid siege to Olynthus. At this point Demosthenes had his way, and some two thousand troops went north. But they were too late. Philip had some well-placed traitors in the city, and it fell without too long a resistance. It had been too dangerous to Philip, with its constructive ideas of federation, it had shown too marked an ability to recover. There must be no mistake this time. It was razed and its inhabitants were sold as slaves, shocking all Greece into the realization of Philip’s power and ruthlessness. This was not the kind of thing that happened in the enlightened fourth century.

But Philip had calculated correctly. The shock was not enough to awaken the Athenians to activity, but it was just enough to scare them into good behavior. When he

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*See page 211, above.*
chronological chart

The end of the independent polis
Expansion of Olynthus in Chalcidice 400–379
First conquest of Olynthus by Spartans and Macedonians 379
Philip II becomes king of Macedonia (Macedonia) 359
Olynthiacs of Demosthenes 351
Destruction of Olynthus by Philip 348
Sacred (Phocian) War 355–346
Philip conquers Phocians 346
Philip invited to take part in further Sacred War 339
Demosthenes, Third Philippic 339
Battle of Chaeronea 338
Congress of Corinth and foundation of Hellenic League 338–337
Murder of Philip 336

The career of Alexander the Great
Alexander crushes revolts in Greece 335
Alexander invades Asia—Battle of Granicus 334
Battle of Issus 333
Expedition to Egypt and submission of Egyptians 332–331
Battle of Gaugamela (Arbela) 331
Murder of Darius—Alexander becomes Great King 330
Indian campaign of Alexander 327–324
Death of Alexander 323
Deaths of Demosthenes and Aristotle 322

Results of the conquests
Ptolemy I Soter seizes Egypt 321
Civil War between the generals 322–301
Battle of Ipsus—Final division of Alexander’s kingdom 301

Hellenistic Age in Greece
Formation of the Aetolian League 290
Formation of Achaean League 280
Revolution and reforms in Sparta 245–235
Philip V of Macedon engages in first hostilities with Rome 215

Hellenistic Age in Egypt
Foundation of Museum of Alexandria 288
Romans intervene to save Alexandria from Syrians 168
Cleopatra (vii) on Egyptian throne 51

Hellenistic Age in Asia
Seleucus I founder of Seleucid dynasty 305–280
Eumenes I founds independent kingdom of Pergamum 263
Antiochus III defeated by Romans at Magnesia 190
Revolt in Palestine against Antiochus IV (Judas Maccabaeus) 168
Attalus III of Pergamum bequeaths kingdom to Rome 133
Syria made a Roman province by Pompey 64

Dates are before Christ.
invited them to discuss a peace treaty, he played the charming host at his Macedonian capital, and convinced them that he was a good, cultured Greek after all; and they signed the peace. But Demosthenes had now made his influence felt in the Assembly. He had not been charmed by Philip, and he was backed by a strong party who had realized the danger presented by Philip and that only force would defeat Philip. Backed by the Assembly Demosthenes proceeded to organize a pan-Hellenic league against Philip. But most of the cities were powerless and were hardly capable of making any appreciable contribution to a joint army. Only Thebes had such an army, and Thebes was still in uneasy alliance with Philip. At this point an opposition leader in the Assembly committed either an inexcusable blunder or deliberate treachery.

Philip, it will be remembered, was now in the Amphictyonic League of all Greeks. It was thus very probable that there would somehow be another extremely profitable "sacred" war. No one ever could prove that the fine hand of Philip was behind the "Second Sacred War," and perhaps he was just in luck.

At all events, Athens gratuitously and publicly insulted Thebes on the old matter of Theban collaboration with the Persians a century and a half before, and was herself accused in the Amphictyonic Council of sacrilege by Amphissa, a small city friendly to Thebes. Athens replied by the counter-charge that Amphissa had been committing a much worse sacrilege by cultivating the lands of Apollo (she had been doing so with impunity for at least a hundred years). The Athenian orator Aeschines was so effective in the ensuing debate that the Council declared war against Amphissa. Philip was invited to undertake the job, which he accepted with alacrity.

With an unnecessarily powerful army he moved into central Greece past the gates of Thermopylae, was welcomed as the defender of the god of Delphi, and took up a position commanding the road to Thebes. The Athenian Assembly, apparently not having expected this, now turned once more to Demosthenes. He personally went to Thebes, armed with full authority and funds from Athens, and succeeded in persuading the Thebans at last that they must either fight together or be picked off separately. By his eloquence he persuaded the Thebans to throw off their long-standing alliance with Philip, and just at the moment when they were in the greatest danger. Philip, now safely in central Greece, was in no hurry. He took a trip to Amphissa and settled the affairs of the god in a swift and relentless campaign, then suddenly turned on the army of the alliance and routed it at Chaeronea in 338 B.C. The Theban Sacred Band, the crack troops of the city, fell to the last man, and the harshest terms were imposed upon her—a Macedonian garrison in the citadel, and slavery or death for her leaders. Athens was spared, either for the sake of her glorious past and her culture or because she still had a navy.

PHILIP AS THE GREEK LEADER AGAINST PERSIA—HIS MURDER

Philip then proceeded to call a congress of all Greek states to which only Sparta, now almost impotent, who had not fought in the recent war, refused to go. He dictated his terms. No state should be allowed to go to war on its own, and each must contribute troops and arms for his projected war against the barbarian Persians. In return Philip offered them his protection. No one was interested in his campaign, and, as the sequel showed, the hope was general that he would overreach himself, and perhaps be put out of the way by some barbarian.

As it happened, within a year he was murdered, probably in a family quarrel; and his son Alexander succeeded him. Demosthenes sprang to the attack again and persuaded the Athenians to send envoys even to Persia for support. Thebes expelled the Macedonian garrison. But Alexander in a lightning march took Thebes by assault, razed it, and enslaved the inhabitants. The Athenians, faced with a similar fate and not knowing what to expect of this terrible young man, passed a motion of congratulation on
his punishment of Thebes! Alexander was reinstated as leader of the Greeks, and prepared for his expedition to Persia.

### The career of Alexander the Great

#### THE INFLUENCE OF ARISTOTLE

Alexander the Great was one of the most remarkable conquerors in history. Yet he was much more than a conqueror. A man of wide learning and genuine enthusiasm for all that was Greek, something of a poet and a very considerable idealist, he seems to have been imbued with a sense of mission, and an exact knowledge of what he was going to do and how he was going to do it, even before he started on his expedition. It is tempting to ascribe at least some of this to his association with Aristotle, who had tutored him privately for at least three years—and Aristotle, as we have seen, was both the most learned man in the world of his day and the best exponent of all things Greek that could have been found. The evidence shows that Alexander
and Aristotle were in close contact with each other all through the campaigns, and that the association was not broken even when Alexander found it necessary to execute his tutor’s nephew. But, at the same time, Aristotle in his Politics is critical of monarchies, and regards the polis as the only fit form of government for human beings. How can these apparent contradictions be reconciled?

Alexander’s regard for reason and balance, his belief in the control of the body by the mind, his disinterested love of knowledge, and his spirit of inquiry could have been instilled into him by his tutor. Alexander’s first thought in entering a foreign country was to visit the shrines and initiation centers, and to inquire into the customs and beliefs of the people. But he persistently refused to regard the conquered as barbarians and in any way different from Greeks, much to the annoyance indeed of his own soldiers. In this he might appear to be ahead of Aristotle. The truth seems to have been that as a practical man he needed a policy, and that he used what he could of his teachings from his master, put them into effect wherever possible, and improvised the rest of his policy on the basis of his growing understanding of the problem of an empire builder in a territory in which the Greeks would necessarily be outnumbered by foreigners.

Though, as we shall see, he consolidated the empire under a central administration, this governmental technique he took over intact from the Persians; but in addition he founded new poleis wherever he went. To these he gave the institutions exactly as they were found in Greece itself. And though in many respects these cities could not function effectively as political entities, as social entities they were far nearer the Greek ideal than anything formerly to be found in Persia. A king over barbarians, Aristotle had said, must at least pretend to an interest in public welfare, avoid the exhibition of a tyrant’s vices, and rule as little like a tyrant as possible. As far as his imperfect control over his own temper permitted him—for unhappily, like too many Greeks, he lacked moderation (sophrosyne)—this is what Alexander seems to have attempted. He did not accept Aristotle’s more cynical suggestions as to how the tyrant could rule without the consent of his people and still maintain himself in power. For the rest he did his duty by his old tutor by taking along with him a corps of specialists, collecting specimens of strange plants and animals and sending them back to him. No military campaign in history has been so much like a scientific expedition. But the question remains: Did Aristotle know of the expedition in advance, and did he approve of it? If so, why did he not give his pupil special instructions on how to carry it out, and why did he not give more attention to the special needs of the situation, giving more detailed instructions, for instance, on monarchy?

While there is always the possibility that Aristotle’s works on this subject are lost—tradition says that he was asked for books on colonization and monarchy—even if we assume these books were not written, it can hardly be doubted that Aristotle knew of the planned expedition. Everyone in Greece knew of it for a considerable time before, and it was certainly known at the Macedonian court. Probably the best conclusion is that the expedition itself was the plan of Philip, inherited by his son Alexander. Isocrates, the Athenian orator and political philosopher, had urged it upon Philip. When the latter chose Aristotle as tutor for his son, he may have only wanted him to have the best education that money could buy. But Aristotle succeeded in giving his pupil an enthusiasm for Greek culture that was later to bear much fruit, though details of his personal advice on how to conquer and rule a barbarian people are missing and probably were never committed to writing. For Aristotle was hoping to return to Athens, and public support of the policy of the Macedonian king was hardly likely to endear him to Athenians.

Aristotle was a student of politics, and particularly of the Greek polis as a form of

#Plutarch, writing four centuries later, declared that Aristotle did give Alexander such private personal advice. But we do not know whether Plutarch had any definite information on the subject.
government and as a medium for social life; he probably hoped that something of the values of the polis, as he saw them, could be transferred to an alien territory. And Alexander, as we have seen, tried his best to transfer the polis to Asia, and it was no personal fault of his if it failed to take root within a monarchical system, and in a foreign land permeated by Oriental culture. What Alexander seems to have appreciated, and Aristotle did not, were the values of Oriental culture in themselves. This was the result of the conqueror's own experience, which, of course, Aristotle lacked.

**FLEXIBLE POLICY TOWARD THE CONQUERED PEOPLES**

Alexander was a consummate master not only of military strategy and tactics but of publicity. This was of vital importance, especially in the initial stages of his campaign. For though Philip had made nearly all the preliminary preparations for the campaign, he had not yet taken care of financing it. The Persian treasury was a more formidable enemy than the Persian native manpower, for it meant that he would be opposed by Greek mercenaries who were as tough fighters as his own Macedonians, and originally more numerous. There seem to have been, in fact, more Greeks fighting against Alexander at the beginning than were fighting for him. However, they were scattered throughout Persia, and not all of them could be brought to bear upon him at the same moment. Alexander's policy, as it revealed itself, was therefore to pose as a champion of Hellas, and to try to arouse Hellenic patriotism. Moreover, if he could demonstrate to the world that he was an invincible conqueror the mercenaries might be persuaded to desert. And above all if he could acquire the treasury of Darius, the Macedonian himself could hire troops and put them in the field against the Persian king. Alexander's policy, with a force vastly inferior in numbers, though of excellent quality, varied in each country he entered. He had to pose as the champion of liberty in a country such as Asia Minor which appreciated that pose; he had to pose as a god-king appearing in majesty in Egypt where god-kings were acceptable, and for this purpose he had to win over the priesthood; and in Persia proper he had to be an invincible conqueror and appreciative of Persian valor and traditions. His brilliant propaganda seems to have been an important element in his success. His policy and campaigns have always been of great interest to students of the Greek mind and
civilization because not only did he have the physical appearance of an ideal Greek, but in every act that he performed, except when he could not control his passions, we see the evidence of a trained and logical Greek mind, master of itself and its environment.

THE CONQUESTS

He started on his conquest of Asia with only thirty days' provisions for his army and with only seventy talents in his treasury; and he was already heavily in debt. He dared not leave Greece without an effective garrison, so that he had to leave nearly half his army behind in Macedonia to keep order and prevent revolt in the Greek cities. As it happened, the garrison was very necessary since Sparta suddenly revived, and for a while tried to unite the cities against him. The revolt caused considerable trouble to the regent, but was ultimately suppressed. The Greek "volunteers" in Alexander's army amounted to fewer than eight thousand men, and he only had enough cash and credit to hire a further five thousand. The "Hellenic League," so carefully provided by Philip, was of little use to him until it could be seen that he would be successful. The Macedonian nucleus is estimated at about eighteen thousand infantry and three thousand cavalry, with a valuable unit of Thessalian cavalry which had really volunteered and was of inestimable value to him. His fleet was very small and made up of dependable allies. The Persians, on the other hand, possessed almost unlimited gold and silver, which was, however, virtually useless to Darius since his original mercenaries were expended, since he could not hire any more foreign manpower after Alexander had secured the coasts. Darius also had the services of a large Phoenician navy. Potentially he had a very large Persian army made up of feudal levies, but these were not, for the most part, well trained, as he had relied in recent years too heavily on Greek mercenaries, and could not organize an effective army from his polyglot empire in the short time available to him.4

The first battle in Asia Minor was a resounding victory for Alexander (Granicus, 334 b.c.). The propaganda was working well enough for most Greek mercenaries to be doubtful, and so take little active part in the battle. Those who did take part and were captured were sent as slaves to Macedonia, causing some consternation among the remainder. They finally chose their sides; but the remnant that opted for the Persian king and his treasure was too small to be effective, and was wiped out by Alexander's victorious troops in a local engagement. The Persians retired from Asia Minor, and most of the non-Persian inhabitants offered their submission, the Ionians naturally hailing Alexander as liberator. The remainder were quietly mopped up, and suitable forms of government granted to them.

Darius by this time had assembled what he could of the Persian armies, including Greek mercenaries from his Persian provinces, and advanced to meet Alexander in Syria; and though Alexander's army had also increased in size it was no match in numbers for the Persian. This time everything seemed to be in Darius's favor. His Greek mercenaries, knowing that Alexander would show them no mercy, fought loyally and stubbornly. But Alexander's cavalry won the day and Darius himself fled into the interior (battle of Issus, 333 b.c.). Alexander captured his camp and enough spoil to be able to pay his troops, hire more, and still have something in hand. In no hurry about pursuing Darius, he proceeded to capture the Phoenician coast and secure the sea; then he went on what was largely a triumphal tour into Egypt, sacrificed to the Egyptian gods, rebuilt a number of temples, and founded the city of Alexandria, destined to become the greatest city of the world. Greek architects, artists, craftsmen, and plain immigrants flocked to it. At last Alexander had the support of some of the Greeks. His tolerant and Hellenizing policy was beginning to pay off. He made a state visit to the Greco-Egyptian oracle of Zeus-Amon

4 See also Chapter 4 for the organization of the Persian Empire.
away off in the desert, and left everyone to this day speculating what the god told him that was so “agreeable to his desire.”

Having settled Egypt to his satisfaction without opposition, he took up again the pursuit of Darius, who had now gathered together his motley troops into another powerful army, which still greatly outnumbered anything Alexander could muster. But again by superior tactics and discipline he was successful on a battlefield chosen by his opponents, a wide plain near Nineveh, former capital of the Assyrian Empire (battle of Arbela, 331 B.C.). Alexander now adopted the Persian title of the “Great King,” successor to the “abdicated” Darius, who had again fled into the interior, and took possession of the remaining three capitals of Persia, together with their enormous hoards of treasure. The avenging of the ancient expedition of the Persian Xerxes, the official reason for the war, was now complete, and Alexander dismissed all his allied Greek forces with thanks and handsome rewards. He then took steps to capture his predecessor, who was still at large; instead he found Darius’s corpse, slain by the latter’s own satraps. Furious that these men could have committed such sacrilege upon his own predecessor Alexander proclaimed a man hunt for the murderers. After burying Darius with all the honors befitting a Great King, he adopted Persian court ceremonial, and began to treat Persians as his subjects rather than as his enemies, much to the annoyance of the Macedonians. They also disapproved of his man hunt for the murderers, since this meant a further campaign into far-distant lands. Before he was able to catch up with them he had to cross the mountains of the Hindu Kush and conquer Bactria, developing new tactics as he went along to cope with a kind of warfare he had never known. He was, however, uniformly successful. He assumed Oriental manners more than ever before, demanded the Persian custom of prostration before him even from his Macedonians, and married Roxane, a native princess. Callisthenes, nephew of Aristotle, refused to prostrate himself and was later put to death for plotting against the king.

Pushing south, Alexander made his way next into India, and again won a desperate battle with a formidable force, including elephants, by developing other new tactics, and the Punjab was his (battle of the Hydaspes, 327 B.C.). But at this point his exhausted army refused to go any further, and at last Alexander decided to return to Susa and Babylon. The homeward journey was made very difficult by Alexander’s insistence on returning by way of the deserts of Baluchistan, apparently for scientific and exploratory reasons only. At last, however, he reached Susa, where he held a five-day marriage festival with ninety of his leading Macedonians marrying Persians, and he himself taking as an extra wife the daughter of Darius. All previous Greco-Persian marriages, amounting to about ten thousand were registered, and the bridegrooms rewarded with royal presents. Alexander also distributed some thirty thousand noble Persians throughout the Macedonian army, causing a revolt which was settled after an eloquent speech by the commander. After a few months he went to Babylon, where he contracted swamp fever and died at the age of thirty-three (323 B.C.). He had changed the face of the ancient world and never lost a battle.

Since he had left no provisions for a successor, and he had as yet no children—though Roxane later gave birth to a son—the inheritance was disputed among several of his more capable generals. There were a few attempts to hold the empire together; but no one general was strong enough to take over the whole, and the efforts ultimately collapsed. Egypt fell to Ptolemy Soter, the greater part of the Asiatic provinces to Seleucus, and Macedonia, after a long struggle between several contending generals, was consolidated under Antigonus Gonatas. Each of these men founded dynasties, and such of their history as is necessary will be recounted elsewhere in this chapter.
Results of the conquests

THE FUSION OF GREEK AND ORIENTAL CULTURE

The effects of the conquests of Alexander were momentous in world history, not so much politically as culturally. The empire did not last as a single unified governmental unit, but the rule of Macedonians and Greeks over Oriental peoples was secured. Extensive immigration from Greece made the conquest more real than if an alien power had established political control only, as has happened in other periods of history. The barriers between Greek and barbarian had been broken down forever, and the resulting interpenetration of cultures determined the future pattern of all later civilization in the West. It is impossible to estimate whether Greek or Oriental culture predominated in the resulting complex. Both Oriental and Greek civilizations were already developed, and neither could be said to have absorbed the other; on the contrary, both contributed to a new, distinct amalgam. And it was left to the Romans, who entered this world in the guise of semibarbarians with a gift only for law, government, and military science, to spread this amalgam into a Western Europe which had been largely untouched by the Greeks and the Orientals themselves.

The period following the death of Alexander (usually called Hellenistic, as distinct from the earlier Hellenic) is therefore one of the great formative periods in the history of mankind, and should require extensive study. But since we have studied separately the elements that went to make it up, it is only necessary here to discuss the fusion, and the new trends in human civilization that resulted from it. Thereafter we shall move to the beginnings of the Roman state which inherited it, though it would have been quite possible, and perhaps even preferable, to have discussed Rome as a late comer in the Hellenistic civilization to which it contributed a few distinctive features.

The outstanding element making for unity in the whole Hellenistic world was the penetration of the Greek language as the common language of all educated men and of all those engaged in any form of commercial or trading activity. The old cuneiform and hieroglyphic writing quickly disappeared. The Greek language lost its ancient purity and became hospitable to any useful Oriental expressions that were needed. The language in which the New Testament, for instance, is written is the Koine, the "common language," which could be understood from Central Asia west to Italy and beyond. Other languages and dialects were, of course, spoken, especially Aramaic in the Near East, as has already been described; but the possession of a second language made it possible for the Italian and the Bactrian to carry on commercial and literary activities together. We find Armenian and Parthian kings as connoisseurs of Euripides and even writing plays in Greek, and we find a king of far-off Ethiopia having at least a nodding acquaintance with the language centuries after the conquests of Alexander. This powerful instrument of cultural fusion was perhaps the greatest single Greek contribution to the Hellenistic world civilization.

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL CIVILIZATION OF THE HELLENISTIC WORLD

The Greeks had always been good traders, though the peoples of the Near East had been no novices. But the Greeks had developed more useful devices for the furthering of trade, and these now appeared in the Hellenistic world and were developed on a far larger scale than had been required before. Greek traders made themselves at home in the new world-cities founded by Alexander and his successors and were often granted special privileges. The greatest stimulus to trade was the release of the enormous hoards of gold and silver accumulated by the Persian kings, but never allowed to enter circulation. The chronic shortage of precious metals was therefore relieved, with a remarkably fructifying influence upon
all trade and industry. For the first time throughout a large area taxes were paid in coin, and the states paid out their own wages in coin, especially to the armies. Banks sprang up everywhere, credit expanded far beyond anything previously known, and the check became a usual method of payment, though Egypt was ahead of the Asiatic empire in this. The new, largely money, economy, however, had a serious effect upon the poorer classes, as will be seen.

Insofar as the economic situation can be generalized, it may be said that the numerous new cities and the greatly expanded old cities were characterized by a commercial and industrial civilization more like our own than in any period prior to the sixteenth century. However, as was to be expected in an economy where slaves were present in large numbers, there was a very distinct cleavage between rich and poor. Profits were very high, while wages remained extremely low. The upper classes had access to all the luxuries of the ancient world and took full advantage of it. The poor, with the price of their labor determined by supply and demand, and the latter determined by the available slave labor, found themselves at the mercy of economic forces over which they had no control. Slaves actually declined in number, but this was no advantage to the poor freeman; slavery declined only because slave labor was more expensive than free labor. Slaves had to be fed and housed and treated as a valuable property, while the free laborer could be exploited without limit and it was of no interest to the employer whether he lived or died. The upper classes in the early period were predominantly Greek and Macedonian, but increasingly local nobles and traders were admitted into their company. Intermarriage continued in Persia, though in Egypt it was not so common and was hedged by restrictions. The distinction between rich and poor was far more important than that between Greek and barbarian. The peasant continued to work as from time immemorial, he gave crops and services to the state under the Seleucids and the Ptolemies as he had given them to Persian kings or Egyptian Pharaohs. The money economy of the cities hardly affected him; nor did the cultural radiation from the Greek cities, with their imported political institutions and their literature, philosophy, and science. The improved agricultural practices of the Greeks were passed on to him and when he was compelled to do so, as in Egypt, the peasant adopted them.

But there were several important differences, both political and economic, between the different parts of the Hellenistic world, and these require some separate mention.

The Hellenistic Age in Greece

Continued Political Experimentation—The New Leagues

The cities of Greece were usually politically subject to Macedonia, but Macedonia did not interfere with their economic activities. Indeed, the Macedonians performed a notable service to them by protecting them from barbarian invasions from the north, and by insisting that they keep the peace. Corinth, however, now far surpassed Athens in trade, being a more important industrial and manufacturing city, while the Aegean islands and ports on the Hellespont and in Asia Minor knew their greatest period of prosperity during the Hellenistic Age. But there was a constant drain of the population of the mainland into Asia and Egypt, and the prosperity was on a small scale, enjoyed mostly by the upper classes. On the land, owing to the depopulation, the estates became much larger than in classical times, with severe consequences to the small farmer, who could not compete with them and was often evicted for debt and lost his land permanently. There was a great increase in agricultural unemployment, and many parts of the country became desolate. Free distributions of grain became the rule in those cities which could collect enough in taxes to afford them.

Two promising political organizations were developed during the centuries after Alex-
ander, but unfortunately they were usually antagonistic to each other. Moreover, the superior power of Macedonia in the north was a disturbing factor, since it tempted the leagues to apply for help to Macedonia when they quarreled with each other. But these leagues had genuine federal, or confederate, constitutions, and were the nearest approach the Greeks ever made to any organization larger than the polis. Their special contribution to federal unity was the abolition of the leadership of the most powerful city, leadership which had been the downfall, for instance, of the otherwise promising Chalcidian League of Olynthus. The capital cities of both the Achaean and the Aetolian leagues were small and unimportant. The constitutions of the two leagues were substantially similar. In their most advanced forms they had a federal council on which each constituent city was represented on a proportional basis and to which had been delegated the power to take joint action without referring back to the cities. There was also an Assembly of all the citizens of all the cities, who voted by city, each of which had only one vote. The vote cast by the city was determined by a majority of all the citizens attending the Assembly who belonged to it. This Assembly elected officials and had to decide on peace and war and a number of other important questions concerning its own league. A general of the whole league was elected, but he could not succeed himself in office, though he could be elected in alternate years. The Achaean League at its height was made up of more than half of the cities in the Peloponnesus; the Aetolian League was made up of the cities of central Greece with the
exception of Athens and some cities of Thessaly.

The only other power of importance in Greece was Sparta, where the old spirit reasserted itself and found expression in the division of the land, cancellation of debts, reform of the army, and re-establishment of discipline. The distinction between rich and poor that had grown up during the period of Spartan imperialism was abolished, together with the ephorate and council. But when the kings, under whose leadership these reforms were instituted, tried to expand their power in the Peloponnesus they came into contact with the Achaean League, which appealed to Macedonia rather than to the Aetolian League, which thereupon joined Sparta. The superior alliance squeezed out Sparta for the time, the revived Spartan kingdom was abolished, and the old constitution was restored. The Aetolians, left to the mercies of Macedonia, appealed to Rome, which ultimately conquered both Greece and Macedonia. As always, the internal strife in Greece prevented any chance of an all-Greek government, until, with the conquest by Rome, their liberties were lost for good.

**The Hellenistic Age in Egypt**

**Macedonian Efficiency in Agriculture**

Egypt under the Ptolemies was for several centuries probably the most prosperous area in the world, at least as far as the upper classes were concerned. We are exceptionally well informed on the period because of the continuous discovery in recent years of Greek papyri preserved by the dry climate of the country. With the exception of Alexandria, which became a metropolis of more than half a million people and lived a full and relatively independent life of its own, the whole land of Egypt was the personal estate of the new Pharaoh, who made it a definite policy not to found any new Greek cities, preferring to exploit the political and economic heritage of ancient Egypt, which, as will be remembered, was accustomed to a god-king. First, however, it was necessary to restore the agricultural system to prosperity.

An extensive program for the improvement of irrigation and cultivation was put in hand for the benefit of both ruler and sub-
jects. Most of the best soil in the country was farmed as the Pharaoh's personal estate through royal appointees or by tenants of the crown, who were not permitted to leave their land and had to supply services and produce in exchange for the right to farm and for seed. In the reigns of the earlier Ptolemies this did not bear too hard on the tenants, but later the taxes and exactions were raised so high that it was almost impossible to make a living. Moreover, each village was collectively responsible for the taxes and had to make up any deficit on the part of individual tenants. Though we hear of several strikes and attempts to leave the land, the police and the military system were in every case strong enough to suppress them and enforce obedience. The lands let out by the Pharaoh, including temple lands, were farmed in the same way. Loyal soldiers, generals, nobles, and other favorites were sometimes freed of all taxes and allowed to exploit their tenants so long as they kept the land in good condition in case the king-god should have need of it himself. This was one of the methods used for pensioning soldiers and ensuring a new supply when required.

The Ptolemies also maintained a tight monopoly of all industry. Either directly or indirectly through concessionaires, usually Greeks, and carefully supervised by the state, all important businesses were under royal control, with gangs of inspectors checking to see that the established price was maintained. Even retailing was controlled, with the individual retailer buying the right to sell at a fixed rate of profit. The crown also subsidized voyages and exploration, and transportation was a royal monopoly. Directly or indirectly the Pharaoh had his hand in everything; his subjects were allowed to make a living, but only by his permission and under his control. Though there were organizations of workers, these were mostly for social and religious purposes, and not for the purpose of coercing their rulers. The theory of ancient Egypt was now put into thorough practical operation as it probably had never been, even in ancient times, under the efficient management and with all the necessary police control of a dynasty descended from a Macedonian general who had once more appeared as a god on earth.

The Hellenistic Age in Asia—Pergamum and the Seleucid Empire

On the conditions in Asia we have less information. One important part of Asia, northwest Asia Minor, was separated from the Seleucid Empire very early and became an important and very prosperous small kingdom, the kingdom of Pergamum, more urban than the other Hellenistic kingdoms, and better situated for maritime trade, with royal monopolies in the key industries and private enterprise in the others. This was almost a model small kingdom under the Attalids, who were great builders and patrons of art. Many of the finest specimens of Hellenistic art and architecture come from Pergamum. The whole kingdom was bequeathed to Rome by the last of the Attalids, as we shall see.

Central control in the Seleucid Empire was far less effective than in Egypt, for the rulers had continuously to fight with pretenders to their throne, with military adventurers, and, by the second century B.C., with the Romans. Their kingdom increased and decreased in size according to the fortunes of war. The old kingdom of Persia was largely worked by royal serfs, and temple lands were added to the royal property. The kings also made it a policy to dispossess nobles when possible. The Seleucid monarchs established royal monopolies in several industries, but private enterprise in industry was far more widespread than in Egypt, owing to the difficulty of central control in such a vast country. The royal post roads and the postal system of the Persians were expanded and improved, and for the first time many of the Asiatic rivers were made navigable; fleets of ships under royal protection and supervision carried the products of industry over long distances in shorter time than before.

Most of this system in the western part of Asia was taken over intact by the Romans. Internally, as in the Persian days, the area was usually at peace, the warring armies of
the monarchs did not affect the ordinary life of peasant and trader. Ships regularly plied the seas and rivers all the way from Persia to Italy, some armed with catapults against enemies and pirates. There was already substantial peace in this part of the world before Rome, with fanfare of trumpets, established a Pax Romana.

**Hellenistic culture**

**GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS—COSMOPOLITANISM AND INDIVIDUALISM**

The cosmopolitanism of the Hellenistic world is the dominant characteristic of all Greek thought and society during this period. We have seen the rise of individualism in the fourth century, B.C., and how this tended to break down the old, close-knit social organization of the polis. Although the polis was now transferred to new surroundings and many formal elements of self-government were retained, the self-determination of the state was irretrievably lost, and with it community duties and responsibilities. In fifth-century Athens a citizen was content to live in a humble house on a tiny income because he valued participation in the social life of the community more than individual wealth and "self-expression"; his religion was part of the life of the community rather than a means of individual comfort, much less salvation. His art and his architecture were expressions of his love for his city and were the result of great communal efforts. When the polis life disintegrated, everything the earlier Greek had valued disappeared with it. The transition was, as we have seen, gradual through the fourth century. The conquests of Alexander only put the seal on the already accomplished fact.

It is useless to try to discover whether
individualism was the cause or the effect of the social breakdown. Both were always present at the same time. And, since there no longer was a community, it became necessary for each man to take care of himself, whether he liked it or not. A great temple of Zeus built by a monarch was not his, and he felt no civic pride in it. But he could still feel pride in a piece of fine craftsmanship of his own making. He could hope to get rich by struggling, necessarily to some degree at the expense of his neighbor and fellow citizen. If he were wealthy, he could take advantage of the good things, the luxuries offered by this cosmopolitan civilization. He could be entertained in the theater by amusing slices of life, seeing other people fighting to reach the top like himself; he could read books of an entertaining nature, not the kind to make him think, but worth reading to keep himself from contemplating the fact that something was missing in life that his ancestors had known, some secret of happiness withheld from him. Or, if he were a scholar, he could try to discover what it had been that these ancestors had had, he could diligently peruse their works, editing them with fine fidelity, taking care to catch the exact wording of the original, and write ponderous histories about them. If he were practical he could try to increase the sum of useful knowledge instead of speculating about things that could never be known. Or, finally, he could decide that life was not worth living anyway, with this vacuum at the heart of things, and so he could turn to the Persian religions or the religions of the mysteries, or he could become a Stoic philosopher.

All these different manifestations of individualism we find in the Hellenistic world; it only seems to have needed the Industrial Revolution, which was already well on the way with the latest technical developments of the Greek scientists, to transform it into our own society. But the creativity of the early Hellenistic civilization gradually spent itself for reasons which still elude the investigator. There was too much revolt perhaps against the relatively new individualism, too little real interest in the workings of the material world, too much respect for nature to wish to interfere with it for the satisfaction of the material needs of human beings. Too recently had these peoples emerged from the belief that they were powerless against the gods for them to be able to take the whole step of usurping the position of the gods without drawing upon themselves fate and nemesia. They had to go through a long apprenticeship before they could come to believe that man was the lord of creation, and that only the individual human being and his welfare on earth counted in all creation, and explain satisfactorily to themselves that this indeed was the intention of the gods. In the Hellenistic Age they lacked the compelling assurance of the value of this life for the individual man that proved to be the great strength of Western civilization in its struggle to understand and control nature; and so when the new religions promised salvation in the next world after a period of trial and testing in this, their teachings fell on willing ears. When Bishop Theophilus in A.D. 390 destroyed the bulk of the library of Alexandria, the greatest collection of Greek books ever assembled, he was only symbolizing a choice that had been made centuries earlier in the Hellenistic Age.

PHILOSOPHIES OF DOUBT AND PESSIMISM

The Cynics

The thought of the Hellenistic Age is in strong contrast with that of earlier days. The Academy of Plato and the Lyceum of Aristotle continued their work, the latter patiently assembling more facts and writing histories of special fields, the former moving at first into some of the more mystical aspects of Platonism and then into Skepticism. But the original philosophies of this age were more directly influenced by the new social experience of individualism and cosmopolitanism.

The earliest of these was Cynicism, founded by Antisthenes; its most notorious early member was the famous Diogenes, who lived in a tub and cultivated rudeness and self-sufficiency. Though it arose out of the
discontents of the fourth century before the conquests of Alexander, the germ of developed Stoicism is already to be found in this philosophy. Everything in society, said the Cynics, is foolishness; nothing in life is worth having. What men pursue is not worth the trouble; whether you are rich or poor, Greek or barbarian, is of no importance to the wise man. Only the wise man can appreciate the uselessness of possessions. He alone can be self-sufficing, and his own thought and character are all that count. He can think and he can be moral only if he is completely indifferent to possessions. The wise men in the world form a world community, a city of the world, as Diogenes called it, based on contempt for everyone and everything.

The Cynics did not form an organized school of philosophy but became wandering beggars and preachers, often cultivating uncouthness and rudeness in order to show their superiority to all conventions. The only positive action that the wise man would take would be what his personal sense of duty dictated, for he was bound by no social convention nor by any other of man’s inventions for leading people away from the philosophic life. The equality in Cynicism, the world-city of wise men, and the cultivated indifference to worldly things were all to be found later transformed in Stoicism; therein lies its only permanent importance, for the philosophy was obviously not designed to attract a numerous following.

Epicurism

The philosophy of Epicurism was founded by Epicurus, who began to teach in Athens about 306 B.C. Though Epicurus took over the atomistic science of Democritus, the core of his teaching was his insistence on indifference (ataraxia—literally the condition of not being shaken). "Be happy with little, for being interested in, and needing, much, brings unhappiness." The goal of men is the attainment of happiness. But for Epicurus and his disciples happiness consisted primarily in freedom from physical pain, worldly cares, and fears. Since congenial friendship was one of those pleasures which can be obtained with the least difficulty, the early Epicureans especially cultivated it, living a simple life and discoursing on philosophy in the famous "Garden of Epicurus."

In Epicurean thought everything was subservient to the pursuit of happiness. It was better to cultivate the virtues than the vices because the latter usually involved pain—which should be avoided. But there was no need to cultivate virtue too assiduously, since this would lead to self-denial—which was unnecessary and prevented enjoyment. In general the philosophy in its original form was more negative than positive—a tired man’s travesty of Aristotle’s Golden Mean—and a mild asceticism was the usual practice of the personal followers of Epicurus.

In order to justify such a worldly philosophy the gods were relegated to a far-off sphere, primarily to provide man with an example of how to live perfectly. They paid no attention whatever to man, and all religion was simply superstition. Astrology, divination, and other outgrowths of religion were the result of man’s ignorance. The truth was, according to Epicurus, that we live in a purely material world of atoms in constant motion, and the whole world has come into existence by chance and not by divine decree. It is not known whether Epicurus himself, or his Roman disciple Lucretius, introduced the famous "swerve" of the atoms so that they would move from their regular perpendicular downward path and strike each other; at all events this swerve was also fortuitous in the atoms, though its occurrence made free will possible in human beings.

The philosophy of happiness, although with Epicurus it led to a gentle asceticism, in later times, especially in Rome, became a simple philosophy of hedonism, or the pursuit of pleasure, even of the grosser varieties—likely to lead to pain. The same lack of interest in social responsibilities was maintained, and the same indifference to worldly success; but happiness was considered to be attained best by enjoyment of all that the
world offered, even to excess, rather than by the moderate enjoyment of Epicurus, and the consequent lack of the penalties of excess.

Stoicism

Stoicism was unquestionably the greatest philosophy of this age, and in its many aspects went far toward answering the difficult problems arising out of the new social experience. It was a philosophy that continually grew in scope as the centuries passed; much of it was woven into the fabric of Christian philosophy and ethics, and much also into Roman law. As a philosophy it was still vital in the last centuries of the Roman Empire, and at times it provided the only moral anchor for those who could not accept the salvationist religions, and yet would not lapse into the negative or hedonistic indifference of Epicurism, or complete Skepticism. Its founder, Zeno of Citium, supposedly a "Phoenician," founded a school at Athens about 300 B.C., but Stoicism was never centered on a single school, and never held deep roots in old Greece. It was from the beginning Hellenistic rather than Hellenic. Zeno, like the Cynics, his forebears, taught that there is only one world-state, with all men equal in it, united by no race or class but only by virtue—as with the Cynics, a
world of wise men united by their wisdom. We know very little about Zeno himself beyond his teaching on the ideal state, for his writings have not survived. Indeed, most of our knowledge of the Stoics comes from Roman sources.

Chrysippus, a Cilician who taught at Athens some seventy years after Zeno, is regarded as the second founder of Stoicism. He was who gave it its systematic theology and its ethics. The purpose of Stoicism, as with Epicureanism, is to give man individual well-being and self-sufficiency. It is therefore primarily a philosophy of this life. Throughout the history of Stoicism there are many who interpret the ideal of self-sufficiency as justification for the withdrawal from life, including even suicide in certain circumstances. But Chrysippus taught resolution, fortitude, and devotion to duty, combined with indifference to all temptations of ordinary earthly pleasure and enjoyment. Every man on earth has his part to play, assigned by Divine Providence, and this he must seek to play with dignity, answering only to his own conscience for his lapses from rectitude. The world order is created by God and it is working for good; the wise man should understand the goodness and seek to work in accordance with the divine plan. Not only man, but the animal kingdom, is part of this great world order, and animals also have their part to play. But man is different because he has reason; and reason is an attribute of God. Hence the world order is reasonable, and it is man’s duty to discover this Divine Reason as far as he can, and try to make his human laws approximate to it. Therefore above the laws of any earthly state are the divine laws, or what is henceforward to be called Natural Law. Every man possessed of reason is equal to every other man; there are no natural inequalities. A slave is a “laborer hired for life,” and should be treated accordingly, not as a sub-human implement.

This dogmatic teaching, so much at variance with earlier Greek rationalism, laid itself open to practical criticism, which it received primarily from Carneades, the Skeptic who devoted the greater part of his life to attacks on Chrysippus. The chief ground for criticism was that the wise man indifferent to things of the world, inhuman in his attempts to get rid of all natural feeling, could be found nowhere in nature. And Carneades complained that there was no evidence for divine justice whatever, and there could be no agreement even between reasonable human beings on what justice is. On the contrary, Carneades insisted that on the evidence man is governed by self-interest only; and it is nothing but fear of the consequences that prevents him from pursuing his own interests altogether without regard for others. He disagreed that this could be called justice. This and other criticisms led Panaetius of Rhodes to modify the early Stoicism into the philosophy of the so-called Middle Stoa, restating it in a form palatable to the Romans, among whom Stoicism was now finding most of its adherents. The Romans were imperialists; and the Stoic idea of a world-state, the old Stoic virtues of devotion to duty and public spirit, and the idea of natural law were able to appeal to them, once Panaetius had brought the philosophy down to earth by eliminating the superhuman wise man, and replacing the asceticism by public service and humanity. But this aspect of Stoicism in the Roman world will be briefly discussed in a later chapter.

In the East, Stoicism became more religious in tone, with Divine Reason being exalted almost to the status of a God. Cleantus in his famous Hymn petitioned this one universal God not for anything worldly but for a virtuous mind. The traditional gods were also absorbed into the Stoic system as attendants upon the Divine Reason, even astrology and magic finding their home in it. But in whatever form it appeared, and whatever religion it influenced, always the central ethic remained—be indifferent to worldly success and strive to cultivate the moral life, for man’s first duty is to fulfill the demands of his moral nature. Externals can never be worth anything in comparison with the self-sufficiency of the consciously upright man. This was clearly a thought to which all
religions that stress morality could be hospitable.

The Skeptics

The Skeptic school was founded by Pyrrho as early as the end of the fourth century B.C. We know little of the founder beyond the fact that he seems to have been the first to make criticism of other theories the goal of his philosophy, denying that knowledge was possible. All sense perceptions are illusions, and against every statement that can be made an opposite is equally probable. The wise man therefore will make the best of the world of illusion, and by suspending all judgment not strive after the impossible, but take the world as he finds it. Later Skeptics continued to emphasize criticism, which in a world of superstition and dogmatism was necessary enough; and their work was on the whole salutary, as we have seen from its effect on Stoicism. But Skepticism as a philosophy made little impression on the less rational philosophies and religions. It was too austere to command much general success, though for a while its spirit dominated, of all places, the Platonic Academy at Athens. A philosophy without positive content can be a valuable tool for the reform of others, but in a religious age even the indifference which Skepticism preached found more arguments in its support within other philosophies than Skepticism alone could offer.

The Religious Vacuum—Mystery Religions

In philosophy Greek thought still predominated, but Greek religion of the Classical Age was so closely associated with the polis that it could not be expected to survive in the Hellenistic world. The religious vacuum was filled by the mystical Oriental religions, and the mystery religions of old Greece, which themselves had developed out of an earlier Oriental tradition, received a new lease on life. The more intellectual upper-class Greek probably despised the new "barbarian" religions, and many of them took refuge in atheism and skepticism, or in the Greek philosophies. The goddess Tyche or chance, which indeed seemed to rule Hellenistic life, was widely worshiped, and astrology from the Chaldeans was both believed in as a science and used as the basis for a kind of star worship. On the whole, even when the Greeks accepted the Oriental religions they were inclined to make the gods abstract, representing universal principles rather than the persons they were to their Oriental adherents. The Stoic god, for instance, was never a person, which has led students to characterize the philosophy as pantheism. For the Greeks there were divine persons, but they did not fulfill the functions of Oriental gods. The Greeks had no objection to deifying kings, especially after they were dead. It was even explained in the Hellenistic Age that this was what had happened to the Olympian gods: they were ancient kings who died and had been deified (Euhemerism).

A more extended discussion of the Hellenistic mystery religions of this time will be deferred to Chapter 12, when they will be considered as part of the background for Christianity.

Science

Growth of exact science and scholarship
—The Museum of Alexandria

The classical polis had never been an especially good soil for the development of exact science. There had been much speculation, as we have seen, and there had been a significant development of mathematics, largely as a by-product of philosophy. But the practical sciences did not come into their own until the Hellenistic Age, when the professional scholar who devoted all his time to his study first became socially respectable. The earlier Greeks had abhorred professionalism of all kinds as likely to detract from social usefulness and ability to participate in political life. In the fourth century there had been an increase in professionalism, especially in the army and in public life, but in the Hellenistic kingdoms the pure scholar was for the first time fully appreciated. The patronage of the wealthy monarchs often
enabled scholars to spend their lives in one activity without the distraction of political life. Alexandria with its famous Museum was the chief center of study, and all the Ptolemites gave their support to this great headquarters of research. Its four departments of literature, mathematics, astronomy, and medicine were both research centers and schools, with a library of four hundred thousand books to support them which later increased to an estimated seven hundred thousand.

In the Hellenistic world facts could now for the first time be systematically collected, and the bases thus laid firmly for correct deductions and even experimentation. Archimedes of Syracuse in the third century B.C. even made use of the scientific method, the combination of induction and deduction which has been found acceptable in modern times, though it was neglected for nearly two thousand years after him. The scientists, however, being Greek, were more interested in theory than in practice, and several inventions that might have been greatly developed in other hands were regarded as ingenious toys and of far less importance than the theory which led to their construction. But the addition to knowledge in these years was nevertheless considerable.

**Astronomy—Influence of Babylonia—Heracleides, Aristarchus, Hipparchus**

The most notable advances were made in astronomy. Here the Greeks had the enormous stimulus of contact with the Chaldean astronomy and astrology which had hitherto been almost unknown to them. The observations of Chaldean and Babylonian astronomers had been carefully recorded for hundreds of years, and formed a basis for theoretical work by the Greeks, just as Tycho Brahe's observations in the sixteenth century laid the basis for Kepler's theories. The significant advances in geography due to the voyages financed by the Hellenistic rulers also led to new conceptions of the movement of the earth and the planets. Only a brief note on the many achievements of the Hellenistic scientists can be attempted here.

About 350 B.C. Heracleides of Pontus propounded the theory that while the sun and outer planets move round the earth, Venus and Mercury move round the sun. Aristarchus of Samos about a hundred years later, on the basis of his observation of eclipses of the moon, came to the conclusion with the aid of geometry, that the sun is much larger than the earth. Although we do not know on what arguments he based his theory, Aristarchus also concluded that "the earth moves round the sun on the circumference of a circle, the sun lying at the center of the orbit."

To make this point of view, so obviously contrary to common sense, possible, Aristarchus was forced to assume that the fixed stars were enormous distances from the earth. The theory, according to Plutarch, was found acceptable only by Seleucus of Babylon a century later, who tried to prove it and failed. Other astronomers preferred the view of common sense and appearances, in spite of its obvious difficulties of which they were not unaware. By Aristarchus' scheme it was impossible to predict any celestial events, and there was as yet no telescope to show similar movements of the satellites of Jupiter which were later to convince Galileo of the truth of the theory of Copernicus. If Aristarchus had been willing to abandon circular movement he might have convinced his fellow astronomers. These Greeks were not wedded to the geocentric theory from religious, but for scientific reasons.

Hipparchus of Nicaea, who worked in Alexandria most of his life, finally cleared up the difficulties of the geocentric theory insofar as they presented themselves at the time. He propounded a theory of epicycles, minor orbits of the heavenly bodies which combined with the major orbit or cycle around the earth. This accounted satisfactorily for all the phenomena, and he was able to establish tables which predicted fairly accurately future eclipses of the sun and moon. Hipparchus also invented several

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3 Not all the work described below was done at Alexandria; but it seems more convenient to classify by subject than by the place of the research.
astronomical instruments, used the Mesopotamian division of the circle into 360 degrees, and discovered (or possibly restated the Chaldean discovery of) the precession of the equinoxes, though his estimate was slightly at fault. He made a very nearly accurate estimate of the size of the moon and its distance from the earth. Since he also invented both sphere and plane trigonometry he can be regarded as the greatest astronomer and one of the greatest mathematicians of antiquity. His work was summed up by Claudius Ptolemy and improved in some respects in the Christian Era. Ptolemy wrote several important works of synthesis which provided the Muslims and medieval Christians with the bulk of their knowledge of Alexandrian science.

Mathematics—Euclid, Archimedes

In geometry, of course, the great name is Euclid, who collected all the work of his predecessors in this predominantly Greek science, and added many propositions of his own. His work has never needed revision insofar as it defines the qualities of a certain kind of space (three-dimensional), though later mathematicians have found that other kinds of space are also possible, in which case Euclid’s geometry does not apply.

Archimedes of Syracuse was not only a creative geometer, but made extensive use of geometrical principles and the deductive method in his other work. The idea of specific gravity he discovered while in his bath, when he noticed that he displaced water equal in volume to his body; he then proceeded to deduce it mathematically. He also considered the lever, which in practice had been used for millennia before him, and deduced mathematically from self-evident axioms why it must behave as it does. This, however, was not a new discovery, but was due to the straightforward use of the syllogism, or the combining of two different pieces of known or evident information to demonstrate a new conclusion. In the field of pure geometry Archimedes discovered the ratio of the volume of the cylinder to that of the sphere inscribed in it, and this he characteristically regarded as his chief claim to fame, and had it recorded on his tombstone. He was, however, also responsible for many ingenious inventions: pulleys, hydraulic screws, and various engines of warfare, which he did not regard as important, though his science was able to keep the Romans from capturing Syracuse for three years.

Apollonius of Perga, by geometrical means, put the study of cones on a sound basis, giving the well-known Greek names to the various sections—hyperbola, parabola and ellipse.

Geography—Eratosthenes

Allied to geometry and astronomy was geography which, as has been said, supplied information to the theoretical sciences. The most famous of the geographers, Eratosthenes, was librarian of the Alexandrian museum for many years. He calculated the diameter of the earth, which he regarded as a sphere, with a comparatively small error, and he estimated the distance to the sun with an error of only 1 per cent. He also produced an improved map with lines of latitude and longitude. He made it clear that the known world of three continents was a great island, and suggested that India could be reached by sailing west. His latitudes and longitudes were corrected by Hipparchus.

Medicine—Herophilus, Erasistratus

In the field of medicine at Alexandria Herophilus was the first to undertake human dissection for the purpose of discovering the facts of anatomy, making several important discoveries, as might be expected. He corrected the erroneous conception, among others, that the arteries were filled with air. For the most part his work was simply descriptive. His pupil Erasistratus continued his work, and is regarded as the founder of physiology; his many suggestions on the functions of the various organs and the damage done to them by certain diseases entitle him to this honor. On the basis of his findings he deplored excessive bleeding and preferred diet and regimen as suggested by the earlier school of Hippocrates. Later
Greek medicine, however, did not follow these promising lines, but turned more to therapy on the basis of the usual trial and error, though a number of new drugs were added to the pharmacopoeia.

**ART**

**Architecture—The beginning of the cult of magnificence**

In accordance with the tendencies observed elsewhere in the Hellenistic Age the architecture of this period turned from temples to palaces, theaters, libraries, and private homes, which were now far more elaborate than had been considered suitable in the classical period. Temples were still

*The temple of Zeus at Icel in Asia Minor. Note the ornate Corinthian columns of this temple of the Hellenistic period. (COURTESY TURKISH INFORMATION OFFICE)*

When the ruins of Pergamum were excavated, the altar of Zeus from the temple was carried away by the Germans, who restored it. This picture shows the restoration, which is located in Berlin.
built, some of very great size. Probably, like
the great altar of Zeus at Pergamum, a com-
memoration of Pergamene victories over the
barbarian Gauls, they were regarded less as
an honor to the gods than a symbol of the
power and success of their builders. Cer-
tainly they were not built by voluntary co-
operation. The result was that for beauty
and harmony there was nothing in the Hel-
lenistic Age in any way comparable to the
Parthenon, though technical skill and design
were not lacking. The architecture of the
Hellenistic Age is a herald of the Roman
taste for magnificence rather than a con-
tinuation of the classical, though Greek ar-
tistry, especially in Pergamum, still suc-
cceeded in producing far more balance and
harmony than Rome ever attained. The most
notable structure in the Hellenistic world,
characteristically, was the famous Pharos or
lighthouse of Alexandria, a storied building
rising to four hundred feet, with eight col-
umns supporting the light at the summit.
The Corinthian column, as already re-
marked, came into vogue at this time, though
it was not yet as popular as it became in
Rome. Many buildings have combinations
of the three orders, though Ionic was still
probably the most prevalent, with some
Hellenistic modification.

Sculpture—Realism, contrast with
classical sculpture

By far the greatest number of Greek
sculptures known to us belong to the Hellen-
istic rather than to the earlier period. It is
possible to prefer these to the classical, if
one prefers realism to idealism. The char-
acter of the person sculptured now comes
to the fore, the muscles are less smooth and
rhythmic, and closer to our own experience
of human bodies. There is much experi-
mentation visible, and much striving after effect;
often there are thoroughly dramatic pieces
which the classical artist would have scorned.
We have a dying Gaul with blood flowing,
and we have a fallen giant from a frieze in
Pergamum who expresses a pathos that the
sculptor has truly imagined.

What is missing in Hellenistic sculpture
is a sense of the intimate relationship be-
tween soul and body; and there is a lack of
balance and harmony which is compensated
by individual disharmonies realistically por-
trayed. Both, in a sense, are true art. The
aims and perceptions of the two ages are dif-
f erent, and we can condemn the one as deca-
dent and praise the other as "perfect" only
by making a subjective judgment on these
aims and perceptions. There was certainly no
loss of technical ability in the later age; on
the contrary, it is very doubtful if so per-
f ectly executed a statue as the Nike of
Samothrace, with its "Winged Victory"
alighting on the prow of a ship could have
been produced by any sculptor of the time

Hellenistic realism. This statue of an old market
woman, discovered at Rome, dates from the
second century B.C. and was perhaps looted
from Greece by the Romans. (COURTESY THE
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)
Opinion has varied remarkably at different times on the merits of the Laocoön, a late Hellenistic group showing the priest Laocoön and his two sons grappling with snakes. The impression of strain and power has appealed to many as one of the finest expressions of Hellenistic realism, while others have found the whole composition theatrical and forced and, from the Greek point of view, "bad art."
of Phidias. But again the observation is meaningless, for the earlier sculptor would not have thought of it and could not have experienced it. The suggestion of motion, so wonderfully portrayed in the Nike, would no more have appealed to Phidias as an effect worth realizing in sculpture than it would to an Egyptian of any age.

There was a great growth of portrait sculpture for private purposes in the Hellenistic Age, and evidently a great commercial demand for it. The realistic sculpture of the

![Bronze figure of Eros (god of love) sleeping; third to second century B.C. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)](image1)

![Goddess Aphrodite of Hellenistic period discovered at Smyrna. The statue was broken when found, but most of the parts were retrieved and assembled as shown here. (COURTESY TURKISH INFORMATION OFFICE)](image2)
The Nike (Victory) of Samothrace, a statue (now in the Louvre) in the form of the prow of a ship. Note how the Nike suggests speed and movement, unlike the static figures of the Parthenon. (COURTESY THE LOUVRE)
The Aphrodite of Melos (so called because the statue was discovered on the island of Melos) is widely regarded as the finest statue of a woman ever made. The artist is unknown, but the figure probably dates from the second century B.C. No photograph can do justice to this masterpiece. Located in the Louvre, it is displayed to perfection—especially at night, when it is most effectively lighted. (COURTESY THE LOUVRE)
day was of course alone suitable for this—no one wanted an ideal figure in the home. Sculptured portraits could be turned out in the later years of the period according to a more or less simple pattern, and the technique of making them became fixed. The result, especially with the Romans as patrons, who in their expansive days could hardly tell good sculpture from bad, was the degeneration of sculpture into a pure business activity. And though fine pieces, showing technical mastery if not inspiration, were still turned out, they seem to have declined in number, probably owing to the parallel decline of taste. Roman art had many virtues, but few would care to suggest that the requirements of the Roman bourgeois or noble patron of art would be likely to promote a renaissance.

Painting—The cameo, mosaics

Almost no Hellenistic painting has survived; and though Pompeii, destroyed by an earthquake in the first century A.D., was largely a Greek city, we cannot safely infer from its remains much about the earlier Hellenistic painting. Only the cameos, a new art developed in Alexandria, are known to us, and mosaics for walls and floors, most of which, however, were made out of naturally colored stones. We probably know enough about the painting to say that it was more distinctly Greco-Oriental than the predominantly Greek sculpture and architecture of the time. Mosaics in particular were usually made in Egypt and Syria by native workmen.

LITERATURE

Growth of literary scholarship

The entire later world is very greatly in debt to the learned Alexandrians who were the chief instrument in the preservation of the classical heritage. The important scholarly science of philology had its beginnings here. In classical Greece, books were something of a rarity. But an enormous demand grew up in Alexandria and elsewhere for books of all kinds and on all sorts of subjects—mostly entertainment, but also serious and learned literature. The scholarly Alexandrians, without accurate knowledge even of the dates when their masters had lived, invented a system for dating them which to us seems fantastic. They assumed that a writer's greatest period of production was around the age of forty; on this basis they assigned the birth and death dates which passed into later tradition and are still in use. They were meticulously careful in the copying and editing of manuscripts; and much of their work in this field was invaluable to us, though we have now no means of checking their accuracy. These men were subsidized by the Hellenistic rulers, who were proud of "their" ancestral heritage, and we owe them also a debt, especially for the library of the Museum of Alexandria, which was a hive of industry for many centuries.

Popular literature

In the Hellenistic Age the upper classes
really had time to read, including upper-class women who knew far more freedom and education than women had enjoyed in earlier days. Apparently the upper classes also had the desire to write. No fewer than eleven thousand names of writers are known to us, and there must have been thousands more. While in classical days reading was subordinate to the perhaps more liberal education through educated talk and discussion and the development of mind and body, now that this earlier ideal associated with the polis was no longer relevant, the hours were whiled away with books, produced by slaves and low-paid freemen who copied manuscripts for the market. Biography was popular, romantic and realistic, with a tincture of polite moralizing; legends of gods and heroes were turned out by the hundreds, frequently emphasizing the misfortunes of human women mated to gods. There was a great vogue for sentimental and pastoral stories and poems about shepherdesses and the like, and, as more solid fare, a new crop of utopias suitable for such improbable creatures to dwell in. Some of this great bulk of material was both imaginative and attractive, though, as far as we can tell, a considerable majority was not intended to do more than help the reader pass the idle hour with some enjoyment.

There is no great literature, or at all events no literature that we consider great. The supreme works of the earlier Classical Age have appealed to all ages since and many are by common consent looked upon as unequaled of their kind. Nothing of this stature appears in the Hellenistic Age, perhaps because it was the political and cultural conditions of the polis that could alone, for the Greek, call forth the deep and passionate involvement that is the hallmark of the greatest literature. It is certain that such a writer as Thucydides would not have flourished in Alexandria, nor could the tragedy or the Old Comedy of Athens have grown out of such soil. Euripides was still appreciated and admired in Athens, but probably for the reason that he put ordinary people on the stage; as Nietzsche pointed out, it would not have required much change to make Euripides into a writer of comedy. Had he chosen different characters and less pathetic plots, he would have written those amusing and realistic slices of life that the Athenians regarded as comedy.

New Comedy of Athens

Athenian New Comedy, as represented primarily by Menander, is concerned directly with the life lived in the Athens of his day. It was never transplanted to Alexandria or elsewhere in the Hellenistic world. Naturally Menander does not use the gods as Euripides uses them; he is not interested in the Euripidean quest for a lost certainty. But he gives us the lineal descendant of the deus ex machina who comes in at the end of a Euripidean tragedy to straighten out a situation that has got beyond control—Menander gives us the happy ending, usually a happy marriage. His themes are the sorrows and joys of romantic love, intrigues, recognitions, and other devices from the old drama, but all now on the everyday level. He created human types which became stock figures of all later comedy, the old seducer, the clever slave, the boastful soldier, and so on. Menander himself was far greater, however, than any of his Roman and later imitators, as far as we can judge from the many fragments that remain. And, of course, his comedy is valuable for the insight it affords into one section of Athenian society, as again most good comedy has continued to do since his day.

Pastoral poetry and the literature of escape

Most of the Hellenistic poetry comes from Alexandria, where learned scholars studied meters and forms of earlier poetry, and then tried to do their best with their limited poetical equipment. The result is often interesting as storytelling, though feeble enough as poetry. And it is difficult to be enthusiastic about the passions of these erudite lovers if one is unkind enough to look back for one moment to any of the extant lyrics of, say, Sappho or Alcaeus. But
fortunately these scholars were also interested in the great lyricists of the past, if only enough to try to imitate them; and it is often from their quotations alone that, ironically, we know their elders and betters. Apollonius of Rhodes revived the long epic, and in his Argonautica he has given us in detail, ample detail, the story of the Golden Fleece. There are some romantic passages, especially the story of Jason and Medea (the original models for Vergil’s Dido and Aeneas), which approach poetry, and have been considered superior to the Vergilian counterpart.

The pastorals of Theocritus, not an Alexandrian but a Sicilian, belong to a form of poetry which excites the most varied reactions among readers and critics. One either likes it or dislikes it, usually beyond reason. There can be no doubt at all that Theocritus, the inventor of this form of poetry, is far better than any of his imitators; and it is hard to see how these exquisite idylls could be improved or surpassed. They are not pedantic, but quite natural. But their progeny in later ages has killed the appreciation for them in many people. One thinks of the fashionable eighteenth-century French gentleman grinding out between breakfast and lunch a piece about shepherdesses and their loves and the pipes of Pan, then adjusting his periwig and going out to recite it at Madame’s salon. But such a picture is not at all fair to Theocritus and in particular to his really perceptive impressions of natural beauty, while the French gentleman would not even have a nodding acquaintance with a cow. Theocritus also wrote short epics, some of which show again a genuine natural feeling; and he wrote more realistic mimes, designed to be read at the soirées of the time. These, in the hands of Theocritus, present a section of life unfamiliar to the scholars of Alexandria, and are sketched with great perceptiveness. Incidentally, Theocritus was the only poet after Homer who had any real success with the Greek hexameter.

There was little serious prose writing, as far as we know, in the Hellenistic world except in scholarly or semischolarly fields; and almost nothing of it has survived. But there was one great Greek historian, Polybius, probably the greatest after Thucydides—though his style is rather dull and not to be compared with that of his great master, who, though involved and difficult in places and occasionally striving too deliberately for effect, often rose to heights of unmatched eloquence. But Polybius wrote almost exclusively of Rome, and during his stay as a hostage in Rome. A brief mention of his work appears in Chapter 12.

Transition to the Roman world—Hellenistic "conquest" of Rome

There is, as has already been suggested, no definite break between the civilization of the Hellenistic world and the Roman civilization that followed it. The Romans, while developing their characteristic institutions of law and government in Italy and the West, were from the first dependent upon the Greeks for almost every other branch of culture. It was contact with the Greek cities of southern Italy that inspired their first poetry and their first art; and the Greeks gave them their first taste of philosophy and literature—even though it was long before they could comprehend it. In a very real sense Rome was simply a cultural colonization by the Greeks, the last important western center to be added to their cultural empire. So when the Romans conquered the Hellenistic civilization by force they were only inheriting the task that Macedonia had undertaken earlier. Nevertheless, they did have a distinctive Latin language which differs in many important respects from the Greek language, and this they did impose upon the Greeks as a necessity in the sphere of law and government.

But the Greek language and Hellenistic civilization were deep rooted and so far ahead of anything the Romans had to offer that the Hellenistic world remained predominantly Greek. In dealing, therefore, with Rome we shall stress primarily its original contributions in law and government, and
the political history and social experience that gave rise to these contributions. And when we come to Roman culture, the reader should always remember the civilization which molded it, and examine the new fusion in the same sense in which we have in this chapter studied the Greco-Oriental fusion which composed the Hellenistic world.

Suggestions for further reading

The speeches of Demosthenes, especially the *Philippica*, the *Olympiaca*, and the speech *On the Crown*, should certainly be read, if only to make the inevitable comparisons with the speeches of Winston Churchill during the 1930s. Some of the speeches of Aeschines, especially the *Against Ctesiphon*, and Isocrates' *Letter to Philip* should also be read. They may be found most conveniently in the Loeb Series. Still perhaps the best secondary account of the last years of Greek independence is A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *Demosthenes and the Last Days of Greek Freedom* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1941).

On the conquests of Alexander, Plutarch’s *Life of Alexander* is worth reading, in spite of the invariable moralist’s bias in this author’s work. But the best primary source is Arrian, whose work is to be found in F. R. B. Godolphin, ed., *The Greek Historians* (New York: Random House, 1942). Biographies of Alexander are numerous. Most of them, if not all, are to a greater or lesser degree marred by the particular prejudices of their authors. This is natural in the case of such a romantic figure about whose inner thought we really know almost nothing. C. A. Robinson, Jr., *Alexander the Great* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1947), is certainly not free from visible defects, and some of the author’s assumptions are not really to be sustained by the evidence; but on the whole it is a simply written, well-balanced work by a fine classical scholar, and is to be recommended. A thoughtful study of Macedonian imperialism is to be found in P. Jouguet, *Macedonian Imperialism and the Hellenization of the East* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1928).

There are two really outstanding studies of the Hellenistic world which should be attempted by any students interested in this crucial period of history. These are M. I. Rostovtzeff, *Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, a long but well-written study which is not as formidable as it looks (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1941), Vols. 1 and 2, and W. W. Tarn, *Hellenistic Civilization* (3rd ed.; London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1952). At the other extreme from these two detailed studies is the masterly brief exposition of the nature of Hellenistic civilization by W. L. Westermann in *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930), I, 31–41.


For many years B. Farrington’s work on Greek (especially Hellenistic) science, *Greek Science: Its Meaning for Us* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1944), was the only nontechnical work on Greek science available easily. It was therefore widely read, in spite of the author’s explanations, which seemed to many to be highly oversimplified. Now, however, there has recently appeared a very full, careful, and scholarly work, the product of many years’ research, which should supersede Farrington, even for the general reader who will no doubt skip some of the more technical parts of this new book: G. Sarton, *A History of Science* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952), Vol. I. O. Neugebauer’s book, recommended also at the end of Chapter 4—*The Exact Sciences in Antiquity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1952), is also excellent, especially in the sections on Hellenistic science and the contributions made to it by the earlier Babylonian science.

Finally, a special study of Egypt in the Hellenistic Age and the influence of Hellenism on native Egyptian culture is well worth study as a pioneer work in a very interesting field, H. I. Bell, *Egypt from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1948).
The Roman Republic

Divisions of Roman history: republic and empire • Roman history as the classical case of a democracy destroyed by its own imperialism • Early Italy • Early political evolution • The ruling oligarchy of the mature republic • External history • The collapse of the republic

Divisions of Roman history—Republic and empire

Roman history proper can be said to begin only with the expulsion of the kings, about 509 B.C. Previous to this date it can only be reconstructed with difficulty from archaeological remains and such facts as can be tentatively inferred from later Roman legend. Imperial Rome fell to a barbarian ruler in A.D. 476; and thereafter a Roman emperor ceased to rule in the West.

A natural dividing line during the period 509 B.C. to A.D. 476 occurs in 31 B.C. with the battle of Actium. Previous to 31 B.C. the form of government was republican; after 31 B.C. it may be called monarchical (Greek monos—one, arche—rule = rule by one man). Traditionally we speak of the earlier period as the period of the Roman Republic, and of the later as the period of the Roman Empire.

It should be clearly understood that this division into republic and empire refers to the form of government. Confusion is often caused by the fact that it was the Roman Republic that conquered most of the lands beyond Italy which were later administered by Roman emperors, and this rule of foreign peoples is in modern times called an empire. But, to avoid confusion in this text, the word "empire" will not be used in this modern sense, and will only refer to the period and form of government after 31 B.C. The word "expansion" or other words suitable to the context will be used to refer to the conquests of the Romans which took place primarily under the republic.

Roman history as the classical case of a democracy destroyed by its own imperialism

THE INVOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE MARCH TO EMPIRE—CONTRAST WITH GREEK POLITICAL FORESIGHT

During the whole of the period from 509 B.C. to A.D. 476 the Romans were never subjected to domination by others. On the contrary, it was the rulers in Rome, whether the people, the senatorial oligarchy, or the emperor, who made their will felt and respected by others. In studying Roman history

3 The Latin word res publica means only the "state." It is we who have given our word "republic" its modern meaning of a state without a monarch.
we are frequently struck by the fact that there seems to have been something inevitable about the march of the Romans to domination of the Mediterranean world, and that the individual men responsible for Roman policies never seem to have planned anything the way it turned out. The Senate did not want to expand beyond Italy, but the relentless pressure of events forced that expansion; the citizens of the Roman republic did not want to destroy their republic, any more than did the soldiers of fortune who made its fall inevitable. We who live so many centuries later can see the majestic sequence of cause and effect, how each change in the form of government, each province added, was dictated by necessity, so that these self-governing, responsible, dominating Romans appear almost as puppets, doing what had to be done and nothing else. The Christian Fathers regarded the Roman Empire as a necessary preparation for their establishment of the Catholic Church; and we can see how they were able, even with far less evidence available to them than we have and working with a preconceived notion of Divine Providence, to reach such a conclusion and defend it. The Athenians thought out a constitution, logical and appropriate to themselves, which they proceeded to make work; Alexander thought out the policy appropriate to his empire, which had been quite self-consciously planned by his father and himself. The Greeks imposed mind upon matter, in their political life, in their art, and in their philosophy; the Romans felt their way along, modifying, adapting, improvising. Conservative to the core, they tried to retain every old form they had ever known far beyond its limit of usefulness, responding to each challenge as it presented itself to them. Thus the Romans remained empirical, practical, illogical, but uniquely effective, without producing a truly creative mind throughout the whole of their history comparable to any one of a dozen Greeks. It was no wonder that the Roman augurs consulted the gods every day, for no great people ever owed less to their own minds and more to their gods than they. That they should have conquered the Greeks was the triumph of character over intellect, and it is salutary for us to remember that fact. That it should have been Plato and Aristotle who took over the theology of the Roman church, and the Greeks and the Syrians who developed the Roman law in the final form in which it could be transmitted to posterity, is an ironic commentary upon the ability of even character, important though it is, to substitute for mind in the long sweep of history.

The history of the Roman Republic is the classical case of a potential democracy destroyed by its own imperialism. The Roman Republic was never a true democracy as Athens was, for the people never used the power that formally belonged to them, although it had taken centuries of struggle to acquire it. They were not really interested in participation in the government so much as they were anxious to secure equality of rights due to citizens, an equality which was taken for granted in Athens and never became a problem. The Roman oligarchy, the ruling class (a conception foreign to the Athenian polis altogether), was interested in government and extremely competent in it, and did not want to give the less competent masses any opportunity of acquiring it. Instead, the oligarchy made way for competent and distinguished individuals to enter its ranks. But the expansion beyond Italy which necessarily followed the expansion within Italy had such momentous results for the now enfranchised people and for the oligarchy that the former were compelled to use their voting power against the oligarchy to ensure their rights; while the oligarchy in defending itself won the day, but lost its morale and the respect of the people. Thereafter, as the problems of the expansion remained unsolved, both yielded power to the military, and the republic itself yielded to the one-man rule of the emperor.

In studying Roman history, therefore, the foregoing is the sequence of events to be observed. At no time in the history of the republic does it seem possible to say that if A had been wiser or B more conciliatory
or C had had a bright idea, the republic would have survived. The very form of the republic carried within itself the seeds of its downfall. The Roman Republic, with its oligarchy and its magistrates and its solid farmer-soldiers, proved itself incompetent to rule beyond Italy; competent though it was in conquering, it could not manage its conquests. If we are to discover the reason for this fact, we must examine the nature of Roman institutions and how they functioned, and watch the influence that the Roman possessions beyond the seas had on the home government.

THE REPUBLIC AND ITS SUCCESSES AND FAILURES AS THE NECESSARY PRELUDE TO WORLD RULE

And yet without the republic there would have been no effective empire. An Oriental empire which had never known free institutions might have conquered, but it could not have consolidated its possession into a form of government as stable as that of the Romans. The heart of the empire was its self-governing cities; the means of government was the professional army and its officers, and the administrators with their long tradition of public service. These carried over from the great republic, the builder of character and the developer of institutions. Without the republic the empire would have been just another despotism, not a world organization that called forth such an unexampled loyalty from its citizens. When that organization fell, it seemed even to Christians who hated its gods and deplored its morality that the world itself had lost its foundations.

► Early Italy

PHYSIOGRAPHY

The land of Italy is a peninsula extending southeast into the Mediterranean, divided by the Apennine chain of mountains, high in the north and dwindling away into foothills only in the extreme south. The largest fertile area in the country suitable for grain growing is the Po Valley in the northeast; but as this is separated by the moun-

tains from the coastal plains of the west, communications have never been easy between the two areas, and in republican days the region of the Po was not regarded as a part of Italy at all but as the separate province of Hither Gaul. The second largest expanse of fertile land in ancient times was in Latium and Campania, though the surface soil was early exhausted, and the land became more suitable for vineyards and orchards than for grain. The greater part of Italy was best suited for pasture, either of sheep or cattle; but the basic agricultural unit, except when political and social conditions prevented it, has always been the small mixed farm.

There are many variations in climate, from the Po Valley, which has cold winters and warm summers, to the semitropical climate of the southwest. The east coast in ancient times was almost barren of seaports; Italy is not too well blessed with them, even now, in spite of her long coast line. The best harbors in the country were in the south and southwest. Ostia, the harbor of Rome, was never a good one, and needed constant dredging to keep it usable. The Tiber, which leads from Rome to Ostia, is a swift-flowing river, and suitable only for small boats and lighters. Rome, disadvantageously situated for water traffic, never became a great commercial or industrial city.

Italy on the whole was far richer in agricultural resources than Greece, and Greek travelers to Italy in early imperial times always emphasize the abundance of produce, the fine timber, especially the hardwoods, and the animals pasturing on the rich lands. But she was and is short of metals, with iron in significant quantities only to be found on the island of Elba, and small deposits of other metals scattered throughout the country; and even in arable and pasture land she is greatly inferior to France, and was inferior to almost any land in her empire in ancient days.

Rome itself was situated on the left bank of the Tiber, about fifteen miles from the sea, with the fertile hinterland of Latium to the south, and the more broken but still
fertile land of Etruria to the north. Her famous Seven Hills are really three separate hills with four adjacent spurs. Rome at its most extensive filled the whole space between the hills and had a settlement on the right bank of the river. The only real advantage of the situation of Rome was that it was in central Italy and could usually prevent the northern and southern areas from uniting against her. The immediate neighborhood of Rome was unhealthful, and even the land covered by the city had to be artificially drained before it was habitable. It was primarily her man-made system of roads, all leading out of Rome, that enabled her to keep military control of Italy. It was, then, the work of her people that made her mistress of Italy rather than any special advantages of geography. In the Middle Ages, and in modern times, Milan, with a far better natural situation, has always tended to grow naturally and surpass Rome; it has always required special man-directed efforts, almost contrary to nature, to build Rome up to equal or surpass her upstart daughter in the north.

PREHISTORIC SETTLEMENTS IN ITALY

Several prehistoric cultures are known in Italy. Skulls of Neanderthal man have been found not far from Rome, and Neolithic settlements of a people who domesticated animals but did not yet know agriculture have been excavated. An extensive Bronze Age culture of people who lived in pile dwellings similar to those found in Switzerland (the so-called Terramare culture) was followed by the “Villanovan” people who used iron. These last two groups are generally supposed to have been migrants from the north who mingled with the neolithic inhabitants to form the Italic people of the peninsula in historic times. But there is as yet no final certainty on the matter, and excavations may still turn up enough evidence to establish the original homes of these settlers and to determine whether the Terramare and Villanovan cultures are distinct, or the latter developed from the former. It seems quite possible that some tribes of Indo-European people went into Greece, where they found the advanced Mycenaean civilization already existent, and so were able to progress more quickly themselves till they ultimately became the Hellenic peoples of history. At the same time another offshoot went into Italy, but were slower in developing a characteristic culture of their own, having less to build upon. At all events by 1000 B.C. the Italic peoples were already speaking the language that ultimately became Latin, though they could not yet write it. About 1000 B.C. also the first settlement on the Palatine Hill of Rome was founded.

THE INVADERS OF ITALY—CELTs AND ETRUSCANS—INFLUENCES ON ROMANS

Into the Italic peninsula during the next three hundred years came three groups of invaders: Celts, who formed a permanent settlement in the valley of the Po and were called Gauls by the Romans; Greeks, who came from the mainland from the eighth century onward, as we have seen, whose settlements were for the most part in southern Italy close to the sea; and a group of people called the Etruscans, “people of the sea,” probably coming from Asia Minor after the destruction of the Mycenaean civilization by the invading Dorians. These Etruscans were considerably more advanced culturally and militarily than their Italic neighbors, and they maintained contact by sea not only with the Greek cities in southern Italy but with Carthage. They gradually expanded northward in Italy to control the Po Valley, as far as the Alps, and through Latium to Capua, ruling Rome itself intermittently. Though their language is almost unknown to us, archaeologists have made very extensive finds, so that we are familiar with the material elements in their civilization. We know that they had developed urban life to the extent that their nobles had fine houses and enjoyed athletic contests, feasts, and dancing, that the women had elaborate dresses with considerable ornamentation, and used cosmetics and make-up. In material comfort and luxury the civilization was far ahead of anything the Romans or Italians achieved for
many centuries afterward. There was, however, no single centralized Etruscan state, but many self-governing cities which frequently engaged in intercity warfare. We cannot, therefore, speak of an Etruscan Empire so much as of the expansion of the Etruscans, though there is evidence that the Etruscan cities sometimes united into leagues. From the Etruscans the Romans learned the use of hewn stone for their public buildings, temples, and walls, and probably gladiatorial games. One feature in Roman religion, divination from the entrails of animals and augury from the flight of birds, was taken from the Etruscans, but the principles were apparently never fully understood by the Romans, for even in Cicero’s time (the first century B.C.) Etruscan diviners were employed by the priests and augurs of Rome. Some Roman gods take their names from their Etruscan counterparts.

Etruscan influence on Roman political development was crucial, but not long lasting. Rome was conquered by the Etruscans and dominated by them for a period of uncertain duration. During this time the small villages which occupied the area of the Seven Hills were consolidated into one city. Naturally the Romans never gave credit to their conquerors for this creative act; the city in Roman tradition had been founded in 753 B.C. by Romulus, who had come from Alba Longa in Latium. The founder of that city had himself come from Troy as a child with his father, Aeneas, one of the Trojan heroes mentioned in the Iliad. Romulus, according to this tradition, was the first king of Rome. But, as we have seen, there was already a settlement at Rome by 1000 B.C., and though there is some evidence that emigrants from Alba did found it, the famous date of 753 does not seem to represent any event of significance. The tradition, in fact, is not older than the fourth century B.C. The last king, and possibly the last three kings, of Rome were Etruscans; they did not endear themselves to the Romans, who hated the name of king forever afterward.
Early political evolution

EXPULSION OF THE KINGS

About 509 B.C., according to tradition, the kings were driven out of Rome. Again, it is not certain that the Romans themselves drove them out. Some scholars are of the opinion that it was the neighboring Latin cities who were ruled from Rome by the Etruscan monarchy who united to defeat the Romans and the Etruscans together. It is also probable that Rome was retaken by the Etruscans for a time after the fall of the monarchy. However this may be, the Romans did soon succeed in gaining their independence, but found themselves at war with the Latin League, a league of cities of Latium. Presumably Rome was trying to assert her rule over these cities on her own account, as during Etruscan days. This war was brought to an end by a Roman victory at Lake Regillus in 486 B.C., and a treaty was signed under which Rome and the Latin cities entered into a virtual partnership which lasted for nearly 150 years, and which enabled Rome to become the recognized leader of all central Italy.

THE ASCENDANCY OF THE NOBILITY

In addition to making the villages of Rome into a city from which it dominated Latium, the Etruscan monarchy had been able to keep order between the classes in Rome. Almost every Roman was a farmer, for though the Etruscan kings tried to support industry, there was very little, and most manufacture, for instance of weapons and pottery, was done in the home. Three kinds of land were available to the farmer, his own plot belonging personally to him, public land which he might rent, and common land where he could pasture his flocks and herds. But certain customary rights were held by the old noble families; and when they had the power they constantly encroached on the rights of the smaller farmers, who had no means of defending themselves. The noble families, or patricians, jealously guarded their rights, and were divided from the plebeians, the remainder of the population, by a rigid class distinction. While the kings ruled in Rome the nobles were kept in check. But when the kings were expelled from Rome and the nobles ruled the state in their place, the latter held arbitrary power over the plebeians which they abused to the utmost. Public land was sold to the highest bidder as long as he was a patrician, or let out at a nominal rent; or it was pre-empted for the sole use of the patricians. Thus the poorer farmer fell into debt or was driven from his land. Moreover, with the wars that followed the breakdown of the monarchy and with the ill success that often attended Roman arms at the beginning, especially when the Etruscans tried to retake the city, the farmers would go on the annual campaigns and return to find their land ravaged and their property ruined by the war.

THE STRUGGLE OF THE ORDERS—FIRST STAGE

Revolt against the patrician power seems to have been ill organized at the beginning, and took the form of occasional acts of violence, which were avenged speedily by the more powerful patricians, armed with all the authority of the state. The magistrates were able to inflict any legal penalty at will, and creditors were entitled to sell the debt-ridden farmers across the Tiber; if there were several creditors, under primitive custom they could divide the debtor’s body in pieces.

There was only one recourse for the more numerous plebeians. In one thing their numbers counted, even though the machinery of the state was controlled by their enemies. They were needed as soldiers—the patricians could not fight the Etruscans or the Latin League all by themselves. So
about 494 B.C., according to the story in Livy, the plebeian troops, called out for a campaign, marched to the Sacred Hill where they presented demands, in particular for some security against arbitrary acts of magistrates. They were granted the right to have their own assembly of plebeians which would elect two tribunes (later increased to four, then to ten), whose persons were to be sacrosanct, i.e., anyone offering violence against them could be put to death without trial. The tribunes could forbid any act of the magistrates by pronouncing the word “veto” (I forbid).

THE GOVERNMENT OF EARLY ROME—PRIMITIVE DEMOCRACY—MAGISTRATES, SENATE, AND ASSEMBLIES

In order to understand how the nobles had acquired such power after the expulsion of the kings it is necessary to examine the institutions of the Roman state during and after the kingly regime, and then to see how they were modified by further acts of the plebeians through their assembly and officers, and through further use of their potent weapon, the military strike.

The early government of Rome was probably a Primitive Democracy of the kind previously described in the chapter on Mesopotamia. But, as in the case of the Greeks, the king ceased to hold his position instead of developing into an absolute monarch, as in the East. The Council in Rome was known as the Senate, and was composed originally of the heads of clans (gentes), and the Primitive Assembly was the Comitia curiata. In this Assembly each man had a vote; but the whole Assembly was divided into thirty curiae, and it was the majority of the curiae rather than the majority of the total vote that counted. In the time of the kings, the Senate was an advisory body only, and in the event of the death of the king administered the state until the new one was chosen. The Assembly chose the king and conferred his authority (imperium) upon him, and would occasionally be consulted, if called by the king, on important matters of legislation. The king was the sole executive, leader in war, chief priest, and judge.

These bodies and their functions, then, were substantially similar to those discussed in earlier chapters. In Rome all the later governmental organizations retained their basic character, and in fact, long after it had been superseded by other assemblies which had real powers and could use them, even the old Comitia curiata continued to exist, with no powers beyond solemnly meeting to confer the imperium upon magistrates. The Senate always remained in theory an advisory body, could be called only by the magistrates, and had no power of legislation. Although it encroached upon the powers of the other governing bodies of the state so that it became for a long time the actual ruling body, these powers never belonged to it in theory, and could be taken away from it by determined action by the Assembly and magistrates as soon as the Senate lost its indirect control over them.

The first great change in this system was, of course, the expulsion of the kings. Their place was taken by two magistrates, first called praetors, then consuls. The important feature of the supreme magistracy in the state was that, as the name suggests, they consulted together; to prevent arbitrary and absolute power from going to either, each had a veto on the acts of the other. These consuls were primarily leaders in war, and they alternated authority in the field; in practice this did not make for too much difficulty as there were usually two armies in the field at once. The consuls were elected annually by the Assembly, and they appointed the members of the Senate from among those who were eligible. In important matters it was customary for them to consult the Senate; but it was with them and not with the Senate that responsibility rested. Consuls at this time were always chosen from the number of existing senators, and they returned to the Senate after their year of office; this fact no doubt was of considerable influence on their behavior while in office, as they would not wish to antagonize unduly their future colleagues. The consuls could
also call the Assembly when necessary, and neither Senate nor Assembly could be called by anyone else except in the case of a dictatorship. The only appeal against the decision of a consul was in a case involving capital punishment of a citizen; then by custom an appeal to the Assembly was permitted.

In times of grave danger to the state a dictator could be appointed for six months, with a master of the horse as his second in command. For this period the dictator had supreme power, and his appointment was therefore the equivalent of six months under martial law, unless the crisis was over before this time, in which case the dictator automatically retired.

It will be seen at once how this election of consuls instead of the king would work to the detriment of the plebeians. The consuls always came from the noble class, and were to some degree responsible to their class owing to their annual term of office; whereas the king held his office for life and was above the nobles, and thus need not be in any way subservient to their interests.

The priestly power of the king was not transferred to the consuls, but to a college of priests and augurs, also patricians, who were headed by a chief priest (Pontifex Maximus) who was elected by the Assembly. The priestly function was of considerable importance since most public acts were preceded by religious ritual. Knowledge of this ritual was necessary, and ignorance of it kept plebeians from transacting public business on their own account.

Almost at the same time as the election of consuls—the exact date is uncertain—the need for a new kind of Assembly became apparent. The old Comitia curiata was not, however, reformed or abolished. Instead, an altogether new Assembly was formed to which the powers of the old were assigned, together with some new ones. This was the Assembly by centuries (a military formation), the Comitia centuriata. The whole population of the state was divided into various classes, according to the military equipment each could provide. Thus the first class, which could provide horses, weapons, and armor, was superior to the second class, which could not provide horses, and so on. The largest number of centuries was allotted to the first class; the propertyless citizens of the lowest class, who were excused from fighting except in cases of extreme danger to the state, were all put into one century. The centuries of the first class, who provided most military equipment and paid the highest property tax, amounted in number to 98 out of a total of 193 centuries. Since voting went by centuries and not by numbers of individual soldiers, the wealthy classes were able to dominate the Assembly if they voted together (see the chart on opposite page).

To this Assembly were transferred the right to make war and peace, the right to elect magistrates, the right to hear appeals of citizens against the death sentence, and the right to accept or reject proposals for legislation offered by the magistrates. It could not, however, discuss or amend such proposals; no Roman Assembly ever had this right. The vote was always taken in Roman Assemblies by the presiding magistrate’s calling for the vote of each century (or, in the Tribal Assembly, to be discussed later, of each tribe) one by one. When a majority was obtained, the bill was declared passed, and the opinion of the remaining centuries was not taken. So the poorer classes were virtually disfranchised, their opinion not being heard and their vote not counted. The only way open to them to make their voice heard was to acquire enough wealth to enable them to be enrolled in a superior century. This Assembly, though it lost much of its power later to the Tribal Assembly, remained throughout the Roman Republic a factor making for conservatism; even when it was re-formed about 240 B.C. and its composition changed, it was still largely a vehicle for the men of property.

THE STRUGGLE OF THE ORDERS—SECOND STAGE

Tribal Assembly

We have seen how the plebeians first seceded about 494 B.C. and demanded some
Summary of Magistrates and Assemblies in 287 B.C.

Regular Magistrates

- Censors [2: elected for 18 months every 5 years from ex-consuls]
- Consuls [2: annual] selected from all the people
- Praetor [1: annual] elected from all the people
- Curule Aedile [1: annual]
- Quaestors [8: annual]

Tribunes [10: annual, elected only from plebeians]*

* Entitled to call Senate and Assemblies

† Any magistracy entitled holder to sit in Senate provided the censor selected him

Assemblies

- Comitia Curiata [No duties except to confer formally command upon magistrates already elected]
- Comitia Centuriata [Duties: Elect officials, except tribunes. Declare peace and war, court of appeal in cases involving capital punishment]
- Comitia Tributa (enlargement of earlier Concilium Plebis). [Duties: Legislation, election of tribunes when sitting as Concilium plebis, with patricians excluded]

N.B. The only important change in the above list before the time of Sulla (82 B.C.) was made about 242 B.C., when a second praetor, called praetor peregrinus, was elected to take care especially of law cases involving noncitizens.

check upon the arbitrary power of the magistrates. The result of their action was the right to appoint tribunes. The tribune was a new civilian official who held no military powers and only the limited civil authority (potestas) already described. These tribunes were to be elected by the plebs alone, in an assembly of their own (Concilium plebis). This Assembly was also allowed to legislate in matters that concerned the plebs alone (plebiscita). Very soon afterward—though the details of the operation are not clear—the composition of this new Plebeian Assembly was regularized by its conversion into an Assembly of the People by Tribes (Comitia tributa), of which three tribes were urban and seventeen were rural, later rising over the course of the next 250 years to four urban and thirty-one rural. The new Assembly could be called into session either by the tribunes or by the consuls. Later, when the title of praetor was revived and praetors were elected to undertake some of the duties of the consul, these magistrates could also summon the Assembly of the Tribes.

The result of these changes was that the Romans now had three Assemblies; obviously there was no real need for all three. The Comitia curiata of the kings fell into disuse, retaining no powers but a few minor duties, mostly of a religious nature. The Comitia centuriata controlled by the wealthy classes gave place to the Comitia tributa, theoretically controlled by the majority of citizens. This change was accomplished by the Valerio-Horatian laws of about 448 B.C., under which all legislation passed by the Comitia tributa became binding on the people if ratified by the Senate. Thus the Comitia centuriata lost its powers of legislation but retained its other powers, especially the election of magistrates and the declaration of war. It remained the last court of appeal in death sentences.

The first codification of the law—The Twelve Tables

The appointment of the tribunes and the enlargement of their numbers were a help to the plebeians but not enough. Presumably the arbitrary acts continued and the magistrates interpreted the customary law as they
wanted. Moreover, the wealthier plebeians felt themselves discriminated against in the matter of magistracies, which were still confined to the patrician class. And they were not allowed to intermarry with patricians. Around the middle of the fifth century several advances were made under severe pressure from the plebeians. First came the appointment of a body of decemvirs (ten men) to codify the hitherto unwritten law. Since they did not produce a law code within their first year of office, the plebeians agitated very violently, and perhaps staged a second full-dress secession. The result was the issue of the Twelve Tables, which was followed by the Valerio-Horatian laws just described, giving the power of legislation to the Comitia tributa. By then or even earlier this Comitia also enrolled the Roman patricians in its ranks, though of course they were numerically inferior to the plebeians in this Assembly. Agitation for the consulship was settled by a compromise under which a new office, military tribunes, was substituted for the consulship, and to this office plebeians could theoretically be elected. When the number of military tribunes reached six, and the Romans were engaged in a deadly conflict with the Etruscans at the end of the fifth century, a few plebeians were at last elected by the patrician-controlled Comitia centuriata. But the agitation still continued for the return of the honored consulate, and for the election of plebeians to it.

Piecemeal concession of rights and offices to plebeians

Meanwhile a gain had been registered by the plebeians in the first important breach of the social stratification of the classes. Permission to intermarry with patricians was granted a few years after the codification of the law. At the same time the patricians created a new office for themselves, that of quaestor, an assistant to the consuls, whose duties were mostly financial, including the administration of the treasury and the division of war booty. The office, however did not remain for very long exclusively in patrician hands, no doubt because the booty was being unfairly divided. The plebeians obtained the right to be elected to the quaestorship about twenty-five years after it had first become an elective office.

By the end of the fifth century, then, the plebeians had obtained some important concessions. They could be elected military tribunes, though they were not often in fact elected; they could be elected quaestor. They had an Assembly which could legislate, though the Senate had a veto; they had succeeded in obtaining a written law code; and they were allowed to intermarry with the patricians. But they were still far from

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### Chronological Chart

**The Etruscan Monarchy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal History</th>
<th>External History</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terramare culture</td>
<td>ca. 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villanovan culture</td>
<td>ca. 1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First settlements in Rome</td>
<td>ca. 1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etruscans appear in Italy</td>
<td>ca. 900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional date of founding of Rome</td>
<td>753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional first four kings of Rome</td>
<td>753-616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarquinius Priscus (Etruscan king)</td>
<td>616-578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servius Tullius</td>
<td>578-534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarquinius Superbus (Etruscan king)</td>
<td>534-510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Etruscan domination</td>
<td>509</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

Internal history
First secession of plebs—Election of tribunes and establishment of Con-cilium plebis (plebiscites binding on plebs) 494
Establishment of Comitia tributa (Assembly of Tribes) ca. 460
Twelve Tables 450–449
Valerio-Horatian Laws (legislation by plebs binding on state if accepted by Senate) 448
Interrmarriage permitted between plebeians and patricians 445
Suspension of consulship, substituted by military tribunes, open to plebeians 444–367
Licinian-Sextian Laws—Consulship opened to plebeians 367
First plebeian dictator 356
One of consuls must be plebeian 340
Censors to give preference to ex-magistrates in drawing up list of senators 310
Loss of senatorial veto on all legislation 287
Reorganization of Comitia centuriata (electoral assembly). ca 242

Tiberius Gracchus elected tribune 133
Murder of Tiberius Gracchus 132
Re-election of tribune made legal 125
Tribunate of Gaius Gracchus 123–122
Death of Gaius Gracchus 121
Marius elected consul 107
Reorganization of army on volunteer basis by Marius 106
Sixth consulship of Marius 100
Return of Sulla to Italy—Proscriptions 83
Sullan Constitution 83–80
Pompey given extended command against pirates 67
Pompey given extended command against Mithridates 66
Consulate of Cicero and conspiracy of Catiline 63
Return of Pompey to Rome 62
First Triumvirate 60
Caesar appointed to command in Gaul 58
Return of Caesar to Italy 49
Caesar as dictator 46–44
Murder of Caesar 44

External history
Battle of Lake Regillus—Roman victory over Latin League 496
Treaty with Latin League—Promulgation of Latin rights 493
Rome leader of Latin League—Gradual expansion 490–430

Conquest of Veii (southern Etruria) 396
Invasion of Italy by Gauls—Sack of Rome 387–386
Wars with various Latin and other local cities 362–345
War with Latin League 340–338
Defeat of Latin League—Roman Confederation 338
Samnite Wars 327–290

War with Pyrrhus and Magna Graecia 281–272
First Punic War 264–241
Sicily becomes first Roman province 227
Sardinia and Corsica become second Roman province 227
Second Punic War 218–201
Spain divided into two provinces 197
Defeat of Antiochus III (king of Syria) at Magnesia 190
Wars with Macedon 200–197; 171–168
Third Punic War 149–146
Destruction of Carthage and sack of Corinth 146
Macedonia becomes Roman province 146
Jugurthine War 112–106
Marius defeats Cimbri and Teutones 102–101
Social War in Italy 90–88
Murder of all Romans and Italians in Asia by Mithridates VI 89
Sulla undertakes war with Mithridates 87
Wars with Mithridates (Lucullus) 75–66
Slave War in Italy 74–71
Conquest and reorganization of Asia by Pompey 66–62
Caesar conquers Gaul 58–51
Crassus defeated and killed in Parthia 53.

Dates are before Christ.
being first-class citizens. And, as we shall see, whenever the patricians made a concession, they tried to recover their lost power by other means. The background of the struggle remained primarily economic. The successful fifth-century campaigns of the Romans added a great deal of public land to the state, which was divided unfairly by the patricians as long as they had a monopoly of government. And, since the possession of land also determined the position of the owner in the Comitia centuriata, which elected magistrates, the plebeians still had no legal redress. To reduce their agitation for reform there were occasional land divisions which helped them, and in conquered territory colonies were planted in which the poorer citizens could take part.

But after the sacking of Rome by the Gauls in the early fourth century B.C. and the extensive wars in Italy that followed, it became clear that the patricians could no longer maintain their complete monopoly of government. So in 367 B.C. the Licinian-Sextian laws were passed admitting plebeians to the consulship, which was now restored, and limiting the amount of public land that could be held by any citizen. The land law, however, seems to have remained a dead letter, as we find land tenure still a problem for the next two centuries. Following these laws there was intensive agitation for a scaling down of debt, and by the end of the century, after a few minor reforms, slavery for debt was abolished.

The patricians, as usual, had another card up their sleeves. Two new magistracies were instituted after 367 B.C., the praetorship and the curule aedileship, the latter occupied primarily with the administration of the city of Rome, the former undertaking some of the civil, and if necessary, military powers of the consul. The praetor became the chief judge in Rome, but he could also command armies in the absence of the consul and could summon the Senate and the Assemblies. Needless to say, these offices were reserved for patricians, as some compensation for the loss of their exclusive right to the consulate.

The plebeians realized that it was useless to have the right to be elected consul if the Centuriate Assembly never elected them, though in practice a few wealthy plebeians were elected who were acceptable to the patricians and who usually had intermarried with them. So in 340 B.C., since the election machinery could not be tampered with, a law was passed that one of the consuls must be a plebeian; two years later the praetorship was opened to the plebeians, and at the same time a law was passed that the highest dignity in the state, the censorship, must be shared between plebeians and patricians.

A word is now necessary on the censorship, which had been established soon after the Twelve Tables. Every five years two ex-consuls must be elected by the Military Assembly to take a census of the citizens, and decide on the property classification for this Assembly. This work usually occupied about eighteen months, after which the censor (or census taker) laid down his office. During the expansion of Rome the censors came to exercise many important financial functions, including the auctioning of tax contracts and the letting out of contracts for public works. In the early days senators had been appointed by the consuls, but this duty soon devolved upon the censors, who had, in any case, all been consuls. It was, of course, impossible for plebeians to be censors until they had obtained entry into the consulate; but when one consul had to be a plebeian, one of the censors could be a plebeian ex-consul. In 310 B.C. the censors were instructed by the Ovinian Law to give preference to ex-magistrates in drawing up the list of senators, so that it became the custom for all magistrates to enter the Senate automatically. The censors, however, assumed as part of their function the right to purge the Senate for breaches of public decorum and for other offenses (hence our word censorious).

In 300 B.C. the last patrician stronghold fell with the admission of plebeians into the college of pontiffs and augurs, thus giving them access to the secrets of religious ritual necessary for the management of the state.
Abolition of senatorial veto on legislation

Only one victory now remained to be gained—the abolition of the senatorial veto on legislation. Again it was the question of public land and the pressure of debt during the Samnite War that fanned the agitation that was to lead to the concession. Under the leadership of the plebeian Hortensius, a third secession of the plebs was staged in 287 B.C. Hortensius was made dictator, and the final authority in legislation was handed over to the Tribal Assembly. All laws passed by this Assembly became law with or without the consent of the Senate.

It might appear that the constitution was now well balanced, as the Greek historian Polybius thought it, with a fairly even division of powers between the patricians and plebeians. Yet in fact for the next 150 years the balance was only on paper; in practice rule was by a senatorial oligarchy in spite of the fact that the Senate remained in theory what it always had been—an advisory body.

The ruling oligarchy of the mature republic

INDIRECT SENATORIAL CONTROL OF THE ASSEMBLIES

The two potentially democratic elements in the constitution, the tribunate and the Tribal Assembly, were both indirectly controlled by the patricians; and such strife as we hear of during the next centuries, not even excluding altogether the revolt of the Gracchi, was more an interfamily struggle for power among the patrician families and their respective plebeian connections than a true struggle between patricians and plebeians. It was, on the whole, only the richer plebeians who were interested in obtaining office; and these were frequently allowed to marry into the patrician families, not only because of their wealth but because they could, as plebeians, be elected tribune. As tribunes they were extremely useful to the ruling classes because they were able to veto legislation introduced into the Tribal Assembly. There were now ten tribunes, and the veto of any one of them was sufficient to hold up legislation for a year. The tribunes, moreover, now sat in the Senate and had gained the privilege of calling it. So the practice grew up of calling the Senate first and consulting it before taking any measure to the Tribal Assembly. Unless it were called by a magistrate, the Assembly could take no action, and it could neither debate nor amend. So through the control of one or more tribunes the Senate was able to gain an indirect power at least the equal of what it had lost in 287 B.C.

But the patricians had a further indirect control of the Assembly. In the Tribal Assembly the votes were distributed inequitably. It has already been mentioned that there were originally twenty tribes. Over the years the number had been increased to thirty-five, only four of which were urban, while the remainder were rural. Moreover, all new citizens were enrolled in the urban tribes, where their votes counted for little or nothing. It might be thought that in a system where votes could only be cast in person the urban vote would swamp the rural, since genuine farmers could not afford the time to come to the city to vote except on rare occasions. This, however, was not the case; for anyone who had been born in the country retained his vote in a rural tribe even after he had come to live in Rome and the tribal vote could be cast by the few members of the tribe who were able to be present. The votes for the rural tribes were therefore cast by rich landowners whose interests lay with the senatorial oligarchy, and by the clients of these landowners who were evidently organized into an effective political machine, no doubt being paid their expenses for living at Rome in exchange for their vote. Only when the small farmers themselves were dispossessed or had such an important grievance that they thought it worth while to make their journey to Rome to vote could this machine be broken, as it was in the time of the Gracchi.
DIRECT POWERS OF THE SENATE

In addition to these indirect powers which enabled the senatorial oligarchy to control legislation, the Senate also had important powers of its own. Being the only deliberative body in the state, and made up of all those who had held office and high command in the army, it discussed foreign affairs, appointed and received ambassadors, appointed commissions to discuss treaties and ratified them, allotted military commands to the consuls and praetors, and later prolonged the commands of consuls (with the title of proconsuls) and praetors (propraetors). It had to approve the public contracts let out by the censors, and it had almost complete charge of finance. Later it claimed to be able to decree martial law when the state was in extreme danger, and to call upon the consuls to enforce it. Though the Senate did not formally have the right to declare war, its policy could make war inevitable, aside from its general control of the Assembly. Finally, the Senate could always refuse to finance any legislation, so that such legislation would remain a dead letter. Thus the Senate had still another means of preventing the execution of the popular will.

SENATORIAL CONTROL OF THE REPUBLIC
DURING THE PERIOD OF EXPANSION

The whole result, therefore, of the plebeian agitation for reform was that certain plebeians were now admitted to office and its rewards, while the people were in the same position as before, though they now had the formal power to break the oligarchy if they could gain sufficient cohesion within their class and find the necessary leaders. But, although a few such leaders did arise, they were rare, for they had to resist all the blandishments that were available to the oligarchy for their seduction. A tribune who wanted to fight on behalf of the people would need to organize the farmers' vote to break the political machine, he would have to ensure that all his colleagues were of the same mind and could not be corrupted or persuaded to veto his measures, and he would have himself to possess a private income, which in the early days meant the possession of land—for officers of state were not paid. Finally, he would probably be called upon to resist temptation in the form of a marriage into one of the best families, who were quite willing to use their daughters as pawns in the political game, marrying and divorcing them with alarming suddenness to cement a political alliance. It is not, therefore, surprising that most of the tribunes who did in fact espouse the cause of the people were themselves aristocrats or allied with the aristocracy already, even though they might still be classified as "plebeians."

From this account it should not be concluded that the Senate was unworthy of its responsibilities and position of power. For several centuries it was really the only possible government of Rome, containing, as it did, all the men with experience in public office, military command, wealth, and education. It retained its position primarily because of its enormous prestige, its long series of victorious wars, its successful diplomacy, and its real sense of responsibility and tradition of public service. Not only was the Senate unpaid; it was not even allowed to engage in commerce or industry or to contract for provincial taxes. It was only when it failed in war and later when it lost its prestige through corruption and mismanagement in the conquered provinces, and when a new class arose which was wealthier than the landholding Senate and willing to use its wealth to promote its material interests, that the Senate began to lose its grip and become a jealous and embittered oligarchy fighting every inch of the way against all reform.

But for nearly 150 years of expansion the Senate's power was unchallenged by any other class in the state, and during this time Carthage was defeated and destroyed and the bulk of the Mediterranean world was added to the possessions of Rome. Some of the material proceeds of this expansion filtered down to the people who fought the
wars, and for a long time no Roman citizen had to pay any tax, since the whole state was financed by its booty from wars and its taxes from the unfree provinces.

**External history**

THE UNIFICATION OF ITALY

General Italian policy—Roman, Latin, and allied rights

The constitutional development has taken us forward by several centuries in time, and we must now return to the external history of Rome, which had so much influence upon this development. Here again Rome showed the ability to compromise and improvise which made her capable of ruling so many foreign peoples with efficiency and considerable success, at least until she went beyond the borders of Italy.

After the treaty with the Latin League following the battle of Lake Regillus she was quickly able, with the assistance of the Latin cities, to subdue the local hostile tribes until at the beginning of the fourth century B.C. she had extended her dominion over southern Etruria. Toward the peoples she conquered she adopted a military and civil policy which became the model for all her conquests in Italy. She never made permanent peace with an enemy before she had put herself into a position to dictate terms. The terms were always of the same type. A colony of Roman citizens with a garrison was to be established on land ceded to Rome, and a treaty was signed regulating the status of the conquered. Some cities near to Rome were granted full citizenship, including the right of trade and marriage, and the right to vote. This status, however, was rare. The so-called Latin rights were the usual concession, which left the city in full possession of its self-government (*municipia*), with the exception of its foreign policy, of which Rome thereafter took full charge. The city provided Rome with specified numbers of troops under their own commanders to fight in the Roman wars, and a comparatively low tax. Trade and intermarriage with the Romans were permitted, but not the right to vote. This last lack was not felt to be of importance in early days, though later full Roman citizenship meant the first share in the spoils of victory, while the Latin allies only received what was left. Even then it was not the right to vote, as such, that was appreciated so much as the other privileges that belonged to the full Roman citizen. The allied Latins were allowed to send out special Latin colonies within Italy after Roman victories, and these colonies, as well as the cities themselves, were always protected by Rome.

On the whole the arrangement was a distinct gain for these Latin allies. No longer were they in danger of defeat and destruction at the hands of local enemies; and the cost of protection was far less than the maintenance of a separate army capable of self-defense. And for a long time they retained all the important elements of self-government. The cities were united with Rome by the famous network of Roman roads. Each city was bound to Rome by a separate treaty, but the cities themselves did not have treaties with each other; frequently the rights of one Latin city were not enjoyed by all other Latin cities. The purpose of this direct connection with Rome was, of course, to prevent alliances from springing up against her; already the principle of "divide and rule" had been adopted with success.

The third type of treaty was the treaty for federate allies, substantially a defensive alliance. Again the cities were in direct relationship only with Rome; they also kept their self-government but lost the right to make war on their own. They furnished troops to the Roman army under local officers. The Romans paid for their subsistence when on campaign, and they had a share of the booty; they were not otherwise taxed.

If we consider this general policy more carefully we shall see that in the wars for the control of Italy Rome was in an exceptionally favorable position. For Rome had a policy, while the Italian cities were fighting only for complete independence without any
dictation from Rome—a rather intangible good, when it is remembered that this in substance only meant the right to make war and run their own foreign relations. And it was soon learned that when Rome fought, she would never give up, short of outright victory. Her enemies knew that they had only to submit and they would receive her usual terms. So Rome was never without allies; there were always cities that were content with their position and did not want to make foreign wars at the high cost of having to fight Rome for the privilege. Moreover, her enemies had no comparable policy; if they defeated Rome, even captured her, what could they do that would be of permanent value? It is significant that the Samnites, the most persistent of Rome's enemies in
Italy, had to form another confederation of their own to oppose her, with a similar constitution and with similar rights. So it became merely a question of confederation under the Samnites or confederation under Rome. In either case complete independence was over for the cities in Italy.

WARS WITH GAULS,_ETRUSCANS, AND SAMNITES—THE LATIN LEAGUE

In 387-386 B.C., the terrifying Gauls descended upon Rome from Gaul and the Po Valley on a plundering raid. The Roman armies panicked at the battle of Allia, and the city was captured except for the fortified Capitol. The Romans were forced to ransom their city, and the Gauls retired, having no further use for the territory. But it was a considerable blow to Roman prestige and leadership; the Etruscans revolted, as did some of the Latin cities. But more important than these was the competition for leadership in Italy offered by the Samnites, a fierce and determined group of fighters from southeastern Italy, more numerous than the Latins. When the Samnites threatened Campania and its capital Capua, the Campanians appealed to Rome and the Latin League for help. This was given, and in the first round the Romans and Latins were successful. But the Romans annexed the territory themselves and did not share it with the Latins; whereupon the latter revolted, demanding full Roman citizenship and their share in the spoils that went with it. Rome refused concessions and was able, with the aid of some

The Appian Way, the most famous road in Italy, built by the censor Appius Claudius during the fourth century B.C. (COURTESY ITALIAN STATE TOURIST OFFICE)
loyal allies, to defeat the Latin League before the Samnites were ready for the next round. By not reducing the Latin rights and making a few minor concessions, Rome pacified her ancient allies and was able to use their help when the Samnites attacked again in full force. At times the Etruscans and at times the distant Gauls helped the Samnites in the long wars that followed, which became almost the final struggle for Italian independence. Often the Romans lost battles, but their persistence finally wore the Samnites
and their allies down, and at last, by 290 B.C., the war was over—the Romans victorious.

The conquest of Magna Graecia—
The confederation of Italy

Too late the cities of Magna Graecia in southern Italy, which had been giving desultory aid to the Samnites, realized their danger. These ancient Greek colonies had enjoyed independence and prosperity for centuries, but they were never united and, as usual with Greek cities, they frequently indulged in petty wars with each other. During the course of one of these, some cities had appealed to Rome, and one city, Thurii, had been taken into the Roman Federation. The very year after the final defeat of the Samnites, in 289 B.C., Thurii was attacked by its neighbors who were allied with the chief city of Magna Graecia, the old Spartan colony of Tarentum. Having no force of her own, Thurii appealed to Rome, but the Senate, weary of the Samnite Wars, refused help. The consuls, however, refused to accept this senatorial decision as final and called the Assembly, which then authorized the war.

The operations of the Romans soon brought them into conflict with the Tarentines, who invited Pyrrhus, the Greek king of Epirus, a military adventurer, to help them. Pyrrhus agreed, and with a formidable army including elephants, crossed to Italy and defeated the Romans in two battles but lost so many men that he became discouraged (whence our term "Pyrrhic victories"). Unable to get much assistance from the unwarlike Italian Greeks, Pyrrhus left Italy for Sicily, whose cities were appealing for his aid against Carthage. This brought Carthage, a maritime Phoenician city of North Africa, and the greatest power in the western Mediterranean, by chance onto the same side as the Romans, and a treaty was signed which called for Carthaginian financial and naval aid to the Romans. Pyrrhus was now in difficulties. He was at first very successful in Sicily, but the Romans began to capture the Greek cities in Italy one by one. So he decided to return to Italy, and on the way the Carthaginians sank half his ships. Rome meanwhile improved her army, adopted new tactics to withstand the elephants, and was able to defeat Pyrrhus comfortably at the battle of Maleventum ("ill chance"), thereafter called Beneventum ("good chance"). In 275 B.C. Pyrrhus went home to Epirus, intending to return some day, but he was killed by a skillfully (or luckily) aimed tile from a woman's hand while he was besieging a small town in Greece a few years later. Tarentum gave up the struggle in 272, entering the Italian Federation with an obligation to provide ships to Rome when required, and Carthage quietly gobbled up most of Sicily again without too much difficulty.

Consequences of Italian conquests—
Infiltration of Greeks—Beginnings of money economy

Rome was now mistress of the whole of Italy, with a confederation of free cities, especially among the last series of acquisitions, which enjoyed wide contacts with the Mediterranean and Oriental world. From this time on, the influence of Greek culture on the Romans was gradual but persistent. The nation of farmers now had contact with all the riches of Hellenic and Hellenistic culture. Greeks began arriving in Rome, and Roman literature appeared for the first time, a poor imitation of Greek, but at least in the Latin language. Roman primitive religion was gradually transformed, the Greek gods receiving Roman names, and some of the Greek ritual even penetrated into the Roman festivals. But these developments will be discussed in a later chapter.

Economically Rome began for the first time to live in a money economy. This was a considerable hardship to the poorer farmers, who had already suffered enough from the encroachments of the nobles, and had already ceased to grow much grain. Land was no longer the only form of property. Various plebeians who preferred wealth to office began to enter into trade relations with southern Italy. But this was a cumulative process, and became more marked with
the organization of the first Roman province of Sicily after the First Punic War.

THE CONQUEST OF THE MEDITERRANEAN LANDS

Reasons for expansion beyond Italy

A few words are necessary on the reasons for the expansion of Rome beyond Italy, which was to have such momentous effects for Rome and the whole world. Rome was now one of the two great powers in the western Mediterranean, and she was bound by certain treaty obligations to her allies by reason of the fact that she had prevented them from defending themselves and their interests. One of the unpalatable facts that all powerful states, however isolationist in sentiment they may be, have to learn is that it is impossible not to use their power. The southern Italian cities which had trading interests with the rest of the world could not be simply left to their fate and not permitted to defend themselves though they had a defensive alliance with Rome. Moreover, the very existence of Rome as a great power meant that she would be constantly appealed to for protection and arbitration between smaller warring cities. In the next centuries Rome was often anxious to spread no further; she tried to grant self-government to conquered peoples and to the leagues of Greece. But when the leagues quarreled with each other, one of them would always appeal to Rome or to one of the other great powers in the East for assistance. Rome had either to refuse or to allow the other great
power to come too close to her borders for comfort.

Carthage in the third century B.C. was the second great power in the western Mediterranean. A Phoenician colony, she had obtained her independence when Phoenicia fell, first to Assyria and then to Persia. Expanding into the hinterland of North Africa, commanding the North African coast, part of Spain and Sicily, and controlling Corsica and Sardinia, she had a formidable naval and military as well as financial and commercial strength. However, she remained primarily a sea power. Her trade policy was mercantile, that is, she maintained a monopoly on all overseas trade, and taxed even her own colonies and dependencies mercilessly. With the resulting financial resources she could afford to hire huge armies of mercenaries, whom she paid fairly well but whom she allowed to supplement their wages with booty. The Greek cities which also lived by trade objected very strongly to Carthaginian policy, especially in Sicily, which had usually been ruled by Greek tyrants with a more lenient trade and tax policy. It is probable, therefore, that sooner or later these cities would have tried to enlist Rome in an effort to weaken the Carthaginian hold on their natural markets.

The First Punic War

It is unlikely that the Roman Senate fully understood all the implications of Rome's defensive alliances with the southern Italian cities, since we find it refusing to entertain a request for help from some Italian mercenaries besieged by the Carthaginians in Sicily in 265 B.C. It is true that this incident in itself was an insufficient cause for outright war with Carthage, but Rome could not look with equanimity on the presence of Carthaginian troops in Messina, which commanded the strait leading to Italy. The consuls, in any case, went to the Assembly and secured a declaration of war in which the Senate acquiesced. So began the First Punic War, which lasted for more than twenty years and started Rome on the path to world empire.

Carthage proved at first too strong for the Romans, who had no navy of importance and who did not altogether trust the Greek cities they had so recently conquered. So the Romans built a special kind of navy with ships which could grapple with those of the enemy at close quarters, turning what should have been a sea battle into a hand-to-hand fight on the decks of the ships. By these tactics they so disconcerted the Carthaginians that they defeated them in every battle but one that was fought at sea during this war. On the other hand, the Romans had very little idea of navigation and apparently did not take full advantage of the skill and experience of their allies in the confederation. They lost more than a hundred thousand men in storms, a far greater number than they lost in battle, and were forced to modify their system of annual commands to some degree when they found that admirals did not all come from the best families, and in any case could not be trained in a year. Though Rome's allies were extremely restive at the losses, they remained loyal until the Carthaginian mercenaries, depressed at the lack of booty provided by the Roman farmer-soldier-sailors, and not receiving their pay from Carthage regularly, began to fight with diminishing enthusiasm as the war progressed. When the Romans finally defeated these soldiers of fortune and Carthage made peace, ceding Sicily to the Romans, the mercenaries decided to take matters into their own hands by sacking Carthage, where there was certainly enough booty; and the Carthaginians were hard put to it to defend themselves.

The first provinces—Organization and tax system

Rome now was faced with the problem of what to do with Sicily, whether to incorporate it into the confederation, annex it, or make some other arrangements. She finally decided on a combination of all three plans. Some cities were given to a loyal king of Syracuse, a few were incorporated into the confederation, and the remainder were organized as the first Roman province. Since the provincial system was used for the bulk
of her later conquests, it needs a brief description here.

The most important person in the province was the Roman governor, at first holding the rank of praetor; then, when it became the custom to send out magistrates after their year of office at Rome, he was called a propraetor. Other provinces were governed by ex-consuls, called proconsuls. The governor was head of the state and chief judge; he was commander in chief of the Roman army which was permanently stationed there. He held office for only one year unless he had to undertake a prolonged military campaign. In this case his command could also be prolonged. As always with Roman magistrates, he was unpaid. The individual cities in the province were allowed municipal self-government under Roman protection, but they had to pay taxes to Rome. The governor, however, had no staff capable of assessing the taxes and making the collections. This task was therefore handed over to private enterprise in the persons of publicani, tax contractors who bid for the provincial tax contracts in Rome from the censors, who made the assessment for each whole province. Sometimes the provincial city itself bid for its own tax contract, and this was the usual custom in Sicily. If the contract fell to the publicani, they were supposed to make only a profit of 10 per cent on the contract price. The publicani had the support of the governor and his army in case of necessity. If the provincials thought the governor had been extortionate, they could prosecute him in the Roman senatorial courts.

Now this system made considerable demands on the character of the governor and the courts to which he was responsible; and it is a tribute to the still honest senatorial class that complaints in early years were so few. It need only be pointed out here that there was a natural community of interests between the publicani and the governor, which might be made to pay off at the expense of the provincial. And since the courts were composed of men of the same class as the governor, who hoped to govern a province themselves later, it might be difficult to secure a conviction. And even if a conviction were made for the sake of public appearances, the ex-governor was always permitted to live in some other part of the world, comforting his declining years with his ill-gotten gains. Moreover, when it is considered that for only two years in his life, the year following praetorship and the year following the consulate, could he hope for a province to govern, there was an undoubted temptation to make the most of those years. We shall see how this system did indeed tend to ruin the morale of the senatorial class after we have briefly followed the progress of the imperial expansion.

The Second Punic War

Carthage, having with difficulty beaten off her rebellious mercenaries, soon returned to the war again, this time with a new and brilliant leader. Hannibal, one of the great generals of history, came through Spain over the Alps into Italy, defeating every Roman army that was sent against him. But he did not take Rome, even though after the battle of Cannae he came almost up to her gates. He took Capua and ravaged Campania, remaining in Italy for over fifteen years. But he could not gain many allies in Italy, and he was insufficiently supported by reinforcements from Carthage. Ultimately the Second Punic War was decided by a brilliant young Roman general, Scipio Africanus, who with a prolonged command conquered first Spain, and then landed in Africa with a new army. He first defeated the local Carthaginian army, and then defeated the returning Hannibal decisively at the batta of Zama (202 B.C.).

Carthage received severe terms, losing all territory except the capital and surrounding areas. Rome became the protector of the North African coast, and Spain was made into a province.

Interference in Greece—Conquest of Macedonia

The war with Hannibal involved Rome in another war with Macedonia and interfer-
ence in Greece. Even before the Second Punic War the Romans had been forced to intervene on behalf of the traders of Italy to put a stop to piracy on the Adriatic Sea. When the pirates were cleaned up, the Romans naturally had to prevent their reappearance by occupying the coastal area of western Greece (Epirus and Illyria). This annoyed the Macedonian king, who regarded this as his sphere of influence. So when Hannibal appealed to him for help he joined the alliance against Rome. The Romans, however, in spite of their preoccupation with Carthage, were still able to spare enough troops to force Philip V of Macedon to make peace.

Meanwhile the Hellenistic kingdom of Seleucia had been extending its boundaries in Asia under Antiochus III (the Great) and was beginning to look westward. Antiochus entered into a private agreement with Philip of Macedon to partition Asia Minor (the kingdom of Pergamum), the Ionian cities, and possibly Egypt. The important commercial city of Rhodes and the king of Pergamum at once sent envoys to the only power capable of preventing the partition. They arrived at Rome with a request for help in the last year of the Second Punic War; and this time it was the Senate who wanted to go to war with Philip V and Antiochus, while the people hesitated. The Senate quite correctly pointed out that the Romans might be able to defeat Philip before he could get help from his ally, and thus stop the whole scheme before it had started. The people allowed themselves to be persuaded, and Rome, with the assistance, for once, of both the leagues of Greece, defeated Philip decisively. The Roman consul Flamininus, amid scenes of great enthusiasm, solemnly proclaimed freedom for all the Greeks for the first time since the conquests of Alexander.

* See above, page 280.
The gesture, unfortunately, was useless, for the leagues began quarreling again soon afterward, and the Aetolian League invited Antiochus into Greece. The Romans, now freed from the war with Carthage, defeated him, chased him back into Asia, took Asia Minor from him, and added the bulk of the northern part of the old kingdom of Seleucia to the territories of their allies, Pergamum and Rhodes. The Aetolian League surrendered, and Greece was now in Roman hands. But again Rome did not annex, preferring to keep all the existent governments too weak to present a threat to herself, but unfortunately, also too weak to maintain order. Macedonia, which had remained neutral during the war with Antiochus, soon began to intrigue against Rome until she was defeated decisively at the battle of Pydna in 168 B.C. Still she was not annexed, being divided into four "autonomous" republics, with newly devised constitutions.

It is not likely that this Roman policy of making no annexations was dictated by any special concern for Greek liberties; it seems to have been simply a refusal to take the responsibility of maintaining order in these countries as she kept order in Italy. The problem was not so simple for the Roman ruling class as it might seem to us. It was already clear that the Roman armies were not as well disciplined and efficient as they had been in the past. The Romans now fought with considerable superiority in troops and resources at their disposal, but the campaigns were no longer sharp and decisive. What had happened was that both the soldiers and their generals now realized the great profits to be won from the conquests, and too frequently they went as plunderers rather than as disciplined soldiers. The booty gained from the battle of Pydna was enormous, but it had taken several years to defeat the greatly inferior Macedonian army, and even the disunited Greeks could not be overcome in one short campaign. And at the other end of the Roman territory, Spain, inherited from Carthage, was very far from subdued, even though its armies were composed of poorly armed barbarians. If Rome then annexed these territories outright, they would have to be governed; and experience elsewhere showed how difficult it was to keep the governors under proper control by the Senate.

Hardening of Roman imperial policy—Destruction of Corinth and Carthage

After Pydna there is noticeable a definite hardening of the senatorial policy under the influence of men like Cato the Elder, who hated foreigners, and especially Greeks, and no doubt also of the capitalists who had so much to gain from the conquests. The lack of a clear policy combined with exploitation soon drove the Greeks to rebellion again, and at last they were defeated for good in 146 B.C. The chief commercial city of Greece, Corinth, was ruthlessly sacked and Macedonia was annexed and made into a Roman province. In the same year Carthage was razed and the site cursed, even though she had scrupulously respected her treaty obligations, and even aided the Romans with troops and ships. There was no question of trade competition, for Rome was still not interested in commerce; this destruction has always been difficult to account for rationally, though we know that it was the ultrapatriotic party of Cato that urged it tirelessly until it was accepted as a policy. Greece was made into a protectorate under the governor of the new province of Macedonia. At last Rome had accepted responsibility for Greece's defense, but it was a looted and declining country that remained. Spain also was finally pacified a few years later, after barbarous cruelties, and in callous disregard of treaties.

By 133 B.C., therefore, when the Roman Republic entered on the last century of its existence, the whole state was already far on the road to complete demoralization. It is time now to deal more systematically with the effects of the expansion upon the Roman people and their constitution.
EFFECTS OF THE EXPANSION ON ROME

The profits of empire

Rome still remained a city without much industry beyond the supply of goods necessary for the maintenance of the armies and ordinary daily needs of the citizens, and she suffered from an extremely unfavorable visible balance of trade. The exports consisted of some wool, wine, olive oil, and iron implements, and very little more. The Romans were not in the least interested in the carrying trade, never inserted any commercial clauses in their treaties, and allowed other seafaring peoples to attend to all the details of shipping the necessary grain and other imports to Rome. But the profits of empire were so enormous in the form of booty and regular tribute that the city and its more prosperous inhabitants had a handsome surplus, some of which went into new buildings and private estates. By 133 B.C. Rome was beginning to look somewhat like a Greek city; for the contact, first with southern Italy, and then with the Hellenistic world, brought thousands of Greeks, both free and slave, into Rome, where they made themselves useful to their masters in organizing more businesses, especially the retail trade, and introducing Hellenistic financial improvements. At the same time the stolid Roman began to be influenced by Hellenistic culture, which took on a new lease of life in Rome. Greek and Oriental luxuries began to flow into Roman hands, causing old puritans like Cato to bemoan the decadence of the old Roman character and the loss of old Roman manners. Some of the Roman families became educated in the Greek style, and even studied Greek philosophy, especially the circle around the Scipios, who were strong patrons of all forms of Greek culture. More and more interesting things could now be bought for money than in the hard old days. Cato was certainly far from wrong when he viewed this taste for luxuries with alarm; for it did indeed play an important part in the ultimate downfall of his republic.

The rise of the equestrian order

The class that profited most from the expansion was the group of wealthy plebeians, never very many in number, who did not seek office but preferred wealth and the indirect influence that went with it. These men, who belonged to the first class in the Centuriate Assembly and therefore could have been enrolled in the cavalry, were called equites, or knights. These were the men who bid for contracts for public works on which they made profits, but their main source of income was from handling the provincial tax contracts. Most governors could be bribed, for reasons to be discussed shortly, with the result that taxes were stepped up far beyond the permissible rate. When the provincials were unable to pay and faced eviction or worse at the hands of the governor, other capitalists, called negotiatores, offered to lend them the money at high rates of interest, thus ensuring double profits for the equites of Rome. These capitalists soon began to exercise a sinister influence on Roman imperial policy, partly through suborning the senators, and partly through political influence over magistrates and the Assemblies by means of well-placed bribes.

Dispossession of the peasant proprietors—Latifundia

Meanwhile the senators themselves, forbidden by law to handle tax contracts or, indeed, to engage in any other business, could increase their wealth only by capitalizing in some way upon their monopoly of office. They had three methods open to them: winning booty in military campaigns, exploiting the provinces in cooperation with the equites during their terms as governors, and by increasing their landholdings, mostly in Italy. The Punic Wars, while ruinous to the small farmers, had helped the large landholders. Much land had been devastated, especially in southern Italy, and only wealthy men could bring it back into cultivation and make it pay. They were able to buy this land at very low prices, or rent it
at a nominal figure, and thereafter work it profitably with slaves on a plantation basis. The resulting large estates, called latifundia, were mostly given up to sheep, which required the least labor, though olive orchards and vineyards also lent themselves to large-scale cultivation.

The growth of the city proletariat

The social results of the growth of these large estates were catastrophic. The poor farmers who found themselves ousted could only go to Rome, where there was very little employment for them. The Latins and Italians, who were the chief victims, were not permitted, as noncitizens, to bid for the public land even if they had had the money to do so. These allies had won no rights for centuries even though they had loyally supported Rome in all her wars. They began to agitate for Roman citizenship, and the poorer among them went to Rome, where they had an even more precarious existence than the impoverished Roman citizens.

In Rome there was little to do. For those who were skilled there were new public and private buildings to work on, others might be able to pay court to the rich, citizens could sell their votes when the oligarchy needed them. With the influx of slaves, often better educated and more capable than the Roman farmer in the city, wages fell till it was barely possible to live on them. The total result was the creation of a vast proletariat, most of whom had the vote and full rights but felt no responsibility for the state. They were, however, potentially very dangerous to the oligarchy; for many of them came from the rural tribes, and could at any moment break the senatorial political machine in the Tribal Assembly if they were not fed and amused and otherwise bribed. The office seekers began to provide them with great public games and spectacles, and the state began to supply them with grain at very low prices. But all these distractions did not prevent the ex-farmers from agitating for the breaking up of the large estates and for the founding of colonies where they could start life again. For the majority of them there was nothing else; the army still required some property qualification, so that even this last resort was closed to many.

The Gracchan revolution

The Land Law of Tiberius Gracchus—The Constitutional Issue

This was the background of the Gracchan "revolution." There had been several attempts in the years before 133 B.C. to have the land redistributed, often sponsored by members of the Claudian family, which had always cultivated the proletariat for political purposes; but Tiberius Gracchus, the elder of the two reforming brothers, though connected with this family, was undoubtedly sincere himself. In 133 B.C. he was elected tribune, after a campaign in which he promised the redistribution of the land.

When he brought forward a comparatively mild law in the Tribal Assembly, the senatorial party, now generally called the Optimates, played its usual card: a tribune, one of the colleagues of Tiberius, vetoed the bill. Legally Tiberius had no recourse. He could only wait for the next year and hope to have a full board of tribunes elected to support his program. But he himself could not be elected tribune two years in succession. Rather than abandon his program he chose to appeal to the people to depose the recalcitrant tribune. The people backed him, but the deposition was undoubtedly illegal. The law was then declared duly passed.

In ordinary circumstances the Senate could have resisted further by refusing to provide funds to put the law into operation. But, as it happened, it was just at this moment that the last king of Pergamum, in Asia Minor, left his entire kingdom to Rome in his will. Tiberius summoned the Assembly and instructed it to accept the gift on behalf of the people of Rome. This act was not illegal, but for centuries this had been regarded as the task of the Senate and not of the people, and thus was deeply offensive to

5 The Roman citizen retained his vote in the tribe into which he had been born, even when he took up residence permanently in the capital.
that august body, which saw a future in which a determined tribune with the aid of the proletariat could wrest from it all its longcherished privileges. Only one safeguard remained—the tribune could not be re-elected. But Tiberius did not have time in his year of office to put his law into execution, and he chose to stand again for office the second year. On the election day the Pontifex Maximus, a Scipio and an opponent of the Claudian faction, led an armed band of senators and their clients against Tiberius and succeeded in murdering him and three hundred of his followers. Some reaction against this violence followed, and the law of Tiberius was put into effect, showing perhaps that the opposition was rather against rule by the proletariat than against the law itself. And a law seems to have been passed during the next ten years that a tribune could succeed himself in office.

THE TRIBUNATE OF GAIUS GRACCHUS—SENATORIAL RESORT TO DEMAGOGUERY AND VIOLENCE

In 123 B.C., the younger brother of Tiberius, Gaius Gracchus, was elected tribune with a much more comprehensive program than his brother had sponsored. But it was not uniformly popular with the people, thus giving the Optimates a chance to defeat him by strictly legal means. The first item on Gaius’s program was to provide grain for the people below cost price. This was probably not new, and was of no special importance, except that Gaius also made careful administrative arrangements for the import and distribution of this grain. All later tribunes who tried to persuade the people to pass laws included such bills in their program. Gaius also proposed an extensive colonization scheme in the conquered lands, including one on the “cursed” but incomparable site of Carthage. The colonists, however, had to possess some means, as the sites were often, like Carthage, capable of commercial as well as agricultural development. This was therefore not very interesting to the quite penniless proletariat. He proposed a program of public works, especially roads; and he also re-enacted his brother’s land law, although there was by then not much land available for distribution. To gain the support of the equites he made special arrangements for a graduated tax system in the provinces, and he handed over the new rich province of Asia to them alone as taxgatherers; although this system was already substantially in effect elsewhere, the new law gave it official sanction. The whole provincial tax was now let as a unit at Rome, and not to separate groups as had been the earlier custom in Sicily, thus necessitating the formation of large and profitable corporations in Rome. Gaius also substituted equestrian juries for senatorial juries to try cases of corruption in the provinces, a move which involved the recognition of the equites for the first time as a separate order in the state. The new juries were certainly no improvement on the senatorial juries, since both classes were equally engaged in the fleecing of the provincials.

Gaius now stood for re-election and was successful, though far from the top of the poll. As one of his colleagues he had an Optimate sympathizer, one Livius Drusus, who had discovered a new and effective weapon against Gaius. For Gaius wanted to introduce, and may have already introduced in his first term, a bill which he was certain would not be popular—the full enfranchisement of the Italians. This could never please the Roman proletariat, which saw various treasured privileges shared with “foreigners,” especially such minor but personally important matters as good seats at the games and festivals. Drusus proceeded to veto this bill, even though it probably had little chance of passing, and proposed instead a bill which might have passed and would have removed one important grievance of the Italians, namely, discrimination between Italians and citizens when on military service in the matter of discipline. But Drusus went on to show his real intentions by playing upon mass superstition, warning the people of the terrible results that would come from settling a cursed site; and he proposed also that the new colonies should be opened equally to propertyless citizens. There was doubtless no
intention whatever of putting such a proposal into effect, but he was successful in defeating Gaius, who was not elected for the third year.

As his term neared its end the Optimates made obvious preparations to deal with Gaius personally as soon as he had ceased to be sacrosanct. Incidents were numerous, and Gaius surrounded himself with a bodyguard drawn from his own political party, the Populares, as they were called. When one of his followers was tricked into murdering an opponent at the end of the year, the Senate declared martial law and called upon the consul, a ruffian elected for the special purpose, to take steps to defend the state. The consul did so by killing a large number of Populares, and Gracchus himself was either killed or committed suicide. Three thousand more were condemned to death by a senatorial judicial commission without allowing the traditional appeal to the people and without even a trial. The Senate had declared publicly its moral bankruptcy; and though it did not take further steps against such of the Gracchan laws as had passed, it had set the example of violence which was to be followed by senators, demagogues, and generals alike until the republic itself collapsed.

The collapse of the republic

The enrollment of a volunteer professional army—Marius

The instrument which was to destroy the republic was forged by a general who certainly had no idea of the ultimate future consequences of his handiwork, and was directly due to the corruption and rapacity of knights and senators. A young African prince named Jugurtha, who was well acquainted with Rome, decided to use the venality of the governing classes in Rome to carve himself out a large independent kingdom in Africa. Since this meant the deposition of an ally of Rome, he evidently hoped that the judicious placing of bribes would persuade the Senate to wink at his activities. Unfortunately for him, an eloquent tribune succeeded in keeping the issue before the people, or Jugurtha might well have been successful. Several armies were sent against him, but all met with unexplained difficulties, and Jugurtha openly proclaimed that everything in Rome was for sale. Though our only account of the war is from a source unsympathetic to the Senate, there can be little doubt that the earlier generals were bribed; at last Metellus, a member of the ruling clique, himself went out and made some progress in the war. But even he was unable to finish it, thus giving the opportunity to one of his subordinates, C. Marius, to suggest that his superior, too, was lagging for private reasons, and to insist that he himself should be given the command as consul.

Marius was a man of the people, a rugged soldier, no doubt; and with the ability to win popular support in Rome, where his friends prepared the ground for his consulship. When all was ready he demanded a leave from his superior officer to go to Rome and stand for the consulship. This ultimately had to be granted, and Marius was duly elected. But the Senate, which, by custom, distributed the commands, refused to appoint him to Africa. The Assembly, working smoothly under his supporters, passed a special law giving it to him, and the Senate had to acquiesce. It was now that Marius adopted the military policy that led to the downfall of the Republic. He abolished the property qualifications for military service altogether, and proceeded to recruit his army from the proletariat. This army was now made up of volunteers, men who looked to their general for payment of their wages, as well as for booty, and for pensions when they had completed their service.

It is hard to overestimate the importance of this innovation. Property qualifications had been consistently lowered for centuries, and this was only the final logical step; but the soldier-citizens now recruited were those for whom the Roman Republic meant nothing.
but a hostile oligarchy and "bread and circuses" on occasion. They had no loyalty to it, and only contempt and dislike for the ruling oligarchy which made such a good thing out of it. Now they could recover their self-respect in the army; it was not, however, the army of the Roman Republic but the army of the general. One thing only was necessary as qualification for this general. He must be successful, capable of delivering pay, booty, and pensions—or the equivalent of pensions, land. This last could only be secured at the expense of the republic, by political activity.

It was easy for a general with an army at his back to cow the Senate and the people once he was in command; but he had first to be appointed to this command. And he had to be sure that there was no rival general of equal power with him. So it became necessary for the prospective general to maintain a political machine which would ensure him his first and subsequent commands, and would see to it that his rivals did not surpass him. And in order that there might be suitable commands available, the conquests must be expanded, with or without causes of war.

It was clear that the Assembly was now a more suitable instrument than the Senate for this purpose. If the Senate was favorable, well and good; but if not, the Gracchi had shown where the real power in the state lay. And the army belonged to the proletarian class. The power of the Senate rested on the acquiescence of the people and its willingness to abide by the constitution; the new army, being an extracostitutional power, was hampered by no constitutional inhibitions, and needed to have no compunction about intimidating a few hundred senators and their clients. From this time onward the government of Rome was to be in the hands of the tribunes and the Assembly, aided by such funds as were necessary for bribery, and by the threat of the return of the army commander to enforce his will on any opponents of his regime. While the commander was away the Senate was still able to function, and even assert itself on occasion.

But the oligarchy knew well enough that the power in the state had gone elsewhere; its only hope was to be able to persuade a successful general to lend his support to it, rather than to the people. But the Senate was never able again to function as an independent, responsible body, without the support of some general; it could be a nuisance to the general who wanted to act constitutionally, but it could no longer overrule him if he decided to act in opposition to it.

Doubtless none of these consequences were foreseen at the time that the army was organized on a volunteer basis, but they followed inevitably. The republic was doomed.

Marius himself with his new army made considerable headway in his campaigns against Jugurtha. But the latter had gained an important ally in his father-in-law, another African ruler, and it was not until one of Marius’s own officers, Sulla, persuaded the father-in-law to betray Jugurtha that the war could be finished. Marius flew into a jealous rage against Sulla; but since the people gave Marius credit for the victory and since he, not Sulla, celebrated the triumph over Jugurtha, the consul remained the most popular man in Rome. At this moment Rome was suddenly threatened by an invasion of German barbarians from the north. Marius stood illegally for re-election as consul, and was successful, receiving the supreme command against the Germans. It took him several years to recruit and reorganize a larger and more effective army, and finally defeat the enemy, and during this time his supporters in the Assembly continued to elect him every year as consul. But when the war was over, he needed lands for his veterans and he wanted to be elected consul for the sixth time. He had to obtain some political support, for he was no longer an indispensable man; the Senate was anxious to put an end to his illegal consulships, and the proletariat was not interested in his program of lands for veterans.

The only party possible for him was the Populares, led at this time by a pair of unscrupulous demagogues whose price was
high. By grain doles and wholesale bribery he was duly elected consul for the sixth time, but his supporters proceeded to rule Rome by violence and open murder. When the Senate called upon him to suppress them and declared martial law, he decided to disown the demagogues, who were themselves murdered by supporters of the oligarchy. Marius, his usefulness to the Senate over, and naturally deserted by the populace, retired to exile in Africa, where he plotted how to obtain revenge as well as how to achieve the seventh consulship promised him by a soothsayer.

DISCONTENT OF THE ITALIANS—THE SOCIAL WAR

Meanwhile the Italians, who had fought loyally against the Germanic invaders, were subjected to new indignities and discriminations. Italian soldiers in the armies of Marius had not been permitted to take part in the colonization schemes put through for them by the Assembly; and civilian Italians found that some of the colonization, as usual, was at their expense. For years they had been trying to overcome this discrimination by the use of the vote, since they were allowed to vote if they came to Rome to live. But the Senate and people were united in their desire to prevent this, and in 95 B.C. a drastic law was passed expelling all Italian noncitizens from Rome. From this moment the Italians began to plot a rebellion, actual secession from Rome, and the setting up of a new confederacy independent of Rome.

In 92 B.C. new evidence of the debasement of justice, one of the few remaining reasons for Roman pride and Italian loyalty, gave further ammunition to those agitators who claimed that Rome had outlived its usefulness. A certain Rutillus, who had refused to allow the equites to exploit his province of Asia, was himself accused of extortion and bribery and convicted by the equestrian jury as an example to governors to keep their hands off the capitalists. On conviction he went into exile in the province that he was supposed to have exploited, which supported him in comfort for the rest of his days.

In 91 B.C. the last effort was made to satisfy the Italians by a tribune named Drusus the Younger, who brought in a bill for their enfranchisement. Knowing that it had no chance of passing by itself, he included it in an omnibus bill which also contained provisions for cheap grain and new colonies for the proletariat. The Senate claimed that he had ignored the auspices, that earthquakes and other portents showed divine displeasure, and declared the legislation invalid. The people refused to re-elect him, and the next tribune proposed to prosecute him and all his friends. Drusus was murdered, and the Italians, their last hope of succeeding by peaceful means gone, rose in revolt.

With armies the equal of any the Romans could command in Italy, they won several victories, and set up a new state called Italia. But the Romans were no longer exclusively dependent upon the Italians. They recalled Marius and sent for veterans from the provinces who knew nothing of the grievances of the Italians. With these, and under the generalship of Marius and Sulla, his rival and lieutenant from African days, they began to make headway. But progress was slow, and the Romans at last decided to take some action on the grievances in the hope of dividing the Italian ranks. They passed a law giving citizenship to all Italians who had not revolted, and followed it up by another law offering citizenship to anyone whose home was in Italy and who would lay down his arms within a stipulated period. This move was successful, for the Italians had never been fully united in their desire to leave Rome altogether. Indeed, the upper class among the Italians had sometimes profited from Roman rule, and had from the beginning opposed Italia. The Roman armies were now able to make much better progress and at last, with the death of the Italian leader, the revolt was suppressed. But, as usual, the oligarchy had a card up its sleeve. The new citizens were all enrolled in eight tribes out of the thirty-five, and, though they gained some privileges, they were unable to make their influence felt in the Assembly.
THE RIVALRY BETWEEN MARIUS AND SULLA—
THE TRIUMPH OF SULLA

Meanwhile the opportunity for a most important command in the East had arisen. While the Romans were busy elsewhere, Mithridates VI, king of Pontus in Asia Minor, had just massacred all Italians in Asia within his dominions, and he had enlarged his kingdom to the point where it was dangerous to Rome. Both Marius, although he was sixty-seven years old, and Sulla wanted the command. But Sulla, the more successful general in the Italian war, had been elected consul and appointed by the Senate to the command before Marius was able to summon enough political strength to dispute it.

At this point a tribune Sulpicius, evidently a real statesman but condemned by the violence of his times to stoop to violent and demagogic methods, wanted to give the full franchise to the Italians, and enroll them in all the tribes. But the only political support he could gain was from Marius and the worst group of the Populares, including slaves, whom the old man was willing to recruit for his army. When the bill was brought forward in the Assembly, there was a riot, and Sulla was caught in Rome, many miles away from his army, the veterans of the recent Italian war. Sulla was forced to hide, of all places in the house of Marius, until he could escape to join his troops. The bill for the full enfranchisement of the Italians passed, under the threat of the soldiers of Marius, and the latter was then given the command against Mithridates by the Assembly. Sulla, however, escaped to his army.

It was at this point that the domination of the generals became evident to all. Sulla had been appointed to the command by the Senate, Marius by the Assembly. Each had an army in Italy, but Sulla's army was greatly superior to the rabble of Marius—if he could hold its loyalty to himself. The Assembly requested Sulla to turn over his legions to Marius, but they decided to stick to their general, and he marched on Rome. Marius fled, Sulpicius was murdered, and Sulla hastily passed a number of laws taking power away from the Tribal Assembly and giving it to the older Comitia centuriata, which was still, at least to some extent, in the hands of the propertied classes. But he could not stay long in Rome, since he was anxious to go on to his command; he contented himself, therefore, with extracting from the new consul an oath to keep the laws he had just forced through, and departed for Asia.

Needless to say, as soon as he had left, his laws were rescinded; and some courageous or troublemaking tribune again brought forward a law for the full enfranchisement of the Italians. The result was another riot, and once more Marius was recalled. With a band of hastily recruited slaves he entered Rome and started a bloody massacre of senatorial supporters. He was at last elected for his seventh consulship, but died after one month in office. The Assembly formally deposed Sulla from his command, and an army was recruited to take it over from him. This army, however, after meeting Sulla in Greece, decided that he was more likely to provide it with booty, and most of its members deserted to him.

As the menace of Sulla's return grew nearer after a series of successful campaigns against Mithridates, the Populares, knowing what awaited them, tried to raise revolt elsewhere than in Italy. Supporters in Spain, Sicily, and Africa, together with still unreconciled groups in southern Italy, took up arms and prepared to resist him. But Sulla made a solemn declaration that he would support full and equal citizenship for all Italians, thus splitting the opposition in Italy; and with some severe fighting he was able to subdue the other revolts, though Spain continued for a long time to resist successfully under the moderate Marian, Sertorius. After a brief but bloody battle Sulla captured Rome, and instituted another set of proscriptions against the popular leaders. Then he made a determined effort to revise the constitution, and save, if possible, the republic.

THE LAST EFFORT AT REFORM—THE
CONSTITUTION OF SULLA

Sulla was an accomplished general, and one with a remarkable faculty for keeping the loyalty of his troops. He belonged to the
senatorial class, though he did not owe his position to his family connections; he had had to make his own way to the top by hard work and undoubted military talent. He was now to make the last attempt to restore the republic to a workable condition, and he showed a considerable insight into the problems that had to be solved if it was to survive. He could unquestionably have made himself sole ruler and founded the empire then and there; but he was now fairly well advanced in years, and, even if he had so desired, he could not himself have undertaken the enormous work which later Augustus performed in a long reign of forty-five years. It may be added also that the republic had not as yet fully demonstrated its incapacity, and public opinion had not yet been prepared in a people as conservative as the Roman for any form of government other than that under which they had grown to greatness and power. Having then decided on reform rather than abolition, Sulla put a very capable mind to work on the real problems. The military had been overriding the civilian elements in the government, and the rule by the Roman proletariat, with power but without responsibility, had been shown to be both incompetent and corrupt. Yet the Senate, the only alternative body, had degenerated into a narrow, self-seeking oligarchy, and needed a thorough overhauling if it were to be a fit alternative to rule by the proletariat.

In order to reform the constitution Sulla first had himself appointed dictator for an unlimited period; since both consuls were dead and the appointment was carried out with due formality, there was nothing unconstitutional about it beyond the unlimited period of office. Then he had a series of laws passed (the Cornelian Laws) which were directed to the main problems. He had decided that the most hopeful approach was the reform of the Senate and the partial abolition of the powers of the incompetent and unrepresentative assemblies. He would also restrict prolonged army commands and strictly enforce the laws.

He increased the membership of the Senate to six hundred, and prevented it from being a self-perpetuating body by taking away from the censors all power of choosing its members. The new senators chosen by Sulla were mostly from the equites and upper-class men who had held no previous office. Instead of being replenished at the discretion of the censors, the Senate was now brought up to its full establishment by the addition of quaestors—the lowest rank in the cursus honorum. Since quaestors were elected, the Senate thus became virtually an elected body. Twenty were elected each year, none below the age of thirty. Minimum age limits were also set for the praetorship and consulship (thirty-nine and forty-two, respectively), thus ensuring that praetors and consuls had several years' service in the Senate before being elected to their offices. The number of praetors was increased to eight. Each praetor and each consul, after his year of office, proceeded at once to take command of one of the ten provinces, No consul could be elected a second time to his office without an interval of ten years, thus spacing his provincial commands in such a way that he could not gain much personal loyalty from his troops. The Senate through these reforms became more nearly a parliament than anything the Romans had previously known.

In order to give civil powers back to those magistrates who had been losing ground to the tribunes in the last centuries, Sulla disqualified tribunes from holding any other office afterward, thus ensuring that men of ambition would not stand for the tribunate. He probably also took away from the tribunes any power of introducing legislation to the Assembly, and it is fairly certain that the Senate had to agree to the legislation before it was presented. Finally he forbade re-election to the tribunate except after an interval of ten years.

In order to handle military adventurers, he relied upon a redefinition of the law of treason. Under this, no governor of a province was permitted to leave it or march beyond its borders with an army; he might not start a war on his own initiative; and he could not invade the territory of a client king without permission from Rome. No governor could
stay in his province more than thirty days after the arrival of his successor. To enforce this redefinition he reformed the law courts—a permanent reform—abolishing appeal to the people, and putting them entirely in the hands of senatorial members under the presidency of a praetor.

It was obviously a well-thought-out reform, provided that the Romans had continued to be a law-abiding people, provided that anyone had seriously intended to keep to the new rules, and provided that no enemy of Rome appeared who could not be handled by annual generals of the old type—necessarily without much military experience but capable of commanding the loyalty of professional troops with guaranteed pensions. What was needed was the conception of a state, and state responsibility for pensions and pay. Then the army could have provided an honorable career properly rewarded by the state, with all booty appropriated by the state and not by the generals. The reform of the Senate was on the right lines, and its method of recruitment endured even under the empire. There was no further trouble from consuls and praetors except twice when they also had armies in Italy; and there was no trouble from ordinary provincial governors, but only from special prolonged commands given in defiance of the constitution by the Senate or the people. In short, the military dangers necessitated prolonged commands, and prolonged commands, in the absence of loyalty to the state, continued to mean political power for the commanders. The new Senate, even though it may have been a better body, less restricted and less narrowly oligarchic than before, did not command respect from the soldiers; its authority as a parliament, in view of its history and the circumstances of the time, was accepted by no one.

Sulla, having put this new constitution on its feet, then tried to settle his veterans on the land, mostly in Italy, at the expense of rebellious Italians, and founded at least fourteen new colonies. But most of the soldiers recruited after the Marian military reform were no longer even farmers; many of them drifted back to Rome, selling their new land to the eager land speculators in Rome, while others, faced with armed resistance from the recently dispossessed, gave up the attempt to take over their allotments and drifted back too. Sulla, however, did not live to see what happened to his reforms. He gave up his dictatorship, retired to the country, and died soon afterward.

THE BREAKDOWN OF THE SULLAN CONSTITUTION—THE FIRST TRIMVIRATE

The sequel to the establishment of the Sullan Constitution showed that no important body in Rome really wished to give it a fair trial, and the problems connected with the taking over and managing of foreign lands required professional military commanders to deal with them. Sulla had not been long in his grave when it seemed necessary to the Senate to appoint one of his generals, a popular young soldier named Pompey, to a long-term command to subdue some persistent rebels in Spain; and while he was away a slave revolt broke out in Italy which again needed attention from a tried general. This was Crassus, a capable soldier who had become rich through buying up property confiscated from Sulla’s victims, and who was to become better known later as a capitalist and banker than as a general. Neither Pompey nor Crassus had gone through the usual offices of state before receiving their special commands, thus infringing already the Sullan Constitution. When the slave war in Italy was at an end, these two men, though jealous of each other, combined to force the Senate, which had, as noted, now become a virtual legislature, to pass bills to legalize their joint election as consuls. As part of the program on which they ran for election they promised to restore power to the tribunes and to give the full legislative power back to the Assembly. This promise they fulfilled, the Senate in 70 B.C. ceasing to be a legislature after a bare ten years in this capacity.

Having restored power to the tribunes and the people, Pompey proceeded to take steps to control them by political manipulation. For many years afterward he always had sufficient friends among them to ensure
the passing of legislation favorable to himself. The opportunity soon arose for another command. The pirates in the Mediterranean had long been a serious menace to the Roman grain supply, and ordinary commands by proconsuls seemed to be ineffective. Pompey's friends therefore introduced legislation in the Assembly proposing that he should be given a three-year command of a very special nature, requiring governors in the provinces to assist him, and giving him an official staff of fifteen men of praetorian rank. The Senate objected strongly, but was now powerless to prevent him from receiving the command, and he was duly appointed.

He completed the work with his usual prompt efficiency, and within three months he was ready for another command. The obliging and grateful populace, now assured of its grain supply, voted him a proconsular command in the East, superseding the senatorial general Lucullus, who, after several successful campaigns, had bogged down because of a mutiny by his troops, who found him too niggardly with the distribution of his booty. Pompey soon remedied this situation, and proceeded to reorganize the East, a task his predecessor had already substantially done. There could now be no doubt in anyone's mind that Pompey was the supreme arbiter of the Roman world. His troops were secured to him by his open-handedness; and when at last he returned to Rome, there would be no one to contest his supremacy.

At Rome his rivals did their best to undermine him, and at times his agents found themselves hard put to it to defend his interests against the wholesale bribery of Crassus, who was trying desperately to find some alternative candidate for power. The notorious Catiline, known to generations of Latin students for the speeches made against him by Cicero, was one of Crassus' protégés who overreached himself and was deserted by his backer. Julius Caesar, a popular demagogue, seemed a more hopeful candidate, for he was obviously a man of considerable talents and resolution, and his poverty gave Crassus a chance to put him in his debt by lending him the money for sumptuous games, which, of course, endeared him to the voters. Crassus' support of Caesar later paid off handsomely, as we shall see. But meanwhile, as long as Pompey was successful in the East and his political agents looked after his interests adequately, everyone in Rome had to bear in mind his eventual return and take it into account in their political calculations. During these years Cicero, a parvenu lawyer, was able to have himself elected consul as a compromise choice, and chance gave him the opportunity to "save the state" by suppressing the ill-planned conspiracy of Catiline. Cicero's piece of self-assertion seems to have annoyed the supporters of Pompey, who would have preferred that their hero had been recalled to restore order in Rome. As it was, when Pompey finally did return there was no crisis in Rome. Everything was quiet and peaceful, and there was no legitimate excuse available for illegally bringing his army to Rome.

But Pompey, if he chose not to force his way into power by the use of his loyal troops, was in need of some political support. The leader of the Senate was a die-hard republican named Cato (called the Younger to distinguish him from a similarly die-hard ancestor, pages 324–326), and he was supported by the disgruntled general Lucullus, who had been superseded in his Eastern command by Pompey. When Pompey, therefore, disbanded his army at the coast and proceeded peaceably to Rome, these senators thought they would teach him a lesson, and refuse to grant pensions to his veterans, while at the same time they would also refuse to give legal sanction to his administrative settlements in the East—this in spite of the fact that Pompey had sent an enormous quantity of booty to the Senate for the use of the treasury.

This incredible piece of stupidity and shortsightedness on the part of the senators was the death warrant for the republic. Pompey, a man of great administrative and military capacity but apparently not politically ambitious, could at this moment have been won over to the senatorial party, and
Crassus and Caesar would have been impotent. As it was, Pompey was forced to look to these two for political support, and he had much to offer in exchange for it. His land-hungry veterans would naturally follow him in any venture which he demanded from them, in spite of the fact that they had been formally disbanded.

Nevertheless the price of Caesar and Crassus was high, though Pompey seems not to have realized at the time what would be the personal cost to himself. The money of Crassus had partially undermined Pompey's previously unchallenged popularity with the voters, and the banker's support was pledged to his protégé Julius Caesar, whose year it would ordinarily be for the consulship. But there was a legal obstacle to Caesar's election. He had just returned from his first command of importance in Spain, and he desired a triumph for his work there. But, if he were to have his triumph, then legally he could not enter Rome and stand for the consulship. Reasonably enough, he asked the Senate for permission to stand for the consulship by proxy. Cato filibustered the proposal out, and permission was refused. Caesar abandoned his triumph, which had social rather than political value, and was duly elected consul with the support of Crassus. The Senate, still rushing on blindly to its destruction after the manner of a Greek tragedy but well aware of Caesar's military ambitions and believing that it still wielded the powers of ancient days, gratuitously insulted him by allotting him as his proconsular command, to which he was entitled after his year as consul, the sinecure of control of the lands and forests of Italy. This drove Caesar into the arms of the only man who could get him what he wanted.

Pompey needed ratification of his acts in the East and he needed lands for his veterans, Caesar needed a command to satisfy his newly discovered military genius, Crassus needed a pay-off from Caesar whom he had financed so faithfully while waiting for this moment. All these needs were taken care of by an unofficial and extralegal agreement known as the First Triumvirate (60 B.C.). When Caesar proposed that the Senate should satisfy Pompey's demands and it refused, Pompey offered the consul the use of a few of his veterans. The Senate house was surrounded and of course the Senate had to give way. When Caesar asked for a five-year proconsular command in Gaul, Pompey, not fearing any danger from such a recent and militarily unknown rival, supported him. Crassus was entirely happy at the distribution of land to Pompey's veterans, as he had been quietly buying up all the good land in Italy which he could now sell to the state at substantial profit to himself; while for good measure a tribune was permitted to propose that there should be a one-third reduction in the price of all tax contracts for the year (the tribune was paid off in shares of Crassus' corporation). Finally, Caesar and Pompey accepted a gift of six thousand talents from King Ptolemy of Egypt in return for a senatorial resolution that he should be allowed to keep his throne! But Caesar also had what he wanted most, a five-year command in Cisalpine Gaul where there were a few local disturbances. Later Transalpine Gaul was added to his command when a more real danger appeared from invading northern tribes. The year ended, and Caesar went on his epoch-making command, while Pompey and Crassus stayed in Italy.

CIVIL WAR—THE DICTATORSHIP OF CAESAR

The story of the next ten years is the story of the gradual supplanting of Pompey by Caesar. In the early years of the triumvirate Pompey was still supreme, but his veterans were aging, while Caesar was building up a strong army of disciplined legionaries loyal to himself. Crassus was eliminated from the triumvirate when he insisted on being appointed to a military command against the Parthians in the East and was killed in a disastrous defeat at Carrhae (53 B.C.). For most of the time Pompey held no official position, though his services were occasionally called upon to suppress riots in Rome and to organize the grain supply. He was in command of troops in Spain and elsewhere, and the navy was under his control, but he did not rule these
forces personally, preferring to stay in the vicinity of Rome. When reports of Caesar’s successes reached Rome, for a long time he took no action to sustain his earlier supremacy over all rivals. And the Senate, realizing that it was now in greater danger from Caesar than from Pompey, proceeded to woo the older man away from his partner. In 51 B.C. it tried for the last time to make use of constitutional republican safeguards against an aspiring general, and this ill-timed maneuver precipitated the civil war which destroyed its independence forever.

Caesar spent nearly ten years campaigning in Gaul. The Gauls or Celts were by no means a barbarian people, but had developed a distinctive civilization of their own, though they retained their primitive tribal governments. They were, however, seriously disunited, and it had been Caesar’s task to take advantage of this disunity to offset his comparatively small army. He never had to fight with many Gauls at the same time; and though, even so, he was usually outnumbered, he always emerged successful in the end. There was very little excuse for the whole campaign, since the Gauls were not troubling the Romans; but once Caesar had intervened, the disunity of the various groups made possible the exercise of the customary Roman imperial policy of divide and rule. By slow degrees Caesar was thus able to conquer the whole country. In the process he built up a very strong body of legionaries, personally devoted to himself, though several of his senior officers later deserted him as soon as they had the opportunity, and a number of them joined in his murder. His administration of the province and his military acumen were clearly of a very high order, although our only account was written by himself.

At this crisis of the Roman Republic in 50–49 B.C., one thing stands out clearly. Caesar, in addition to being a slightly younger man than his rival Pompey, had obviously a greater resolution; he had tasted supreme military power for ten years and was at the height of his glory and self-confidence. He had no intention of allowing himself to be dictated to by the constitution, by his rival, or by the Senate, though he would probably have preferred to avoid civil war, especially when he had little strength beside his own legions in Gaul. He was not sure how strong Pompey and the Senate would actually prove; for on paper Pompey had the Spanish and African legions, a legendary reputation in the East which could be converted into troops, and undisputed command of the seas. Clearly it was better to behave legally if possible.

But the Senate seemed determined to drive Caesar to illegal action, evidently with the intention of summoning Pompey to take drastic legal steps against him. Pompey, who could have taken supreme power for himself earlier, had refrained from doing so. He might therefore as a last resort be relied upon to defend the republic against Caesar, who might well be intending to destroy it. There were many charges that could be made against Caesar. There were undoubted illegalities in the conduct of the war in Gaul. He had extended his authority without permission, he had massacred prisoners contrary to accepted rules of war, and if these real crimes were not enough, many others could be manufactured, quite sufficient to ensure his exile and punishment should he ever permit himself to be tried by Roman courts. Caesar, of course, was well aware of what was planned against him; hence his insistence that he must continue to keep his command or another one which would carry with it immunity from prosecution. But the Senate had no intention of permitting him such immunity; on the contrary, before he even returned to Italy, it declared martial law and called upon Pompey to defend the republic, thus forcing Caesar’s hand. Caesar, hearing the news, is said to have cried, “Alea iacta est!” (“The die is cast!”) and crossed the river Rubicon, the boundary of Italy, with his army, thus putting himself at once legally in the wrong, as no general was permitted to enter Italy with an army.

Pompey did his best. But when he summoned troops to his standard, too few responded. His active legions were far away, and his reputation was no longer what it had been. The bulk of the senators and the
aristocrats in general were with him; but in the campaign that followed they were a hindrance rather than a help, forcing him into battle before he was ready. With a properly planned campaign he should have won, but he was never allowed to plan his strategy; the navy, which was entirely on his side, was used to poor advantage. Leaving Italy for Greece, he tempted the impetuous Caesar to follow him, but then allowed the rebel to escape from the consequences of his rashness. In the end Pompey was defeated at the battle of Pharsalia (48 B.C.) and escaped to Egypt, where he was murdered. Caesar followed him there and was nearly brought to an untimely end by a sudden uprising of the Egyptians under the last of the Ptolemies. Surviving this misadventure by the fortunate arrival of reinforcements, he defeated and killed Ptolemy and spent the winter with his widow, a young beauty named Cleopatra. The following year he set out again in pursuit of the last supporters of Pompey. Though some of the campaigns were strenuous and hard fought, Caesar was uniformly successful, and was able to return to Rome at the end of the year 46 B.C. and turn his attention to affairs of state.

ESTIMATE OF THE WORK OF JULIUS CAESAR—ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS AND POLITICAL INEPTITUDE

Caesar spent the last two years of his life in trying to create order in the empire of which he was now undisputed ruler. Unquestionably he had a very considerable grasp of the administrative problems involved in this task, and his administration, as far as it went, was enlightened. He extended Roman citizenship to many provincials and he stopped the tax-farming system, making the governors responsible only to himself. He put the municipalities of Italy on a uniform basis. He planned and put into execution an extensive program of public works, draining of marshes, and building of roads; and he planned an immense program of colonization in the provinces. He reformed the calendar, putting into use the Egyptian solar calendar of 365 1/4 days. He took measures to diminish the population of Rome, and he instituted a public works program for the remainder, which was greatly superior to the privately sponsored building programs of his predecessors in that it was better planned and less haphazard. He undertook an important reform in the free municipalities of the empire in the hope of ensuring a regular supply of officials to undertake public duties, he substituted a graduated land tax in some of the provinces instead of the much-abused irregular collections. He was able to carry out these reforms because, for the first time, there was a real public authority in Rome in the person of himself. Rome was, in his day, on the verge of becoming, for the first time, a true state.

It was a good beginning, and a very considerable body of achievement for the short time that he held absolute power. There is no doubt that Caesar was a military man of immense energy and outstanding attainments, and as an administrator he was equal to any in Roman history, though perhaps not surpassing his great-nephew and successor. He was, of course, also one of the best military writers of all times, and a master of the Latin tongue. It is, however, doubtful if he deserves the enormous reputation that he has acquired in the centuries since his time, as a kind of universal genius. If he had survived longer than two years after his final return to Rome, we would be better able to come to an informed judgment. It was to the interest of Augustus, his great-nephew and adopted son, to exalt the reputation of his "martyred" predecessor, as we shall see; and it may well be that this propaganda and the use of the name Caesar by all the imperial rulers of Rome have tended to obscure the real defects in the vision as well as in the character of the great dictator.

For Caesar, above all, lacked political insight. The visible and tangible problems of Rome and the empire were clear to him but not the more subtle political realities of which the founder of a stable regime must take account. What was so vitally important in his time was the regularization of his own position, and about this he seems to have had no ideas whatever. He had himself
elected dictator for life, but, unlike Sulla, he made no attempt to reform the constitution, and then abdicate his emergency power. He accepted every honorific title offered him by a cowed and obsequious Senate, and even suggested more. He did not know whether to make himself king—a few trial balloons were sent up on this notion—or stay in his present position. He allowed no one to approach him in power, and was content to hand over administrative tasks to his military subordinates. It would seem that the only thought he had on the matter of his position was that he should become something like a Hellenistic king, with divine attributes, ruling by divine right.

This, in a city which had known self-government for nearly five centuries and had risen to be mistress of the world by her own efforts, and especially by the activities of her noble families, a city, moreover, as conservative and enamored of tradition as Rome, was certain to arouse all classes against him. The Senate was “reformed” by the introduction of recently enfranchised provincials and by some of his own veteran soldiers, down to the rank of centurion. This “reformation” may have improved the quality of the Senate, but it is far more likely that Caesar instituted it in order to satisfy his own sardonic sense of humor, since he pointedly gave the Senate nothing to do. But why waste such an institution? Though it had fallen on evil days it still counted for something, and a statesman, like Caesar’s successor, Augustus, was able to put it to work. The result of Caesar’s tactlessness, which could easily have been foreseen, was that the senators were furious, even though they had to conceal their feelings, and the Senate became the focal point for the conspiracy which cost Caesar his life. Sulla had been much more careful. Though he knew as well as anyone else how feeble the Senate had become, he tried to make use of it, striving to improve its quality by increasing the number of officeholders and making entry into the Senate mandatory for officeholders. Caesar, of course, realized that the time had come for one-man rule, and that a reform of the Sullan variety was no longer feasible. But a dicta-

torship, based on military power alone, could never have been permanent. And it was the height of folly to plan a new campaign in Parthia, on which he was to take his intended heir, leaving a city full of enemies behind him. As it happened, the conspirators against his life seized the opportunity to murder him before he left.

Caesar always prided himself on his “clemency,” and it is true that he did not proscribe his enemies as did Sulla and Caesar’s own successors. He could be ruthless on occasion, while at other times even his enemies admitted his personal charm. There can, however, be little doubt that Caesar did regard himself as in some degree superhuman, not subject to human failings, and altogether removed from the ordinary run of men. He trusted his destiny, and in all his career never bothered to take elementary precautions. Probably it was for this reason that he did not care to trouble himself with the subtle arts of the statesman. His treatment of his enemies must have wounded them in their dignity; there are different ways of forgiving one’s enemies, and even Caesar’s most determined apologists have never credited him with tact. When he returned from his victories over Roman citizens in Spain he celebrated a triumph, and forced the Senate to vote him a thanksgiving. Several of his most trusted officers deserted him, even when he was victorious, and the conspiracy against his life included such soldiers as Decimus Brutus and Cassius, who had served through long campaigns with him. It would seem, then, that in the end it was his inhuman or superhuman arrogance that was responsible for his death, and prevented him from being the founder of the empire.

On the Ides of March in 44 B.C. Caesar was murdered in the Senate house as he sat listening to petitions. Marcus Brutus, his longtime friend, and reputed illegitimate son, led the conspiracy, and, according to Suetonius, Caesar gave up the struggle with the famous words, “Et tu Brute!” when he saw Brutus among his enemies. The conspirators had no program, and it was an act of folly to murder the man who had become
the state without any idea of what was to replace him; but on personal grounds the act was entirely understandable. It can hardly be denied that Caesar in a sense invited his own murder. If, like Augustus, he had taken the Senate into partnership, or even spared its dignity by pretending to do so, he would probably never have been murdered. Something new had to be thought out, some way of ensuring continuity between the dying past and the future not yet born. In this Caesar failed, and it was left to the political genius and the unsurpassed tact of Augustus to achieve this result in the forty-five years of absolute power that he enjoyed. Certainly Augustus profited by Caesar’s mistakes and untimely end. But nothing in Julius Caesar’s career or in the ideas that he revealed during his few years of supreme power suggests that he could have founded an empire that would last for five hundred years, even if he had had twenty more years to live and had returned victorious from Parthia with the eagles lost by Crassus at Carrhae.

Suggestions for further reading

There is one excellent modern source book which gives many pertinent extracts from the primary sources, including inscriptions. This is N. Lewis and M. Reinhold, Roman Civilization (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951). Aside from these readings, the Loeb Classical Library translations may be used, and the student is urged to try at least some of the letters and speeches of Cicero, and the political work of Polybius. Though Livy as a historian has to be treated with caution, the student should read at least a few of the earlier books of this writer. If he does so, it might be interesting to examine the way in which a renaissance Italian historian and statesman interpreted Livy, by looking into Niccolo Machiavelli’s comments on Livy, recently published in a cheap edition: N. Machiavelli, The Prince and the Discourses (New York: Carlton House, n.d.). Plutarch’s biographies of such Romans as Marcus Cato, Cato the Younger, Crassus, Marius, Sulla, Cicero, Caesar, Pompey, and Marcus Brutus may also be consulted.

In Roman constitutional history there is one outstanding summary which is a masterpiece of compression and clarity. It is, however, difficult to obtain except in good libraries, since it was published in South Africa. This is J. K. Wylie, Roman Constitutional History from the Earliest Times to the Death of Justinian (Cape Town, South Africa: African Bookman, 1948). If this is not available, perhaps the best book is F. F. Abbott, History and Description of Roman Political Institutions (Boston: E. Ginn & Co., 1911). Very clear, but sometimes suppressing some of the difficulties, is L. Homo, Roman Political Institutions (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1929).

This reading list does not, as a rule, recommend textbooks for further study. But an exception should be made for a really outstanding piece of clear exposition which will serve admirably to fill out some of the gaps in the text. This is R. Geer, Classical Civilization (2nd ed.; New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950), Vol. 2, Rome.

For the last century of the Roman Republic there is available an excellent study which deals with all the factors that entered into the decline and final fall of the Republic—F. R. Cowell, Cicero and the Roman Republic (New York: Chanticleer Press, 1948). This book is graced also with a number of colored charts which well repay study, once the technique has been mastered. A clear and interesting essay on the fall of the Republic is also to be found in F. D. Marsh, Modern Problems in the Ancient World (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1943). A pioneer study, sometimes turbulent and ill-tempered, highly destructive of earlier romantic traditions about the great men of the last age of the Republic and the early Empire, but solidly based in the most recent scholarship, is R. Syme, The Roman Revolution (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1939). No serious student of the Roman Republic, however, can afford to neglect this work, even though he is cautioned to treat it with some reserve. A well-balanced and judicious account which may serve to complete the study of this period is F. D. Marsh, The Foundation of the Roman Empire (2nd ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1927).
The Civil War and the establishment of one-man rule

Caesar had been successfully murdered, but the murderers had no idea how they were to replace him. There is no evidence that any of them had grasped the magnitude of the difficulties with which the republic had to contend if it was to survive. Only Cicero, a lifelong supporter of constitutional government, showed any real signs of leadership in the crisis. But even Cicero, who was not himself one of the actual conspirators against Caesar, had no positive policy for dealing with it. He seems to have hoped vaguely for an end to the military dictators and a restoration of the republic through a new concord between the warring classes. Though he gave leadership to the senators, his practical policy was one of opportunism, trying to play one leader against the other. He failed to appreciate the real abilities of Caesar’s adopted heir, and this underestimation cost him any chance he might have had of success, and ultimately his life.

The murder of Julius Caesar was not greeted with any enthusiasm by the proletariat, who had always regarded Caesar as their champion, and who naturally appreciated his openhandedness. But their sullenness presented no immediate danger to the conspirators. The danger was from the Caesarian armies led by Mark Antony the consul, and by Lepidus who held the title of master of the horse, second in command to Caesar as dictator. Another important army in northern Italy was commanded by Decimus Brutus, one of the conspirators. If these commanders could hold the loyalty of their troops, a new civil war was inevitable. Lepidus succeeded in escaping from Rome and joining his army, but Antony was trapped at the time of the murder, being forced to barricade himself in his own house. In spite of the realization by some of the conspirators that Antony ought to have been murdered with Caesar, they failed to secure him. Instead, they negotiated with him, and he at once came to terms, hoping for time to come to his aid. But no sooner had an agreement been patched up when an opportunity presented itself to Antony for getting rid of them. On the occasion of Caesar’s funeral he made an impassioned speech which was followed by a riot, and the conspirators suddenly found Rome too
hot to hold them. They fled across the Adriatic, and began to recruit armies in Greece and the Near East among those who had been supporters of Pompey and were willing enough to put an end to the Caesarian rule. Pompey’s son Sextus, who was in Spain, also proceeded to raise an army and a formidable fleet. But Antony was left with the priceless advantage of possession of the capital and control of the machinery of government. Lepidus went off to Spain on a lucrative command.

Cicero and the Senate were for the moment helpless. It was not therefore surprising that they gave a warm welcome to a new candidate for power who showed promise of becoming the only possible champion against Antony. Gaius Octavianus, Caesar’s great-nephew, had been adopted as the dictator’s personal heir by the terms of his will, and the will had been proclaimed and accepted by Senate and people alike. Antony had disregarded many of its terms, and embezzled for his own use part of the money. He had also hesitated to fulfill the bequests of lands to Caesar’s veterans until the situation was easier. It was natural that Antony had paid little attention to his chief’s adoption of a young and unknown man of eighteen, although the consul had hoped to be made Caesar’s heir himself. But Octavian was no ordinary young man. Caesar had paid sporadic attention to him and provided for his education. But he too could have had little idea of his qualities, having had little opportunity for personal contact with him. Octavian was known to be sickly and he had had little military experience. His father’s family was an obscure one, and if he had not been adopted by Caesar, he would have been regarded as an Italian rather than a true Roman. At the time of Caesar’s death he had been undergoing training in preparation for accompanying the dictator on his Parthian campaign.

But Octavian in fact possessed certain personal assets of his own which were in most respects wholly contrary to those of Caesar, and would probably have failed to rouse the latter’s admiration if he had known of them. Octavian had political gifts of the first order, a natural tact and understanding of people, an appreciation of their strengths and weaknesses, including his own, and he seems to have been entirely free from the arrogance that was the undoing of his great-uncle. At the same time he had great personal courage, and at this period in his career he could be as ruthless as any of his opponents, with a farsightedness and flexibility in action denied to them.

With an astonishing resolution and grasp of the realities of the situation and of the possible sources for his own power Octavian proceeded to capitalize on his only real asset, the act of adoption in Caesar’s will which enabled him to add the names of Caesar to his own. Realizing that Antony had lost the loyalty of some of Caesar’s troops by not carrying out his bequests, Octavian proclaimed that he personally would honor them, and indeed he paid some of them out of his own pocket in the name of Caesar. The gamble succeeded. On his arrival in Italy from Greece, where he had been in training, several legions joined him. In due course others deserted to him, even from Antony. Cicero offered him the support of the Senate. Antony, occupied with preparations for the campaign in northern Italy against Decimus Brutus, treated him with disdain, but did not take effective measures against him, and ultimately left for the north. This was Octavian’s chance. Cicero delivered a series of orations against Antony (the Philippics, so called from their resemblance to the famous speeches delivered by Demosthenes against Philip of Macedon). Antony was declared a public enemy, and the consuls of the year, with the aid of Octavian and his legions, took the field against him. The consuls were killed in the fighting, but Octavian was left in possession of the field. Antony escaped across the Alps, where he defeated Decimus Brutus and recuperated from his losses.

The Senate under Cicero’s leadership then repeated the mistake it had made on Pompey’s return from the East. Octavian was slighted and refused the consulship on
The Civil War and establishment of one-man rule
Second Triumvirate—Proscriptions and death of Cicero B.C. 43
Battle of Philippi—Death of Brutus and Cassius 42
Antony goes to the East 42
Defeat and death of Sextus Pompeius 37
Renewal of trumvirate for five years 37
Battle of Actium 31
Death of Antony and Cleopatra 30

The work of Augustus
Augustus given proconsular imperium and tribunicia potestas for life 23
Augustus becomes Pontifex Maximus on death of Lepidus 12
Danube frontier established for empire 15
Rhine frontier accepted after defeat of Varus A.D. 9
Death of Augustus 14

The successors of Augustus
Reign of Tiberius 14–37
Reign of Caligula (Gaius) 37–41
Reign of Claudius 41–54
Reign of Nero 54–68
Year of the Four Emperors 69
Vespasian and the Flavian dynasty 69–96
Nerva chosen emperor by Senate 96
The “Good Emperors”—Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius 96–180

technical grounds, while the conspirators, who had now prepared a formidable force in the East, were honored with official commands. But these forces were not in Italy, where Octavian still had his loyal and victorious legions, which he did not hesitate to use against the Senate. Rebuffed by the Senate, Octavian decided to make advances to Antony and to Lepidus, who still had troops under his command which could not be ignored. The three met in northern Italy, and on the first day of the year 42 B.C. began a triumvirate which, unlike the first private agreement of 60 B.C., was proclaimed the official government of Rome.

The first act of the Triumvirate was the proscription of three hundred senators and two thousand knights. While the private vengeance of the triumvirs was sated against the murderers of Caesar and their own political enemies, the chief purpose of the proscriptions seems to have been to secure money for the necessary campaign against Marcus Brutus and Cassius. Estates of the proscribed were confiscated and the proceeds used to recruit an army. Even this was insufficient, and the triumvirs resorted to arbitrary requisitions and forced loans. But at last the army was ready, and in the brief campaign of Philippi, Brutus and Cassius were defeated and committed suicide. The credit lay mostly with Antony, for Octavian showed poor generalship and was intermittently confined to his bed by sickness.
There was now only one formidable enemy left, Sextus Pompeius, who had a fleet of ships active in the Mediterranean with which he was able to threaten and at times cut off the grain supply of Rome. Antony had allied himself with him before the Triumvirate, and afterward tried to use him against Octavian; and even Octavian several times was forced into an agreement with him. It was not until 37 B.C. that Octavian, by then in sole command in Italy, was able to dispose of this naval menace and restore Italy to normal life.

After Philippi (42 B.C.), Antony, still the leading partner in the Triumvirate, was given the chief command in the East to undertake the Parthian campaign projected by Caesar, while Octavian had to be content with Spain, and Lepidus with Africa. Control in Italy was divided between Antony and Octavian. But Octavian did not find it necessary to go personally to Spain and was actually present for several years in Italy, while Antony left for the East. His absence from Rome proved to be the older man’s undoing.

It will never be known whether it was the infatuation of Antony for Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, that destroyed them both, or whether Antony had a coherent and potentially successful plan for an Eastern Roman Empire with its capital at Alexandria, in the most prosperous area of the empire. But it is certain that his absence from Italy during the crucial period of his rivalry with Octavian presented the latter with an opportunity for the display of his unique political gifts, which at this moment in history were more necessary than any possible military talents. Octavian had at least one first-rate general in Agrippa, but it was not Agrippa’s talents that won Caesar’s nephew the empire. His gradual ascendancy over his rival was due to his building of an effective political party loyal to himself, and to an unexcelled use of propaganda to which Antony had laid himself open by his own policy.

Cleopatra had become queen of Egypt in her own right when her brother (and hus-

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1 Soon after the death of this brother, she had married another younger brother, but after a short time had him murdered.
tony intended one day to conquer Rome itself with the aid of Egyptian resources, and to make Cleopatra queen of the Roman Empire with himself as king, Italy would be dethroned from her proud position as the seat of empire.

It should be remembered that Egypt possessed vast resources, but its troops were now Roman. Antony could not rely upon foreign or Oriental troops alone in any trial of strength with Octavian. It was essential to him to keep both officers and men loyal to himself, or they would desert to the enemy, and not all his superior generalship could help him against Octavian if he had no troops to support it.

Evidently Octavian saw that this was his supreme chance. He did not dare to challenge Antony for many years, during which he was patiently building up his own strength in Italy. Though Antony was suspicious, he also could no longer afford to quarrel with his rival, and the Triumvirate was always formally renewed until the end of 33 B.C.

Antony then made his bid for power in Rome, but now it was too late. Octavian had the support of the people, inflamed against Antony by the publication of his acts in the East, colored by the young triumvir’s own interpretation of them. And though perhaps even a majority of the Senate still supported Antony, they soon began to desert to what was clearly to be the winning side. The conclusion was by this time inevitable. Cleopatra dared not let Antony venture too far from Egypt lest he make terms with Octavian which would be insupportable for her. On the other hand, if she accompanied Antony in a military attack on Octavian, then the Roman troops would believe the propaganda of Octavian that Antony had fallen victim to the wiles of an Oriental princess. The naval battle of Actium, therefore, in 31 B.C., such as it was, was a foregone conclusion. The bulk of Antony’s forces deserted him, and shortly afterward both he and Cleopatra committed suicide.

Octavian was now in all but name the supreme ruler of the Roman world. That he had matured greatly and that his early ruthlessness had been softened can already be seen by his immediate acts. There were no more proscriptions. Where the triumvirs had mercilessly expropriated land in Italy for Caesar’s veterans, Octavian now gave his veterans land outside Italy. The administrative arrangements of Antony in the East he disturbed as little as possible, though Egypt was annexed as his personal property. A subservient but perhaps also grateful Senate, purged of some of its less reliable members, a few years later voted Octavian the title of Augustus, by which he will henceforth be known in this book. One-man rule had begun, and the new ruler was faced with the enormous task of making it permanent, in spite of the five-hundred-year tradition which had been too strong for all previous aspirants.

The problems facing Augustus and his solutions

The scope of the problems

The magnitude and scope of the problems facing the young ruler (he had been born in 63 B.C. and was thus thirty-two at the time of the battle of Actium) can hardly be overestimated. The old Roman Republic had clearly failed to live up to the responsibilities of empire, and had collapsed from its own weaknesses. Yet some form of government must replace it which was capable of enduring. And this government, whatever it might be, must also be able to keep under control the vast territories which had fallen to Roman arms during the previous three centuries. Rome had a responsibility to them also. It was impossible simply to decree their freedom and independence, even if the idea had ever occurred to Augustus. Their earlier forms of government had been destroyed beyond recall and could not be restored by a mere imperial fiat. In the last century of the republic the governors of the provinces had been political appointees of the Senate, anxious only to make their fortunes and return to Rome. By corruption and extortion they had advanced themselves; more-
over, they were in league with the equestrian class of Rome which had milked the provinces for the sake of its own financial interests. The provinces had suffered abominably from this regular regime, and in many cases had been driven into bankruptcy by the more recent civil wars and irregular extortions by would-be rulers of Rome. There was little encouragement to honesty or efficiency, qualities rarely found in the governors. Was it possible for Augustus to reward these qualities and so improve the provincial system that they would become the rule rather than the exception?

We have seen that the enrollment of volunteer armies by Marius had led directly to the fall of the republic, since the troops relied upon their generals for pay and pensions, and their loyalty was given to these generals rather than to Rome. Moreover the various armies had swollen to such an extent in the civil wars that there were probably at least half a million men under arms at the time of the battle of Actium. Augustus had to consider what was the real purpose of an army in the Roman Empire, where the various legions should be stationed, how they were to occupy themselves during peacetime, how they could be persuaded to be loyal to Rome rather than to generals; and yet at the same time the armies must continue to have those professional military virtues, the absence of which in the earlier armies had compelled Marius to introduce long-term volunteer service.

Behind the great political and administrative problems was the ever-present social and economic background. Rome was not a great manufacturing city, not even a trading center of importance comparable to its size and population. There were far too many people in Rome unable to make a living and requiring public support. Yet these men were citizens and possessed the right to vote. The votes of this urban proletariat had always been for sale to the highest bidder in the last century of the republic. Could they be made into a self-respecting citizenry by any means available to a capable administrator? How could the numerous slaves live side by side with a free citizenry without depressing wages? In spite of the fertility of much of the soil, Italy had never really recovered from the depredations of Hannibal nearly two centuries earlier. The small estates had been swallowed by senators and capitalists and made into large specialized agricultural units worked usually by slaves under overseers. Moreover, the small landholders who survived suffered from chronic insecurity of tenure, their properties often being sequestered for the benefit of veterans. And throughout the length and breadth of Italy, especially near Rome, rich men built their villas, too often neglecting the land itself and its cultivation.

The cleavage between rich and poor had undermined the old Roman traditional virtues, and the search for ever-increasing luxury among the upper classes had replaced the stern frugality of the earlier republic. Family life in the upper classes had almost disappeared, with divorce to be had for the asking and marriage used for political and financial advancement. The birth rate among the free Romans had naturally been declining. Was it possible to arrest this process, at least the decay of public morality, even if the ancient virtues had disappeared forever?

These were a few of the problems with which Augustus had to contend. If he did not solve them all, at least he perceived their existence, and made an attempt to solve them. And the organization of an empire which endured for many centuries, the most enduring indeed that the Western world has yet seen, is almost entirely his work. The essential administrative structure was built by him, though the conquests themselves were bequeathed to him by the Roman conquerors of the republic.

THE WORK OF AUGUSTUS

The establishment of a legitimate government

The most difficult problem of all was undoubtedly the reorganization of the government: and it was the most fundamental. Julius Caesar’s inability to make any con-
Constructive contribution to this problem marks his inferiority to his successor as a statesman. Not even a provincial reorganization, the establishment of an equitable system of taxation, nor the enlargement of the conception of Roman citizenship, all of which were in the mind of Julius and well within his capacity, would have been of any permanent value without a governmental system which was capable of controlling the empire and which was at the same time acceptable to the people. Any dictatorship or arbitrary military rule can be cut short by assassination, as Caesar's own career had shown. It was a measure of the genius of Augustus that he made his government both acceptable and legitimate. Though he did not solve permanently the method of succession, this may only be because, as will be discussed later, the problem may well be insoluble within the framework of absolute monarchy.

According to the tradition believed by the Romans, Rome had existed as a city for more than seven hundred years. For almost five hundred it had been free and self-governing. Though occasionally defeated in individual battles, it had never lost a war and had never been compelled to sign a peace with an undefeated enemy. For five hundred years magistrates had been elected and the noblest of the citizens had sat in the Senate and given their advice to the magistrates. It was a body of incomparable prestige, even though in the last century, often through its own incompetence, it had been forced to bow to arbitrary military men with armies at their backs. And the people of Rome had accepted its supremacy and shared in the glories won by their arms under its leadership. Though Rome was not a state, the Romans were truly a people, and Roman citizenship was prized by everyone who possessed it; and those who did not possess it valued it and sought to win it for themselves. During all these years the name of rex or king had been detested. The Romans no less than the Greeks regarded it as an office fit only for barbarians.

Yet Augustus realized that he must be king in fact, even though he did not hold the title. It would never have occurred to him—not indeed would it have been possible—to have ruled the empire with its many different peoples of varying degrees of culture, through any kind of representative government. The empire was too vast and heterogeneous for any such experiment. But if the government had been returned to Senate and people as under the republic, the same weaknesses would have led to the same breakdown of government. Only a monarch could hope to hold it together.

Augustus solved his dilemma by one of the great creative compromises of history, a species of legal fiction which bridged the gulf between the fallen republic and the monarchy which had to come. In time the republic was forgotten, the monarchy supplanted it, and the necessity for the fiction disappeared. But in the competent hands of Augustus, who understood it, the reasons for it, and the behavior required of him to maintain it, the fiction worked. Though
thinking Romans of course knew that he was the sole ruler and that his power was ultimately based on the army and the treasury, nevertheless to the mass of the people the republic still survived. They felt at home in the new Roman state. The magistrates were still elected by the same procedure as before, though no candidate would even have run for office without the approval of Augustus; the Senate and the Assemblies still met for debate and legislation; and though there was now a Princeps, or first citizen, a title and office unknown to the republic, he was not obtrusive, he scrupulously respected all the old republican forms, and his public and private life were beyond reproach in the best tradition of the early days of the Roman Republic.

Augustus confined the offices held by himself personally to the minimum required for his possession of the reality of power. He had a permanent proconsular military power (proconsulare imperium) conferred upon him, giving him supreme command of the army; he was granted a permanent civil power as previously exercised by the tribunes (tribunicia potestas), which gave him the power to introduce legislation and veto it. He became chief priest (Pontifex Maximus), giving him authority in religious matters; but, characteristically, he did not assume this office until the death of Lepidus, who had been ousted from his position as triumvir in 36 B.C. and was given for his loss of power by appointment to this honored position. Occasionally Augustus allowed himself to be elected consul in the early years of his rule, feeling that he needed the civil as well as the military power inherent in this office. But consuls, praetors, aediles, and even tribunes were elected as before to perform the specific duties of these offices under the guidance of the Princeps.

Augustus tried his best to maintain the dignity of the Senate. He encouraged it to give him advice, and he presided over it personally as Princeps Senatus. The judicial functions of the Senate were maintained and even increased under his rule. By setting aside certain provinces to be ruled by ex-

magistrates under the direct control of the Senate and not of himself, he made it worth while moving through the full sequence of offices (cursus honorum) to the exalted position of consul. The Senate also had its own treasury. As under the Constitution of Sulla, the quaestors on being elected automatically became senators, though under Augustus their duties lay primarily in the provinces. From the equestrian order he recruited a body of public officials, paid out of the imperial treasury (fiscus) but with the same duties as taxgatherers and tax assessors that they had performed in their own interests under the republic. Under later emperors these men became part of the imperial civil service.

When it was proposed that he should be worshiped as a god (his adoptive father had already been deified), he refused the honor, but permitted his Genius to be worshiped instead. According to old Roman belief every man had a guiding Genius, and the Genius of the head of a family guided the fortunes of that family. In allowing a cult to be set up to his Genius, Augustus was therefore directing Roman worship toward the state of which he was now the controlling Genius. Later this indeed became the worship of the living emperor as god, a state cult to which all had to subscribe on pain of treason. But Augustus in his lifetime never claimed to be a god except in the Hellenistic world, which had for centuries been accustomed to a divine monarchy.

The greatest difficulty inherent in his position as sole ruler, the difficulty of the succession, Augustus never solved. There were only a few possibilities open to him. Since the Roman ruler had to be a supremely capable man, the vagaries of heredity made this natural and traditional method of succession dangerous for the welfare of the state. Augustus himself had no sons, and his one daughter Julia was the scandal of Rome, from which Augustus was ultimately forced to banish her. He had grandsons and several relatives by marriage, but all died before him. He also had two stepsons, both extremely competent men, the younger of
Mausoleum dedicated to Gaius and Julius Caesar, grandsons of Augustus who died before him, to the great grief of the ruler, who had hoped that his position would be inherited by members of his family (St. Rémy, France).

whom was accidentally killed while on campaign in Germany. The surviving stepson, Tiberius, did indeed succeed him, but not by virtue of his own relationship to the Princeps. Tiberius was forced first to divorce his wife and marry the profligate Julia. Later Augustus adopted him as his son, and confirmed on him the two great powers held by himself as Princeps. So on his death there was no doubt as to who had been designated as his successor; and Tiberius, already possessing proconsular and tribunician power, could have mastered any possible rival with ease.

But the principle of adoption or heredity was not yet established. Theoretically the Senate was entitled to elect the ruler; but the right was an empty one, never independently exercised during the empire except when the Senate was called upon for an election by its military masters. So for the first two dynasties the succession was hereditary within the Julian and Flavian families. The so-called “Good Emperors,” Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 96-180), were all childless except the last-named, and adopted the best men they could find in the empire as their successors. Marcus, however, chose his son, who happened to be incompetent and a wastrel, and under him the empire declined precipitately. It always remained true that the ultimate power to choose an emperor rested with the army. But there was not only one army. The legions stationed in different provinces favored their own particular leaders, and as early as the death of Nero in A.D. 68 these legions joined battle with each other on behalf of their respective choices.

If, therefore, an emperor chose his successor and granted him military power while he was still alive, then this successor would probably accede to the throne without difficulty as long as he had taken the precaution to promise suitable bonuses to the army. When, however, an emperor died before nominating his successor and without having transferred to anyone a part of his power, a free-for-all usually resulted, and the most powerful army leader won the throne. If the hereditary principle had been strictly observed, as in modern monarchies, there would have been no doubt in anyone’s mind as to who was the rightful successor. But in that case the risk of having an incompetent ruler, and the chance of the death of an emperor without sons, would have to be run. Even under a strict hereditary monarchy, the possibility of a civil war over the succession is not avoided altogether, but it is greatly minimized. On the whole, therefore, it would seem that the hesitancy of Augustus to face the problem of succession was inevitable in the circumstances of his time, and the combination of adoption and heredity was as good a choice as any available to him.
The reorganization of the provinces

The reorganization of the provinces was a further example of Augustus' efficient use of such opportunities as existed. He saw at once that it was not necessary to keep armies in every province, as had been the custom in the later years of the republic. Those that had long been pacified and had no frontiers to be defended against barbarians needed no more than enough troops to ensure local discipline. These provinces (see the map for details) he entrusted to the Senate, which was given the power of appointing governors and administering the tax monies. These provinces, as under the republic, were reserved for ex-magistrates, and constituted a reward for those who had progressed through the cursus honorum. In addition the arrangement gave the Senate some real work to do and served to maintain its prestige as a body. And though Augustus exercised a final supervisory jurisdiction over these provinces, he left them largely to themselves. Those provinces, however, which needed legions of trained troops, and whose frontiers had continually to be defended against enemies, were under his direct control, which he exercised though the appointment of salaried legates, personally responsible to him, who could hold their positions as long as they proved efficient. This arrangement gave them the opportunity to gain a real knowledge of their provinces and to win the loyalty of their troops, but in later times it proved a serious danger to the state in the event of a disputed succession to the throne. Egypt, as the richest province, the primary source of the grain supply for Rome and Italy, was given a special status in keeping with its history as well as its present importance. As in the past, the ruler was divine and the owner of all the land. Augustus, therefore, was a Pharaoh in Egypt, with all the privileges of this office, although he did not perform his duties as king-god there himself, but entrusted them to a prefect of equestrian rank, responsible to himself. The country, however, was farmed as an imperial estate rather than as a province with a certain degree of self-government, and its revenues accrued directly to the ruler. No one of senatorial rank was permitted within the territory without the permission of the Princeps. Finally, a number of kingdoms on the outskirts of the empire were permitted self-government.

Triumphal arch of Augustus, set up near the present St. Rémy de Provence, in southern France.
under their kings, who became clients or vassals of Rome.

The provinces of the Roman Empire had always been made up of more or less self-governing municipalities, city-states on the Greek model, together with a number of other communities whose position had been defined by treaty, usually without full self-government. Augustus encouraged as much local administration as was compatible with the imperial relationship, thus saving the burden of direct administration. The corrupt tax system of the republican period was not abolished by Augustus, probably for lack of any alternative method of collection. His successors, especially Claudius and Hadrian, developed a regular civil service which gradually supplanted the tax companies. Meanwhile the abuses of the system were checked through more efficient supervision by the Princeps, even in the senatorial provinces. Penalties for extortion were severe, and even senatorial governors were far too much under control to be able to lend the efficient aid to the tax farmers that had been the custom under the republic in its last years. And the nucleus of the later civil service was formed with the inclusion of treasury officials in the staff of the governors.

The entire system of provinces was reorganized thoroughly by Augustus, with new boundaries, chosen for the sake of efficient administration and defense (see map). In the process a number of minor conquests had to be undertaken to round out many territories which had been acquired haphazardly by the republic according to the needs of the moment. Augustus always hoped to make the northern boundary the Elbe rather than the Rhine, as shorter and more easily defensible. Such a boundary, however, would have necessitated the conquest of a large part of Germany. Though progress with this conquest was made in the earlier years of his reign, his armies suffered a severe defeat toward the end of his life, and the conquest was abandoned. The Rhine became the northwestern frontier, while Augustus maintained the Danube in the East, refusing to move into Dacia to the north of the Danube (the modern Rumania) on the grounds that it was indefensible. This policy was maintained until Trajan a.d. 98-117, who not only took Dacia but engaged in extensive wars in the East, the spoils of which had to be abandoned by his successors, as Augustus had predicted. The empire was held together by the great Roman roads, which were constantly extended throughout the imperial period and over which the imperial post traveled, bringing news to the emperor and his instructions in return.

The provincial system proved to be the most enduring of the reforms of Augustus. Whatever happened at Rome, the life of the provinces went on much as usual, under good rulers and bad alike. Only when the burden of taxation was heavily increased and prosperity declined in the third century a.d. with the continuous civil and foreign wars was the strength of the provinces slowly sapped. But while the Roman peace (Pax Romana) gave them a respite from war they had never previously enjoyed, their prosperity increased and with it the ability to pay the taxes which ensured the continuance of that rule.

Two bronze plates of a military diploma granting citizenship to honorably discharged soldiers and their wives. (courtesy the Metropolitan Museum of Art)
Augustus himself, as has been said, was an Italian rather than a Roman, and always regarded Italy as the center of his dominions, the homeland with special privileges, with Rome as first the capital of Italy and then of the empire. The inhabitants of Rome, however, were no longer exempt from all taxation as had been the case under the republic for all Roman citizens. But their taxes always remained lighter than those of the provinces. Every native freeborn Italian was a Roman citizen with all the privileges attached to the position. The provincials could achieve Roman citizenship, but Augustus regarded it as a privilege to be earned and not a right to which they were entitled by birth. This policy was gradually abandoned by his successors until in A.D. 212 citizenship was granted to every free inhabitant of the empire.

The reform of the army

By virtue of his proconsular power the Princeps was naturally commander in chief of the army. Augustus, drawing upon the experience of his predecessors and especially of his adoptive father, laid down a permanent basis for recruitment and for the composition of the army, which survived in its essentials throughout the whole empire. The regular troops or legionsaries were drawn from Italians and the most Romanized provincials, who received citizenship on enlistment if they did not already possess it. They served for twenty years, receiving a regular salary and a pension on retirement. In addition to these were auxiliary troops who received citizenship only on retirement. These were also salaried men, but drawn from the less Romanized provinces, and serving primarily within these provinces. Their officers also were originally drawn from the same territory, but later, after it had been shown that these troops were capable of rebellion in the interests of their own provinces, Italian officers were substituted. The armies were by no means always engaged in active warfare, although the legions might at any time be transferred to a danger spot on a distant frontier. During the first two centuries, however, the general practice was for the legionaries to live in camps behind permanent fortifications which were built by themselves. There were strategic roads to be built, ditches and moats to be dug, walls to be erected, and many of the troops necessarily became skilled artisans as well as soldiers, not unlike the modern corps of Army Engineers. These men, holding Roman citizenship, speaking Latin, imbued with Roman tradition, enjoying even on the frontiers the comforts of Roman civilization, such as warm baths, naturally mingled with the peoples among whom they were stationed, and served therefore as an important instrument for the Romanization of the empire. The army, however, in its own estimation, was rarely well enough paid in proportion to its value to the state. Its chronic dissatisfaction and its sporadic insistence on bonuses gave ambitious generals the opportunity to make lavish promises in exchange for support of their candidacies to the throne.

In Italy itself no regular troops were stationed except the Praetorian Guard, which in the early centuries was drawn from Italians alone. This was a body of about nine thousand men under its own prefect and living in special barracks just outside the city of Rome. Being the only body of troops with easy access to the capital, it was often instrumental in the elevation of an emperor, and its prefect at all times wielded an authority far greater than could be justified by his actual position. As early as the reign of Tiberius the praetorian prefect, in the absence of the Princeps himself on the island of Capri, was the virtual ruler of Rome, with actual power quite sufficient to dominate the Senate. Nevertheless at this time the power of the Princeps was hardly to be challenged if he cared to exercise it, and a letter of Tiberius to the Senate with a concealed threat was enough to ensure the fall of the ambitious prefect.

Social and economic policy

Rome had never been an important industrial center, and even as a commercial
city its usefulness was impaired by its lack of a good harbor. The muddy Tiber had constantly to be dredged to keep the harbor of Ostia at its mouth open for commerce at all. Puteoli, where Paul landed on his journey to Rome, became the regular seaport for Roman trade, and developed into a great city, largely peopled by Greeks and other foreigners, who remained the leaders in maritime commerce as under the republic. But in spite of the absence of large-scale industry, there were innumerable small manufacturing shops in Rome and throughout Italy. For centuries Italy was the chief manufacturer for the Western world, though its products were far surpassed in quality by those of Alexandria and the East. Nevertheless, the Italian balance of trade was always unfavorable, if Rome is included with Italy, since Rome remained a parasite on the economy.

Augustus did not take any active interest in the economy as such. Except for Egypt, industry in the Roman Empire was overwhelmingly in private hands. There was no state industry, nor monopolies of the kind that later developed in the Eastern Roman Empire of Constantinople. But indirectly the establishment of the Pax Romana, with its network of roads and safe transportation, in-
creased prosperity for all classes throughout the empire. And Augustus used the tax money that came from the provinces to pay for an enormous program of public works, chiefly temples and other public buildings, gardens, and baths; and in this the majority of those emperors who had the money available and were not too heavily engaged in unproductive warfare followed his example. These public works provided a market for numerous products made by small industry throughout the empire, and direct work for the large army of unemployed in Rome itself. The provincial municipalities also engaged in similar programs on their account, and it became a matter of civic pride for wealthy citizens to improve their cities with gifts of parks, gardens, temples, and other public buildings.

But social and political conditions throughout the empire and especially in Rome itself militated against any real and lasting prosperity for all. In a world without machines, hand labor must be efficient indeed to produce any surplus for luxuries over and above the ordinary daily needs. Agriculture, the backbone of the imperial economy, improved in efficiency, it is true, with the introduction of rotation of crops and the use of leguminous plants. But it was severely hampered by many disabilities, especially absentee ownership; and it had to feed an enormous urban population. The real life of the Roman Empire, as life had been in the Hellenistic world, was concentrated in the cities, and every encouragement was given by the authorities to create ever more and more municipalities. The inhab-

A house at Pompeii as it appears today, partly restored. This house belonged to the Vetii family. (COURTESY ITALIAN STATE TOURIST OFFICE)
itants of the cities never produced by their inefficient industrial techniques goods proportionate to the large number of people engaged in their production, and these goods in any case were luxuries rather than essentials. Moreover, there were large numbers of people who did no productive work at all, but lived on the proceeds of farms and small industrial establishments owned but not worked by them. In addition there was a growing army of public servants engaged in important work but not contributing directly to production. The reason why it was possible for so many men and women to be idle from the point of view of production was that there was also a large army of slaves, manumitted slaves, and freemen, all of whom consumed far less than they produced. Most slaves in the imperial period could look forward to being manumitted (freed) by their masters as a reward for good service, and in many cases they could earn enough to buy their own freedom. On ordinary farms the slave was also to some degree protected as a valuable property and at least fed enough to live on. But slaves engaged in mining and contract labor were in a different category. They cost less to buy than domestic and agricultural slaves, whose skills were appreciated. The work of these men and women was supervised by overseers who drove them mercilessly to obtain the maximum work from them. In the last days of the republic enormous numbers of slaves were captured and sold (Caesar sold 53,000 as the result of one campaign alone, the proceeds from slave sales forming an important item in his estate), but with the decline of foreign wars this source gradually became less productive. More slaves at most periods of the empire were probably obtained by natural increase (the child of slave parents being a slave himself) than by capture.

Nevertheless, in the time of Augustus a large part of the population of Rome and indeed of the whole empire was made up of slaves who, as always, served to depress the wages of free labor, which had to compete with them. But at the same time the low wage rate for free workers also served to promote the manumission of slaves, since a slaveowner not only had to buy and support his slave throughout his lifetime, but also by custom had to allow him to keep some of his earnings for himself. On the other hand, a free laborer could be laid off work in slack times and left to fend for himself, and his employer had to make no initial investment in him. Economic causes therefore worked in the direction of free labor rather than slave, and slaves became fewer. Furthermore, with the decline of prosperity in the upper slaveholding classes, fewer men could keep the armies of domestic slaves retained for prestige purposes in the early days of the empire. But, however socially desirable the freeing of slaves may seem to us, it should be emphasized that it was only because free labor was so cheap that slavery declined, and that emancipation did not result in any economic improvement in the lot of the ex-slave or of the laborer in general.

For social and political reasons Augustus attempted to place some restrictions on the manumission of slaves, as part of his general effort to make Roman citizenship a privilege and prevent the Orientalizing of the Roman populace. But it seems to have been impossible to halt the natural process by imperial decree.

For the poor of the city of Rome, who were grossly underemployed, he found no remedy beyond his public works programs and a continuance of the republican practice of providing them with cheap or free food. In addition he, and more particularly the later emperors, provided lavish public spectacles to keep them amused. This program was called by the later satirist Juvenal "bread and circuses." Since the elections were arranged and laws were now really made indirectly by the Princeps, the Roman people, so powerful in the last century of the republic when their votes were necessary for the election of magistrates and army officers, lost their power. Riots could be dangerous on occasion, but they could now be easily suppressed. On the other hand, all the rulers
were anxious to keep the people as contented as possible, and tried to provide for their needs. Augustus, recognizing the irresponsibility that went with their unemployment and dependence on imperial handouts, tried to give them some status in the community and in their own eyes by incorporating them formally into an order, the plebeian as distinct from the equestrian and senatorial orders. But since they had no real duties in addition to their privileges, it is probable that the gesture remained an empty formality. We are not told what the plebeians themselves thought about it.

The city in the time of Augustus was efficiently policed, and a fire brigade was established, first under elected officials and then under appointees of the Princeps.

In agriculture Augustus strove to increase the number of small farmers. He gave security of tenure to those who had farms already, and he made an effort to instill a real love of the Italian countryside into the free peasantry. In this effort he was ably assisted by the poet-farmer Vergil, whose *Georgics* are a long paean of praise of the rural life. But the tendencies of the time were against Augustus. It was difficult to arrest the growth of large farms and estates which could be more economically worked than the small unit. The exodus of farmers to the cities which had been such an important feature of the last years of the republic continued. Not all the praise of the rural life could prevail against the hard necessities of making a living. Though there was, as has been seen, chronic underemployment in Rome, at least the citizen could scrape a living somehow, and free bread and circuses were available, as nowhere else. Not until the Industrial Revolution in modern times did it become possible to work farms efficiently with a small labor force, and at the same time keep millions employed in the large cities through the production of machine-made goods and the provision of multifarious services. The problem of Rome itself was almost certainly insoluble by Augustus, however great his power and intelligence.

**Cultural and religious policy**

There is no doubt that Augustus thoroughly understood the Roman ideal and the Roman tradition. Though in his earlier days he was no model of virtue, in his principate he strove by example and legislation to revive the old Roman virtues which had made her great. Seriousness, hard work, frugality, piety, family solidarity, public spirit—these were the traditional virtues, and Augustus did not believe they had disappeared forever. The desire for luxury and ostentation, overeating and overdrinking, skepticism, public and private immorality had been no part of the earlier Roman tradition. But it was quite another matter to try to put the clock back and revive the old virtues against all the cultural pressures of the age. Still less was it possible to do this by legislation, although Augustus has had some distinguished successors in the attempt in many times and places. His cultural and religious policy, therefore, though partially successful in some directions, must on the whole be accounted a failure. Trying to restore the sanctity of private life, he decreed compulsory marriage at a certain age, and for all citizens. Later, when he was forced to modify this decree he laid special disabilities on the unmarried and he offered preference to certain state offices to fathers with three children. He legislated on the size of houses, and the quantity of food and drink to be consumed at banquets. He even encouraged informers against those who offended against his laws. Naturally these laws were extremely unpopular, especially among the upper and middle classes who could afford luxuries, and they were completely ineffective against the other social evils at which they were directed. And, as far as we know, bachelors remained as numerous as ever, and the birth rate was not increased.

The more positive aspects of his policy, however, seem to have had some effect. He tried to revive some of the old Italian rural religious festivals, and regenerate the old primitive religion of the countryside, which had never altogether died out. And he un-
doubtedly succeeded in reviving patriotism and a reverence for the Roman heritage, as evidenced by the success of his great patriotic poets, especially Vergil and Horace, and even of the old republican historian Livy, whose history exalts the Roman virtues at the expense, it is feared, of historical accuracy. The court poets and writers, dealt with in the next chapter, for the first time found a patron in Maecenas, who subsidized and encouraged them with the full backing of the Princeps. But, above all, the imperial cult really did take hold of the people and persisted for several centuries in the form of emperor or state worship. It does not seem to have been the empty formality that we, with our higher religions concerned with the relationship between man and God, might have expected. It was building on traditional foundations, both the reverence paid to the gods of the household and family, and to the Genius of the father of the family. What Augustus did was to enlarge the conception to include the whole Roman family and state, and institute rituals designed to capture this reverence for the protective deities of the state and the ruler himself. In addition he exalted the older gods Apollo, Mars, and, above all, Jupiter, building great temples for them in their capacity of protectors of the state. The new era of peace was his greatest helper in the program; for it did seem to all at this time that the gods had indeed had the protection of Rome within their care, and brought her through a long age of civil war and anarchy to a secure haven. And though Livy's history was designed to show that the gods had always protected those Romans who had kept their virtue, every reader could see for himself that it was for this purpose, for the purpose of bringing into being the Roman Empire, that the Romans had been tried and purified—that it was their destiny to rule, as Vergil had stated more explicitly in his Aeneid, and had always been since the day when Aeneas completed his long journey to Italy and his descendant Romulus laid the foundations of Rome.

Estimate of the achievement of Augustus

It is difficult to find in the records of all history a greater political and administrative genius than the first Princeps of Rome, the "architect of Empire," Augustus Caesar, and there are few who have approached him. He has suffered in comparison with his great-uncle, who was undoubtedly a more impressive personality with more spectacular and captivating qualities. He has also suffered from his biographers in ancient times, who could not appreciate at their true worth his farsightedness and understanding of the real problems involved in the transition from republic to monarchy, and who paid too much attention to minor failures, such as his sumptuary legislation.

He was conservative, cherishing the old virtues and the old institutions, and appreciating their value; and he devised means to continue what seemed good in them. He did not try to set back the clock in his governmental reforms, nor yet leap forward rashly into impossible experiments forbidden by the nature of the times. The most difficult and rare art of the statesman is to see the limits of the possible and pursue only the possible. And his monument was the Roman peace and the Roman Empire, which endured for hundreds of years in the framework which he had invented. The empire did not collapse after his death as did Charlemagne's, nor fall to pieces by military overextension as did Napoleon's.

Augustus had a tremendous job to accomplish in which all his predecessors had failed; and yet once he had achieved supreme power he substituted, almost without friction, a legitimate and acceptable civil government for civil warfare and domestic anarchy. There is a tale that a man was brought before him who had attempted a conspiracy against him. Augustus reasoned with the man, asking him how he proposed to replace him, and succeeded in convincing him of the impossibility of any alternative. Thereupon he forgave the would-be murderer and
even promoted him in the public service. Perhaps Augustus was fortunate in that he was still a young man and had many years of life in front of him to make full use of the opportunity with which he had been presented. But he was never a healthy man, and it is one of his titles to greatness that he was able to overcome the handicap. He lived without ostentation, and never let anyone believe that he had any other ambition than to be first citizen in a restored and transformed republic. He is the most eminent disproof in history of the famous dictum of Lord Acton that "all power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

The successors of Augustus

TIBERIUS AND THE DECLINE OF THE SENATE

It is not necessary in a book of this compass to go into detail on the achievements of the successors of Augustus. The reign of Tiberius (A.D. 14–37) was marked by excellent provincial administration but a growing disharmony between the Princeps and the Senate. Our chief authority for this period is the great Roman historian Tacitus, a man of senatorial rank who lived almost a century later, who, in the opinion of many scholars, described the conditions of his own time but placed them earlier in the age of Tiberius, as this was less dangerous to himself. But Tiberius most certainly lacked his step-father’s tact, and he was already a morose and disillusioned elderly man when he became Princeps. It was not surprising that the senators for the first time now realized the potentialities for an imperial tyranny that had been masked under the principate of Augustus. And many of them began to look back nostalgically to the lost republic, viewing it through rose-colored glasses since few of them had actually experienced it. Brutus and Cassius, the tyrannicides, became their heroes, for they had defended with their lives the dignity of senators. Throughout the reign of Tiberius there were constant intrigues over the succession, even while his son, later poisoned by the orders of his favorite, the praetorian prefect Sejanus, was still alive. Betrayed by the one man he had trusted, Tiberius countered the opposition to him with new laws against treason, and new rewards for informers, setting a precedent followed by too many of his successors. There were many real conspiracies against him, but, more than anyone else Sejanus, master of Rome when Tiberius retired to Capri for a little peace in his old age, betrayed him; and though Tiberius was strong enough to crush this conspiracy, the aftermath of treason trials and executions was always remembered against him by later historians and posterity.

The position of the Senate was indeed unenviable. It had had a long tradition of power under the republic, and its position even at its worst was always one of dignity. Augustus had given the senators work to do, but there was no doubt that all real power had been taken from them, and they were deeply offended. Tiberius would preside over the Senate, and though even the anti-imperial historian Tacitus admits that, at least in the early part of his reign, he encouraged the senators to speak freely, most of them were careful to catch every sign of approval or disapproval, so that they would not be found on the wrong side, in opposition to the Princeps, with all the danger that this entailed. This subservience wounded them in their dignity. They were forced out of fear to agree, and their true opinions were not valued. As long as any republican tradition remained, as it did at least until the death of Nero, A.D. 68, they were bound to regret their lost freedom, human dignity, and respect. Not all the outward dignity of a special toga could compensate them. Only the Stoics in the reigns to come provided any real resistance to the rulers, since they had a philosophy to sustain them, and at the last a sword to fall upon; and it was no accident that the tyrannous emperors especially singled out the Stoics as their enemies and treated them accordingly.
THE JULIANS, FLAVIANS, AND THE “GOOD EMPERORS,”—RECURRING PROBLEM OF THE SUCCESSION

At last Tiberius died, and was succeeded by Caligula (A.D. 37–41), a young man of no ability and no experience who soon became insane, his insanity revealing itself in an undisguised tyranny and sadistic cruelty. When he was murdered in a praetorian conspiracy he was succeeded by Claudius (A.D. 41–54), an able administrator and student of history who effected many valuable reforms in the provincial administration but was unable to keep order in his own house, being ruled by his successive wives. He was murdered by his last wife, who thus succeeded in securing the succession for her son Nero (A.D. 54–68), who was only the stepson of Claudius. Nero lost no time in getting rid of his stepbrother, who was a real son of Claudius, but for five years he allowed his praetorian prefect Burrus and his tutor Seneca to exercise the actual rule of the empire. Thus the first five years of Nero’s administration became proverbial for excellent administration at home and abroad. Then Nero became himself as the misfit he was on the throne, a second-rate artist, anxious only for the plaudits of the crowds for his theatrical performances and careless of his administration. The people loved him for his spectacular games and gladiatorial shows, but he degraded the imperial dignity, emptied the treasury, and won only contempt and enmity from the upper classes, contempt which culminated in conspiracies against his life. Thereafter no one in Rome was safe from his vengeance, and especially not his former friends. His tyranny in his last years equaled that of the madman Caligula. When he was overthrown by an open revolt and perished at the hands of a freedman when he lacked courage to take his own life, no provision had been made for the succession and no direct heir remained of the Julian house (called Julian after Julius Caesar). First the commander of the Spanish legions took the throne, then the praetorian prefect, then the commander of the German legions, none surviving the year (A.D. 69). Finally the commander of the Eastern legions, a plebeian general of rural ancestry, gained the throne and restored order.

Vespasian (69–79) ruled sensibly and restored some of its earlier dignity to the principate. He was succeeded by his two sons (the Flavian dynasty), one of whom died after two years, while Domitian, the second son (81–96), a suspicious tyrant but a good administrator, fell to a conspiracy. This was the end of the hereditary principle for nearly a century. For the first time no obvious candidate was available for the throne, and the choice fell into the hands of the Senate, which selected Nerva (96–98), a mild, elderly man whose most important act was the adoption of the best general in the empire as his son. Thus the adoptive principle superseded the hereditary, and the result was the period known as the era of the “Good Emperors.” Each of the four emperors who reigned between 98 and 180 was a good administrator, and Trajan (98–117) was a great general, though it is not certain that his policy of enlarging the empire was altogether a wise one. The province of Dacia, north of the Danube, acquired by him, in addition to territories in Asia had to be abandoned before most of the rest of the empire, but not before it had been civilized by the Romans. The old Roman province of Dacia, the present-day Rumania, still has a language based upon Latin. Hadrian (117–138) was one of the ablest of the Roman emperors as an administrator. He it was who systematized the civil service, the most competent body of bureaucrats outside China in the ancient world, recruiting its members almost exclusively from the equestrian order, which was now entirely dependent upon himself. Hadrian also gave impetus to the study and codification of the Roman Law by abolishing the edicts of the annually elected praetors (see the next chapter). By Hadrian’s time it was recognized that the word of the emperor was the true source of law for the empire, and it may be said that with Hadrian disappeared the
THE PROVINCES IN THE FIRST TWO CENTURIES

Life in the provinces was rarely affected by the disturbances in the capital. The chief annoyance undoubtedly was the arbitrary increases in taxation necessitated by the spendthrift habits of some of the early emperors, especially Caligula and Nero. Imperial governors usually remained over from one regime to another, and senatorial governors continued to be appointed as before unless the emperor was especially interested in the appointment. The Roman peace was maintained in almost the whole empire without a break. The only power in the first two centuries that presented any danger was the Parthian Empire in the Near East. But it was already on the decline in the second century, and Trajan inflicted several severe defeats upon it, altering the Augustan settlement in this region by annexing several new provinces. But his successor recognized the great difficulty of holding them, and the fact that the expense involved could ill be afforded. For this reason he returned some of the new provinces to client kings. Not until the reign of Marcus Aurelius was the Roman peace seriously threatened by the first movements of barbarians against the frontiers; and even this was of no moment to the interior provinces, save for increases in taxation to pay for the wars.

The first two centuries of the empire were characterized by an increasing centralization of the government, above all through the growth of the bureaucracy or imperial civil service. Hadrian brought every official under direct imperial control, including those in Italy, even in some cases nominating the governors of senatorial provinces, who were in any case by now the prisoners of the bureaucracy provided for them by the emperor. The municipalities also lost some of their responsibilities. Though the "Good Emperors," including Hadrian, were not personally tyrants, and indeed kept on very good terms with the Senate, being themselves drawn from the senatorial class, their policies tended toward an increasing absolutism which was ultimately recognized by the for-
mal changes in the nature of the monarchy brought about by Diocletian at the end of the third century A.D. It should be added, however, that the Senate no longer provided any opposition to the absolutist tendency, for it had been itself enrolled by previous emperors, and the old qualification of nobility of birth alone had long ago disappeared. The tyrants Caligula, Nero, and Domitian had paid careful attention to see that it should.

The Romanized provinces by the end of the second century had become the real heart of the empire, though Rome, of course, remained the capital. The rank and file of the legions was made up exclusively of provincials, and the officers now came as much from the Romanized provinces as from Italy. One of the reasons why Trajan’s wars in the East were ultimately so dangerous to Rome was that the most thoroughly Romanized provinces, Gaul and the two Spanish provinces, provided so many of his troops, who too often did not return to their homelands; if they were not killed in the East they were likely to settle there. All the emperors after Nero had had long experience in the provinces and recognized their importance; Trajan and Hadrian were both Spaniards. The Italian patriotism of Augustus was therefore slowly replaced by the wider patriotism of the citizen of the Roman Empire itself. This reality was ultimately recognized in the famous edict of the Emperor Caracalla in 212, which granted Roman citizenship to every freeman of the empire.

INFLUENCE OF THE ROMAN IMPERIAL IDEA

The Roman Empire, then, by the end of the second century had become fully established and accepted as the natural order of things. Internal opposition had disappeared, and the idea of the Roman Empire now had such a hold on the hearts and heads of men as no empire in the past had ever achieved, with the possible exception of the Chinese Empire under the Hans. There was some excuse for the belief that it was eternal, that it had even been willed by the gods. It was in this atmosphere of eternity and impregnability that the foundations of the Christian Church were laid, and this Church, the spiritual successor of the Roman Empire, was deeply influenced by it.

The achievements of the empire had already been enormous. It had always given tolerable and often excellent administration and an equitable law to a vast area, and it had given this area a peace it neither knew before nor has known since. If liberty was missing, this was a lack not felt by the people of the time. No one alive had known it from experience. It survived, at most, as a philosophical ideal. In the next chapter we shall see the other contributions to the cultural heritage of the world made by this hard-headed, efficient, practical, but hardly inspired people who first unified and ruled the Western world.

Suggestions for further reading

Every student should make the effort to read at least some part of the great history of Tacitus, which is conveniently printed in the Modern Library series in the standard translation, M. Hadas, ed., The Complete Works of Tacitus (tr. A. J. Church and W. J. Brodrribb; New York: The Modern Library, 1942). The Annals covers the Julian Age; and the Histories covers especially the period of anarchy following the death of Nero and the re-establishment of the principate under Vespasian. Other worthwhile authors are Juvenal, some parts of Seneca, Lucan, and, with caution, Suetonius. These may be read in the Loeb Classical series.

For the differing views on Augustus and Tiberius, the present author’s chapter on “Freedom and Tyranny in the Ancient World,” in K. Setton and H. Winkler, eds., Great Problems in European History (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1954), will serve to introduce the problem and give some idea of the varying views of contemporaries and posterity. The last half of R Syme, The Roman Revolution (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1939), already referred to at the end of the previous chapter, and J. Buchan, Augustus (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1937), should be read, preferably in conjunction, since they represent opposite points of view. F. D. Marsh, The Reign of Tiberius (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), is a masterly attempt to rehabilitate the second princeps,
THE FOUNDATION OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

whom the author feels to have been much
malignied by Tacitus.

Almost all the information the beginning
student will wish to know on the actual workings
of the early Empire are to be found in the pages
of M. I. Rostovtzeff, The Social and Economic
History of the Roman Empire (New York: Ox-
ford University Press, 1926), though the reader
should be warned that not all scholars agree with
his conclusions. The book is also excellently illus-
trated. For the more conservative opinion, the
old classic, T. Mommsen, The Provinces of the
Roman Empire (2nd ed.; New York: Charles
Scribner's Sons, 1909), is still worth consulting.
For a briefer picture of the Roman Empire, in-
cluding its cultural achievements, a valuable
work is M. P. Charlesworth, The Roman Empire
(Home University Library; London: Oxford
University Press, 1951).

The standard book on Roman society of the
early imperial period is S. Dill, Roman Society
from Nero to Marcus Aurelius (London: Macmil-
lan & Co., Ltd., 1904), which may be supple-
mented by a more lively account by J. Carcopino,
Daily Life in Ancient Rome (tr. E. O. Lorimer;
New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press,
1940). A useful survey, which contains also
much cultural material, is F. G. Moore, The
Roman's World (New York: Columbia Univer-
sity Press, 1936).
Roman Culture

General characteristics of Roman culture • Religion • Philosophy: transformation of Greek thought by the Roman spirit • Science • Architecture and sculpture • Rhetoric • History • Law • Literature

General characteristics of Roman culture

CONTRAST WITH CREATIVENESS OF THE GREEKS

It is one of the ironies of history that, in spite of our admiration for the Greeks, Western civilization has always been nourished far more by Roman ideas and institutions than by Greek. With the recovery of Greek literature in recent centuries and the opportunity to study some of the masterpieces of Greek art in the original we have been able to make a comparative estimate of Greek and Roman contributions; and few would today claim the Romans to have been qualitatively superior in any single field of cultural endeavor to which the Greeks turned their attention. Roman architecture made use of far more forms than the Greeks had found necessary for their simpler needs, Roman engineering solved practical problems that were outside Greek experience. But though we are impressed by the grandeur of the Pantheon in Rome and admire the excellence of Roman roads, bridges, and aqueducts, it is to the Athenian Parthenon that we go for an ideal of architectural beauty. Yet our own public buildings are copied from the Romans, we are inclined to use the Corinthian rather than Doric or Ionic capitals, and our columns, like Roman columns, too often support nothing and are merely superfluous decorations. But remove a Greek column and the building will collapse. To us the Greek world is remote, to be admired but not imitated, whereas the Romans are close to us. We feel we understand them. They are people like ourselves. To enter the Greek world requires an effort of the imagination; but the Romans, nearly as far away from us in time, can be understood, it seems, without any such rare and difficult mental activity.

It would appear that even to the Romans themselves the Greeks were a people apart. They admitted that in every branch of cultural activity the Greeks were their teachers and masters, and they did their best to imitate them. But they never seriously tried to think in the way the Greeks had thought. It is impossible to conceive of any Roman with whom we are acquainted taking time out to consider the fundamental problem of the early cosmologists, what it is that is stable in a world of changing appearances. No Roman could speculate like Plato or reason like Aristotle. The more simple ideas of these masters they could understand, at least in part. But whenever they tried to explain
The Pantheon at Rome, a much-imitated building, where the deified emperors were buried. Note the combination of dome and Corinthian columns. (COURTESY ITALIAN STATE TOURIST OFFICE)

One such imitation—the Low Library at Columbia University, New York. (COURTESY COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY)
what they had read—and many Romans, notably Cicero and Seneca, made a real effort to cope with the problems of philosophy—the result always appears as oversimplification, not touching the root of the matter, in some way debased. The truth seems to be, however it may be explained, that the Roman mind simply could not think in the Greek manner. Not that such thinking died out in the Roman period. The Greeks, Claudius Ptolemy the astronomer and Galen the physician are recognizably Greek in their thinking, though they lived in the second century of the Roman Empire.

PRACTICAL NATURE OF THE ROMAN GENIUS

The great Roman contribution to world culture therefore lies not in the field of thought, but in the application of thought in the ordinary world of men. In this way they served as a complement to the Greeks. They reaped the harvest of whatever had been thought before them, putting it to practical use. Where the Greeks had been concerned with ethical speculations, the Romans translated these into practical everyday morality; where Democritus had speculated on the constitution of matter, and Epicurus had drawn the conclusion that in such a cosmology there was no need for gods, the Roman Lucretius makes a passionate attack on religion and superstition as the prime causes of human suffering; where human morality is conspicuously missing in the adventures of Odysseus as told by Homer, the Roman Vergil in his Aeneid emphasizes the filial devotion of his hero, and the glorification of Rome and its destiny—the purpose of the voyage of Aeneas—breathes in every line of the poem.

ASSIMILATION AND TRANSMISSION OF GREEK CULTURE

The Romans, then, were the greatest transmitters of culture the world has yet seen, though to a lesser degree the Arabs later performed the same function. But the Roman spirit is nevertheless imprinted on every line the Romans wrote, every idea they took up and put to use. They should not be regarded as mere copiers. Moreover, when the Greeks left no model, the Romans showed themselves quite capable of developing new forms of their own, as in satire, epigram, letter writing, and perhaps even fiction. If anyone had ever had the temerity to translate a Roman work into Greek, it would at once have been recognized as Roman handiwork.

What is especially worth studying, therefore, in a survey of civilization is the process of cultural assimilation from the Greeks, the working of the Roman genius upon the material, and then the advances, if any, made by the Romans themselves in the same field. This chapter, then, will take the various fields of cultural activity one by one, and try to show this process at work rather than attempt a strictly chronological account of republican, Augustan, and Silver Age (the second century A.D.) achievements; external circumstances surrounding particular works will be mentioned only when they have a special relevance. In this way it is hoped that the student will perceive something of the nature of cultural assimilation in general, since every culture, now and in the future, will necessarily build upon the achievements of its predecessors, adding, like the Romans, the impress of its own distinctive genius, and thus carrying it forward into the future.

THE LATIN LANGUAGE

A word, however, is first necessary on the language of Roman literature. The Latin language is a native product of Italy. Though it has many virtues, it cannot compare with the Greek for flexibility, variety, and subtlety. It has comparatively few tenses; it lacks the middle voice, the dual number, and above all it lacks the Greek particles and prefixes which make Greek a language capable of expressing so many different shades of meaning. In this it shows itself as a suitable vehicle for Roman expression. The Romans did not make fine distinctions, they were not subtle; they, like their language, said what they meant, clearly and distinctly, with no nonsense about it. Moreover, the Latin language also lacks the invaluable auxiliary verbs, "to have" and "to be," which are so useful in
the modern languages. It is defective in many parts, lacking, for instance, the present participle passive and past participle active in transitive verbs. Classical Latin makes use of what seem to us awkward circumlocutions when dealing with reported speech and past events (this defect was remedied in medieval Latin). And while it has one useful case, the ablative, unknown to the Greeks, this hardly compensates for what is missing. However, it has a wonderful terseness and brevity which make for precision and clarity, and in the course of time it developed a wealth of abstract nouns, which made it in medieval times an admirable vehicle for the formal logical philosophy of the scholastics. It also has the qualities of dignity and statelessness which made it especially suitable as the language of church and government. Medieval Latin, though derided by the humanists of the Renaissance, had gone far toward remedying the language’s earlier defects, and out of medieval Latin developed not only all the Romance languages of the West, but much of the English language in its present form. For more than a thousand years it was the universal language of educated men, and until the present century was probably read by more people in Western Europe than any other. It is still the official language of the Roman Catholic Church.

Religion

Native and Etruscan

Native Roman and Italian religion reflects the social structure of the primitive Romans, but it is difficult to look upon it as in any sense a religion in our sense of the word. If the Romans had not become in later times a great people, few students of religion would probably have troubled to examine their religion. It conforms very closely in its primitive beliefs and rituals to those discovered by modern anthropologists working with uncivilized tribes. It explains, however, much in the early Roman character, and makes it easy to understand why the Romans were always so hospitable to im-

A lar, one of the household gods of the Romans. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)

ported religions which made a greater appeal to religious feeling.

The early Romans evidently regarded all nature as animate, and gave names to the spirits, of particular areas and of natural phenomena such as rivers, as also to various agricultural functions such as plowing and sowing. These natural forces were called numina, or spiritual powers, and the farmer had to propitiate these powers by sacrifice. In addition there were certain protective deities, especially the lares, protectors of the home, the penates, protectors of the household stores, and the genius, protector of the family itself who worked through the head of the family. There was no kind of morality or ethics in this religion, as the spirits merely required specified attentions from members of the family. If these duties were fulfilled then the spirits were bound by a kind of bargain to support the family. Ironically enough, this binding contract is the original meaning of the word “religio,” from which comes our word “religion.” After death the spirits of human beings survived, but apparently without any individuality, and wandered in a featureless underworld, similar
to the Babylonian Arali. In addition to these nature spirits, Jupiter, god of the sky, and Mars, god of war, were worshiped from an early time and seem to have been native Italian deities. They possessed greater power than the lesser spirits, but the latter were closer to the individual man, like the personal gods of the primitive Sumerians and Babylonians. The household gods, especially the lares and penates, served to keep the Roman family together, and were very close to all its members, while the greater gods only came into prominence when the Romans became a real people, and families acquired a wide loyalty to Rome itself.

The Etruscans influenced the early religion in several important ways. The father of the family was originally the only priest required for household worship. But as the state grew in importance, especially under the Etruscan monarchy, it became necessary to know more about the will of the gods of the state so that they might be propitiated in times of danger. Hence developed, as in Babylonia, the art of reading the future through the inspection of the livers of animals, and later the interpretation of various omens such as lightning and the flight of birds. For these specialized functions colleges of priests came into existence, whose duty was to keep officials advised of the will of the gods. This gave the college of pontiffs and augurs a considerable political power in later days, for the Romans were legally unable to transact any business on unlucky days. Bibulus, the colleague of Julius Caesar in his first consulship, refused to take any part in the triumvir's transactions, and laid the legal basis for nullification of his laws by retiring to his house to watch the omens every day the Senate sat. Since these omens were all declared by the stubborn consul to be unlucky, the laws were officially null and void. When Caesar decided to cross the Rubicon rather than face as a private person charges of illegal acts committed during his consulship, no doubt he remembered the process by which they had been made illegal.

Under Etruscan influence the gods of the state were first furnished with temples, and these gods gradually became established in public esteem, with the addition of Juno, as a wife for Jupiter, Minerva, goddess of the artisans, and others. Temple building, however, was slow to take hold in Rome, and several gods were worshiped only in the open air until a late date in Roman history. The state religion was looked after by a college of pontiffs, under the chief direction of the Pontifex Maximus, an official elected for life, and exact rules were drawn up for public ceremonial and worship.

GREEK INFLUENCE

With the conquest of the Greek cities in Italy a great change came over this primitive religion. Perhaps the first effect was the acceptance of one of the Greek oracles, the Sibyl of Cumae, as inspired. Her prophecies were contained in the sacred Sibylline Books, which were consulted by the pontiffs in times of crisis. The Greek gods were early grafted onto their Roman counterparts, and the Romans took over intact the very considerable Greek mythology and applied it to their own gods. By the end of the third century B.C., the new Hellenistic religions were already flourishing in the Near East, the worship of Cybele, the great Earth Mother, and various mystery religions. It was not long before these penetrated into Italy, and the greater requirements of the new gods seemed to meet a need on the part of many Romans. The Sibylline Books aided in this process, for when they were consulted the advice usually was to introduce a new cult from the Near East. Since consultation coincided with an actual crisis in Roman affairs, the entry of these new gods was greeted with emotional fervor and elaborate festivals were held. The older and more conservative Romans looked upon these innovations with disgust, and Cato the Elder (234-149 B.C.) led a special campaign to drive all Greeks from the city. But he was behind the times and never met more than a temporary success. On the whole the Romans remained tolerant of all religions unless they presented, like later Christianity, a danger to
the state or offended Roman conceptions of morality.

ORIENTAL INFLUENCE

As we have seen already, when Augustus became princeps he tried vainly to revive the old agricultural religion. But he was only successful in the countryside, which had never fully abandoned its old primitivism. Bringing rural deities to the city was hardly sufficient to satisfy the now apparent emotional needs of many Romans. Only emperorship among Roman cults took any real hold of the people, and even this was supplemented by other more emotional religions which offered more to the individual worshipers. All the religions imported during the empire taught individual immortality and purification of the soul in this life in preparation for the next. It is therefore clear enough that many Roman men and women by the time the principate were thoroughly dissatisfied with the old traditional ceremonies and the cold formality of the state religion. The worshipers themselves did not take part in these ceremonies but only watched them, whereas in the new Oriental religions the worshipers themselves were initiated with mystic rites and ceremonies. Moreover, with the assumption by the emperor of so many of the duties of private citizens in earlier times, local patriotism began to die out, together with the religion that had sustained it. For some few the semi-religious philosophy of Stoicism with its high ethical content (dealt with in the next section) was sufficient, but the new Oriental religions claimed far more adherents.

The two earliest and most important of these were the revived religion of the Egyptian Isis and the Persian Mithraism. The Egyptian religion now included more definite teachings on immortality, initiation ceremonies, and festivals of mourning for the dead Osiris. It was also highly organized into a cult of priests and worshipers, providing a sense of community missing in both Stoicism and the state cult. Mithraism had developed out of Zoroastrianism, and retained its central belief in the two great spirits, Light and Darkness. But now it was made clear that the worshiper must struggle against the Spirit of Darkness. In the struggle he is aided by the god Mithra, who is nearer to man than the original Sun-god, Ahura-Mazda, with whom indeed Mithra intercedes for the human soul. This religion, which has so many striking elements in common with Christianity, made tremendous advances within the empire in the early centuries, especially through dissemination by the Roman legions. But it suffered from one handicap that was insuperable. Unlike the religion of Isis and of Christianity, it did not admit women, whose influence in early Christianity was so strong. Very similar to Mithraism was the worship of the Unconquered Sun, of which very little is known, in spite of the fact that one emperor (Elagabalus, 218–222) was a priest of the cult, and another (Aurelian, 270–275) established it as the official religion of Rome. The rival of Constantine for the throne, A.D. 312, fought under the banner of the Unconquered Sun (Sol Invictus) but lost to Constantine, who had chosen before the decisive battle to fight under the sign of the cross of Christianity. Thereafter Christianity, discussed more fully in the next chapter, became the official religion of the emperors, and before the end of the fourth century the only permitted religion in the empire. The competitive religions gradually died out, though elements of Mithraism survived in Manichaeism, which influenced many important Christian thinkers, especially St. Augustine, and Manichaeism itself survived in various heretical groups in Bulgaria and later in southern France, where it appeared again as the belief of the Cathari, suppressed by Pope Innocent III in the thirteenth century. The essential element in these religions of Persian origin was always dualism, or the almost equal power of good and evil, and human life as the scene of the struggle between these powers. Christianity, while admitting Satan into its religion, nevertheless always stressed his complete inferiority to God, and denied him any part in creation.
Philosophy—Transformation of Greek thought by the Roman spirit

STOICISM

Until the introduction of Greek thought into Rome there was no philosophy among the Romans, and they found no need for it. As an active and practical people they were inclined to despise all forms of speculation. However, in the first flush of enthusiasm for all things Greek in the second century B.C., a number of Greeks were invited to Rome by a distinguished Roman gentleman of the highest rank, Scipio Aemilianus, around whom formed a circle of young Romans interested in Greek culture. Among those who came to Rome was a Stoic philosopher Panaetius, who had already done much original thinking on the traditional Stoic material of which mention was made in Chapter 9. Stoicism, it will be remembered, postulated a Divine Reason which pervaded all nature and was indeed identical with it. All human laws are attempts to legislate in accordance with the Divine Reason, which must be discovered by men. Thus arose the persistent belief in the existence of a natural law in accordance with which positive law on earth must be made. No law is really just unless it conforms with this natural law. All men are equal and brothers, said the Stoics, and this fact necessitated full equality before the law, a lasting principle of Roman jurisprudence. These ideas exercised an enormous influence upon Roman jurists, the greatest of whom were thoroughly at home with Stoic philosophy, which thus found practical application in Rome rather than in its own Hellenistic world.

It will be remembered also that Stoicism taught that the task of man was to achieve indifference to worldly success, and emphasized the dignity and worth of the individual human being, standing alone and without support from the gods, but secure because his wants were few and he could willingly relinquish all earthly desires. Though such a thought was no doubt too demanding for most Romans, and indeed for most human beings of any national origin, it nevertheless did appeal to something deep-seated in the Roman character, his willingness to undertake unpaid public service as a duty laid upon him simply by virtue of the fact that he was a Roman. Throughout Roman history we find many such self-reliant men, devoted to the service of their family and of the state, willing to expend themselves in it without hope of material reward. Such men found their philosophical justification in Stoicism. It was a philosophy only suited to the strong, for it offered no hope of reward in this world or the next. It is no accident that the greatest opponents of the absolute power of the emperors were the Stoics, whose regard for human dignity made them also willing to commit suicide rather than submit to indignity and loss of freedom.

We possess the writings of several Roman Stoics, but none is of first-rate quality. Too often lacking the capacity for sustained original thought, they are inclined to fall into platitudes, and little moral sermons. Cicero interprets Greek Stoicism fairly effectively, but makes no claim to originality. Seneca in the early empire sometimes utters ethical teachings worthily and has a few moving passages much appreciated by the early Christians, who believed him to have corresponded directly with Paul. But too often he lapses into commonplace; and when we remember his own personal fortune acquired in public office, his sincerity is too often open to doubt, spoiling the effect of some of his preachments. On the other hand, the lame freedman, Epictetus, born Greek but thoroughly Romanized, neglects philosophical speculation altogether and concentrates his attention on how to lead a good life on earth in accordance with Stoic principles. All through his work the sincere moralist is evident. In the Meditations of Marcus Aurelius we see the effect of Stoicism upon a man who happened to be an emperor but would have preferred to be an ordinary humble human being. Possessed of a true humanitarian spirit, and really imbued with the theoretical Stoic love for all mankind, there is no doubt that he felt the burden of
empire a heavy one. But Stoicism helped him fulfill his imperial duties, and the Meditations, written (in Greek) for the most part when he was on campaign and under the most difficult circumstances, shows both the man and the philosophy at their best.

EPICURISM

In the hands of the republican poet Lucretius, Epicurism appears as one of the great scientific philosophies of history. Lucretius, however, had a practical aim, to save human beings from their unreasonable fear of death, and free them from the bonds of superstition and religion, which he regards as synonymous and tending to destroy what little happiness is possible in life. Basing his science upon the teachings of Democritus and Epicurus—that the world is made up of atoms which come together by a chance swerve—Lucretius concludes with his masters that gods are unnecessary. Even if they do exist, they live apart at ease, and take no account of human affairs. It is therefore irrational to fear them, or to worship them. Death is not an evil, but a rest from earthly suffering. It is man’s task to live without fear, and without any particular hope for happiness.

The beautiful poem De rerum natura is unique in all literature in that the greater part is true poetry, with many imaginative passages of great power, especially in the account of the creation of the world and all living creatures; yet it remains thoroughly scientific according to the best scientific principles of the time. It achieved wide popularity again in the European Enlightenment before its science was fully outmoded. Even Lucretius’ science was taken seriously for a time, especially by Gassendi in the seventeenth century.

The form of Epicurism as found in Lucretius was not the form in which it was accepted by most Romans. Always implicit in the teaching, “Be happy with little, for desire is likely to bring unhappiness, and we shall all soon be dead”—the teaching of Epicurus himself—is the further thought that we ought to be happy now while we can, and not trouble about tomorrow. And it was in this form that the Romans accepted it as a philosophy of eating, drinking, and being merry. Horace, the Augustan poet laureate, is a gentle Epicurean, content with his loaf of bread and his bottle of Falernian wine on a Sabine farm, and many are the praises he sings of the harmless life of simple pleasures. Others were not so restrained, and ultimately it became the fate of Epicurus to act as the philosophical sponsor for Roman hedonism, the cult of excessive eating and drinking for which Rome is too often remembered.

ECLECTICISM

It was the custom for many centuries for upper-class Romans to go to Greece for the completion of their education. Here they came in contact with many schools of philosophy, and, as in modern universities, they had the opportunity to develop their own philosophy after listening to the best that was offered by their predecessors. The best example of this eclecticism, or choosing parts from various philosophies as one’s own personal philosophy, is to be found in the great lawyer Cicero, who was a thoroughly educated man, but not himself a thinker of the first order. He did not even claim to be, preferring to consider himself as an interpreter of the Greek schools, putting their ideas into attractive Latin dress. It is characteristic of Cicero, as of Romans in general, that Plato and Aristotle are, on the whole, beyond his comprehension, though he admired them greatly. He prefers the later Hellenistic thinkers and philosophies, and again he is more interested in the practical side of their work. He discusses virtue at great length, but the more profound thoughts of Plato and Aristotle on the subject of the Good he lays aside in favor of discussions on how to live a happy life. On the whole, Stoicism seems to be interpreted with the greatest sympathy, and Cicero is one of our best sources for the Stoic teachings current in his day. He pays special attention to the Stoic idea of divine providence, thus endearing himself in a later day to the Christian Fathers. But he always remained to some degree skeptical, and he
appreciated Greek Skepticism, but in a busy life it was natural that that philosophy never engaged his full attention.

Cicero's philosophical writings have had a career far beyond their intrinsic merit, for they were well known throughout the medieval period, and were still appreciated in the Italian Renaissance. Their simplification of the more profound problems of human life has always appealed to those who do not wish to struggle with the metaphysical issues involved, and his practical advice can be appreciated without excessive mental strain. The clarity of his language, even in his philosophical writings, is always a delight; indeed, he was responsible for the development of a philosophical Latin language capable of conveying Greek thought to posterity.

Science

In pure science the Romans contributed not a single figure of any importance. In mathematics they were encumbered with numerals which present insuperable difficulties to any advanced calculations. Although they understood techniques based on mathematics and were extremely competent engineers and surveyors, they had no interest whatever in the fundamental Greek science of geometry, the theoretical basis of these techniques. Indeed, science actually degenerated in Roman hands and the few works written by them were far inferior to work already done before their time.

The elder Pliny was a man of considerable scientific curiosity but no talent. And even though he is said to have lost his life in an attempt to investigate at firsthand the eruption of Vesuvius which destroyed Pompeii, his enormous encyclopedia of Natural History betrays no critical sense. It is nothing but a repository of all the information available to an inquiring Roman in his day, without much serious attempt to discover whether it is true or not. Yet this work remains extremely valuable to us, as it is the primary source for Roman scientific knowledge in all the many fields it covers. The book was also greatly valued in the Middle Ages, since, with the Bible, it provided most of the information available to that period before the more advanced Muslim science and the works of Aristotle became accessible in Latin translations.

The Romans were diligent astrologers but had little interest in astronomy. The Greek Ptolemy in the second century A.D. wrote a highly competent synthesis of the work of previous astronomers, but no Roman name is known in the history of astronomy. When Caesar needed a competent astronomer for the revision of the Roman calendar, a Greek had to be hired for the purpose.

The history of medicine among the Romans is typical of their attitude. Theory was almost entirely neglected, though Galen, a Greek contemporary of Ptolemy, summed up earlier Greek theory and added much of his own. But the Romans were greatly interested in public health and sanitation. The emperors also established a hospital service for soldiers and officials in the provinces. If, however, the remedies used in these hospitals were those described by Pliny, it would seem probable that the doctors who served in them played but a small part in the eventual recovery of the wounded.

In technology the Romans made progress beyond their masters. Even in early republican days they developed a new technique for making roads, the best ones paved with stone, while secondary roads were surfaced with gravel. They built their roads up carefully from a depth of several feet below the surface of the surrounding country, using small stones and even concrete. It seems to have been by accident rather than through any scientific knowledge that the Romans discovered how to make a real concrete composed of lime and a volcanic ash which happens to contain the necessary ingredients. This discovery enabled the Romans to construct their public buildings out of a readily available material instead of using only the always expensive marble, which was then freed for use as a veneer.

The Romans knew how to construct strong bridges through the extensive use of the arch; they made tunnels through difficult
This famous Roman aqueduct, the Pont du Gard in France, gives some idea of Roman engineering skill and the gigantic size of Roman public works of the imperial period. Such construction is even more impressive when one realizes it was carried on with only the most primitive machinery.

mountain terrain; and they understood, but rarely used, the principle of the siphon for their baths and aqueducts. The many Roman remains, not only in Italy but throughout Europe, are an ample testimony to the strength of the materials used and the effectiveness of the Romans as engineers.

> Art

ARCHITECTURE—CULT OF HUGE AND GRANDIOSO, CONTRAST WITH GREEK HARMONY

Oswald Spengler, when he put forward his theory of the rise and fall of cultures and their different stages of development from "spring" to "winter," suggested that the winter stage was characterized always by the cult of the gigantic, the mania for huge buildings and engineering projects rather than the more delicate, beautiful, and truly artistic works of the earlier stages. Since he regarded the Roman civilization as the "winter" phase of Greco-Roman culture, one of his most important pieces of evidence was Roman architecture (the colossal buildings of Rameses in Egypt and American skyscrapers were others). Whether this preference for the huge may be better explained by other theories or not, it is certainly true that the Romans had a taste for the large and ornate rather than for the simple and unpretentious. Whereas the Greeks excelled especially in temples and other religious buildings which were intended only to house the god, much of the best Roman architecture has more practical uses. The greatest successes of the Romans are to be found in their public buildings, baths, theaters, and amphitheaters, and in their monumental imperial architecture.

It was the Etruscans who first taught architecture to the Romans, and Etruscan influence always persisted. It was they who instructed the Romans in the use of stone
and brick, and they who gave them the arch. But the Etruscans had themselves been influenced by the Greeks, and they used Greek columns in their public buildings and had houses of Greek design. After the Punic Wars, Greek influence became predominant in Rome, and during this period Roman buildings, public and private, were usually copies of those in Hellenistic cities. But even in this copying the Romans knew what they liked, which was invariably the ornate and the grandiose. The Corinthian column was preferred to the more severe Ionic and Doric, and the post and lintel construction was abandoned as unsuitable for large buildings constructed for practical needs, for which the dome, vault, and arch were more suitable. Gradually the Greek forms which the Romans, like ourselves, felt to be “artistic,” became merely decorative on Roman buildings. They solemnly inserted useless columns, supporting nothing, they carefully fluted their columns although the fluting served no practical purpose. The volutes at the top of the columns became more and more luxuriant and decorative, the Corinthian and Ionic capitals now being welded into a new composite. Not until twentieth-century architecture was the Roman practice looked upon with disfavor, and even now it is far from ousted, as a glance around any of our large cities will confirm. But it is now believed by architectural theorists that the function should dictate the form and not the reverse. This principle, of course, had been fully understood by the Greeks.

When the spoils of war began to flow into Rome during the last century of the republic, private houses, often built by successful bankers and generals, became larger and more ostentatious, and still for the most part constructed by Greek architects, and often furnished with Greek works of art looted during the successful campaigns. Pompey built the first permanent Roman theater out of his spoils, Julius Caesar from his Gallic booty built a new Forum and repaved the old. Roman taste at this time, as usual with the new rich, ran to the extravagant and splendid, with elaborate ornamentation and statuary (copied from the Greek, of course) in wild profusion.

With the advent of Augustus, Roman architecture came into its own, and we begin to hear of Roman architects and engineers, even though Greek influence was still strong and perhaps predominant. The rebuilding of Rome by Augustus, and the construction of vast new temples in accordance with his religious policy, influenced provincial cities also to take advantage of the new prosperity and rebuild their cities. In the imperial period every city of any importance had its baths, and even the smaller cities were able to build theaters, amphitheaters, and basilicas which were used for public business and to house the law courts. The best known of the Roman amphitheaters is the Colosseum, constructed by the first two Flavian emperors, much of which is still standing today, a huge round structure with a great arena for the spectacle. Underneath the arena is a network of passages, enabling performers—beasts and men—to reach any part of the arena as required. The basilica is a typical Roman structure, the plan of which, with nave, aisles, and clerestory windows, was adopted by the Christians for their early churches. The cross-vaulting of the Romanesque cathedrals seems to have been a Roman invention, and allowed far greater size to the buildings.

Roman architecture reached its zenith in the time of Hadrian in the second century A.D. Thereafter there are still many huge and impressive buildings, especially the Baths of Caracalla, the Basilica of Constantine, and the palace of Diocletian at Split on the Adriatic Coast. But these only showed that the Romans had not forgotten how to construct. The materials, as was natural at a time when prosperity was declining, were now inferior, and there is no significant architectural innovation. Diocletian’s palace was more of a fortress than a royal residence of the earlier ages, and indeed many of the villas and palaces of this declining period paid more attention to strength than to style. It is true that in the Constantinople of Justinian there

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1 For example, New York General Post Office.

2 The palace of Diocletian at Split, where the Emperor spent the last years of his life after his abdication, is shown in Chapter 14.
A Roman theater at Arles, in southern France, as it appears today.

Aerial view of the Colosseum at Rome, built by the Flavian emperors for the display of such public entertainment as gladiatorial fights. (COURTESY ITALIAN STATE TOURIST OFFICE)
Left, a Roman of the third century B.C. (portrait bust in bronze). Right, a Roman of the first century B.C. Note how the Roman sculptors strove to express character in their subjects’ faces. It would appear from their literature that the Romans indeed believed character showed in a man’s face. This may perhaps account in part for the relative frequency of the bust over the full-size statue. (COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART)

The Colosseum seen through the Arch of Titus, a triumphal arch built by the conqueror of Palestine. (COURTESY ITALIAN STATE TOURIST OFFICE)
was a real rebirth of architecture, but this can no longer be called Roman; though influenced by Rome, it belongs rather to Byzantine than to Roman architecture.

**SCULPTURE—REALISM**

Like architecture, Roman sculpture was first influenced by the Etruscans and then by the Greeks. Indeed, the Romans had such a high opinion of Greek (almost exclusively Hellenistic) sculpture that to the end of the empire many sculptors were employed simply at making copies of Greek statuary for the Roman market. But aside from these copies there is a pronounced difference between Roman and even Hellenistic sculpture, which is in full keeping with the Roman character as we know it. The Romans liked their sculpture to be realistic, thus completing what was only a tendency in the Hellenistic world. In this preference they followed the Etruscan tradition also. The Romans therefore developed the art of realistic portraiture far more than the Greeks. When the Greeks, even Hellenistic Greeks, carved a portrait they were always conscious of the harmony between body and mind or soul, between life itself and the material it informed. So the Greeks preferred to carve the whole body, of which the head and face were only a part. When, at the request of the Romans, who usually desired merely a portrait bust, Greek artists took to portrait sculpture, they remained aware of the mind which lay behind
the mere features, and thus strove to reveal character through the features and the harmony of the whole composition. The details thus fitted into place as part of the whole, but were not insisted upon, and perhaps the Greek sculptor did not care too much whether he caught the actual features to be observed on the model. This tendency is what is usually meant when we speak of the idealism of Greek sculpture.

The Romans, on the other hand, as always, were preoccupied by the outer appearance, which they carved exactly as they saw it, including lines of anxiety and unruly hair, which in most cases had no relation at all to what the Greek was trying to portray. For a period in the early empire the two tendencies fully harmonized, the realistic detail being combined with the psychological penetration of the Greek. Then the tendency again disappeared, and this time it was the Greek spirit alone which triumphed, late imperial and other portraits often being only suggestive of the subject rather than realistic likenesses. In noting the insistence of the Romans on this detail in the portrait busts, one is reminded of the way in which Tacitus describes the senators watching the emperor Tiberius for any change of facial expression, trying to discover what he was thinking from the outward appearance. It is clear that the Romans believed that the outward face was the true expression of a man’s individuality, lines of anxiety and the set of the eyes included, and they probably did not wish any detail to escape them, however apparently unimportant. Hence this emphasis on what we call realism.

The same tendency is carried over into Roman sculpture en masse, the enormous reliefs of the imperial triumphal monuments. One has only to look at the Elgin marbles and then at, say, Trajan’s column or the arch of Titus, to perceive at once the difference, though again the tendency toward realism was already visible to some degree in the Hellenistic world. The horses and riders in the Elgin marbles are magnificent, but they are not individualized. Though a mythical story is told, it is done in a series of scenes of a certain static beauty. But Trajan’s column tells a true story, with real men fighting and dying. One can follow the Dacian campaign from beginning to end—and indeed the column has been used to supplement the historical accounts. The Romans tried also to add a third dimension to their relief sculpture by carving in depth, unlike the Greek reliefs where the background is flat and the figures are merely carved on it, all parallel to each other. The Roman technique in reliefs is sometimes very effective. No one would imagine an actual procession in motion from the Greek reliefs, while the best Roman work succeeds in creating this illusion.

Sculptural skill seems to have been lost by the Romans in the troubled third century A.D. Constantine, when building his famous Arch of Triumph, was forced to steal panels from the work of his predecessors Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, and these present a marked contrast to the figures made by his own workmen on the same arch. All illusion of movement has gone from them, and they are stiff, badly executed and designed figures of no artistic merit whatever. Constantine fared no better when he sought for a sculptor to make a statue of himself. The statue is huge but we do not know what the first Christian emperor looked like nor even whether the sculptor was attempting to make an ideal image. An ideal image may have been in his mind, but, though he was presumably the best sculptor in the empire, he lacked the skill to execute it.

> Rhetoric

**Influence of Rhetoric on Roman Life and Culture**

Roman rhetoric deserves a section to itself as the art which the Romans most diligently cultivated, and a full study of its rise, influence, and decline would be a comment on the whole history of Rome. In the world of the republic words were powerful. A man could sway the Assembly, the Senate, or the law courts by his oratory, which could mean both a lucrative private profession or election to a magistracy, with a possible
command of an army and a fortune awaiting him at the end. It could even mean the control of the republic itself. The Greeks, too, had been noted orators, and toward the end of the period of Athenian independence all the orators had studied carefully how to compose their speeches. But whenever a speech is carefully composed, it may tend to overemphasize its calculated psychological effect on an audience, while true sincerity may be lacking. The Sophists had been the first teachers of rhetoric in Athens, and the tradition they began was carried to perfection in the fourth century B.C.

When, therefore, the Romans began to be self-conscious about their speeches and ceased to speak directly out of their momentary inspiration, they naturally turned to the Greeks, whose schools were already established. Even the conservative Cato the Elder studied the speeches of Demosthenes for self-improvement. The Greeks soon began to teach rhetoric for the new market, and the Romans were apt pupils. Unfortunately there are many dangers in the art, dangers of which too few Romans were aware. Demosthenes had possessed such a burning sincerity that his speeches were relatively free from ornate and studied elaborations. Isocrates, on the other hand, had never delivered his speeches, and flowery phrases and circumlocutions abound in them. Too many of these airs and graces slipped into Roman rhetoric, especially when the speeches were intended for publication and not for delivery. In the empire, when the most effective of spoken speeches could have had no practical effect, since the real decisions were always made by the emperor, rhetoric became ever more polished and artificial and entirely concealed any possible sincerity of the speaker.

Indeed, rhetoric, the principal subject in Roman education under the empire, found its way into all Roman writing of this period. Lucan wrote an epic, with Pompey as its hero, in which a theme that could have been nobly presented was utterly spoiled by the striving after effect. A few passages are still noteworthy, even many, for Lucan had the makings of a first-rate poet, but the whole is now almost unreadable. A further danger exists in the too thorough study of rhetoric. The student goes back to the great speeches of the past and examines carefully the form, the pregnant pauses, the rhetorical questions, the moments of drama. And, since it is impossible really to reimagine the circumstances of the original speech, he painstakingly analyzes the form and then tries to use the same form in his own compositions and prepared orations. He is thus working at secondhand, and all sincerity and directness of his own are lost, and his speech becomes merely a lifeless artifice, convincing to no one, but polished and worked over to the last comma. The too exclusive study of rhetoric in the schools of imperial Rome has often been given as one of the most potent reasons for the general decline of Roman culture. And though the study of rhetoric may have been primarily a symptom rather than a cause, it certainly reacted upon the writers, and helped prevent the emergence of a new style suited to the times and more expressive of the spirit of that age.

CICERO, THE MODEL ORATOR

Cicero, of course, was the model for all later would-be orators. He himself had studied in Greece and claimed that his speaking style was based on both Demosthenes and Isocrates. But however powerful these formative influences may have been, he used a different language and his speeches were dictated by the needs of his own day, so that his work was truly original. Fifty-seven full orations and many fragments have come down to us, a greater bulk of work than from any other orator, Latin or Greek. Until very recently these were the possession of every educated man in the Western world, especially the well-known ones, such as those on Catiline. Cicero was not at his best in legal argument, and in this many great lawyers have surpassed him. But few in any language have equaled his capacity for irony and invective, carefully controlled rhythm, and the use of the telling word. He was the complete master of the Latin tongue, and it is
not to be wondered at that his works became classics in the empire and again in the Italian Renaissance, which looked back to him as the master who should be imitated, while despising the medieval Latin which was still in daily use.

Rhetoric under the Empire—Seneca—Quintilian

Perhaps the best example of false rhetoric is Seneca, whose writings are consistently bombastic and always striving for effect, especially by the use of antithesis. Against the tendency of Seneca, the greatest teacher of rhetoric, his fellow Spaniard Quintilian, set himself. Quintilian looked to Cicero as his model, and regarded rhetoric from an ideal standpoint as part of a whole liberal education. To him rhetoric was rather eloquence, which is something not to be produced solely by technical training but by study of the humanities. His work on oratory therefore is a treatise more on education than on oratory, and is the only first-rate Roman contribution to this subject.

Orators in the next century turned more and more to artificial diction, archaisms, and stilted mannerisms, and reacted against Cicero, returning to even earlier writers for inspiration. Their work, however, need not detain us here.

History

under the Republic—Sallust and Caesar

History was one of the earliest forms of writing to be attempted in the Roman Republic, but mostly in the form of annals, factual accounts of events written for information. The earliest histories known to us were written in Greek, though evidently for Roman consumption. But in the middle of the second century B.C. Polybius, a Greek hostage in Rome, wrote one of the great histories of the ancient world, analytical, thorough, containing above all a really admirable analysis of the Roman republican constitution, which he greatly admired.

The first strictly Roman historian of the first importance was Sallust, whose history was clearly modeled on that of Thucydides, showing the same interest in human and social psychology, and using fairly effectively Thucydides’ device of introducing speeches verbatim, even when he had not heard them. We possess only two monographs of Sallust, enough to show the quality of his work, but the History on which his Roman reputation was based is lost.

Contemporary with Sallust was Julius Caesar himself, whose two monographs on the Gallic and Civil Wars are masterpieces of their kind. Caesar writes about his own exploits in a clear, lucid, military style, speaking always of himself in the third person in an effort to appear impartial. No more effective propaganda device could have been invented; for his reputation, at least as a soldier, has been secured primarily on the evidence of these works. Although few would deny the military prowess of the great dictator and the thought and care that he put into his campaigns, it is possible to remain unconverted that he was always as justified and unerringly right as he claims—possible, but difficult.

The Augustan Age—History with a Purpose—Livy

Mention has already been made of Livy, the prorepublican historian of the Augustan age. Not all his History of Rome survives, but enough for us to realize how valuable the work would have been if complete. It was the first systematic attempt at covering all republican history; and evidently Livy had a real enthusiasm for his subject. Unfortunately no one in his day knew any certain facts about the kingdom and early republic, nor had any histories been written within centuries of this early age. What Livy gives us, then, is the tradition as it was known in the Augustan period, and this tradition centered round certain great heroes, whose lives had conformed, or were made to conform, to the best republican ideals of seriousness, courage, fortitude, and selfless service to Rome. The work thus served as a kind of supplement to the Aeneid of Vergil, which showed how the gods had, from
the end of the Trojan War, always planned for the greatness of Rome and her imperial destiny. Livy shows how the virtues of the Romans had made them worthy of this high destiny. Its republican bias was therefore all to the good in a work of this kind. Livy was in no sense a scientific historian like Polybius or Thucydides, and was barely indebted to them at all, and he had done no research beyond studying the works of his predecessors. But it is his picture of republican Rome that captured the minds and hearts of posterity rather than the more difficult and thoughtful Tacitus, who was not known in the Middle Ages, and has never attained a tithe of Livy’s popularity in the centuries since.

TACITUS—THE PSYCHOLOGIST AS HISTORIAN

Tacitus was a republican at heart, but born out of his time into the age of the Flavians and early Antonines, and his experience as a senator in this difficult period for men of his class undoubtedly embittered him. He made no real attempt at objectivity (though he did not realize his bias himself), but his work is nevertheless one of the world’s historical and literary masterpieces. Tacitus had evidently been trained in rhetoric and he wrote in a terse epigrammatic style which is extremely effective in Latin, though it would be entirely unsuited to Greek. Time and again his thumbnail personality sketches hit the mark, summing up an emperor or an official with deadly accuracy. For Tacitus is primarily a psychologist writing history. His *Annals*, as far as we have them, cover the reigns of Tiberius, Claudius, and Nero, while the * Histories*, of which we have only the first part, cover the Year of the Four Emperors. In addition there is a famous and often-quoted monograph on the primitive Germans, whom it was his intention to contrast with the effete Romans of his day. There is also a biography of his father-in-law, a Roman official whom he greatly admired, and who served in Britain.

Tacitus’ thesis throughout his work is that the decay of public and private morality in his age was due to the absolutism of the emperors and to the suppression of human freedom. As far back as Tiberius this tendency was visible, and it is inherent in the very nature of absolutism. Tacitus movingly describes the way in which the moral fiber of the senators must have been undermined by their subserviency, and describes how as members of the highest law court in the land they were forced to agree to the condemnation of entirely innocent men by Domitian, on pain of having to suffer the same fate. Nowhere do we get such an impression of what it was really like to be a noble in the days of the tyrannous emperors. Yet it is only fair to point out that this was not the whole story of the empire, and that Tacitus quite intentionally blinded himself to any merits the system might have had in other respects. But for a modern reader these passages nevertheless remain the vital parts of his work, and Tacitus can be read with profit in our own age, even by those who have no other interest in Roman history.

THE LATE EMPIRE

Suetonius, who lived in the reign of Hadrian, may be classed as a historian only by courtesy. His gossipy biographies of twelve emperors have been very influential in forming later opinion of these men and usually stress the facts about them that are of the least historical importance. The information may be reliable as far as it goes, since for a time he had access to the imperial archives. But his selection of what was important leaves almost everything to be desired, and there can be little doubt that the scandalous anecdotes which fill his work are precisely those that would not have appeared in the imperial archives, and were probably selected from Roman gossip, in many cases more than a hundred years after the events described. The reliability of this part of the work may therefore be seriously questioned.

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*Well known is his characterization of Galba, for a few months emperor in A.D. 69: "Omnium consensu capax imperii nisi imperasset." ("By universal consent he was fit to rule only had he never ruled.")*
Ammianus Marcellinus, the last Latin historian of importance (there were other minor historians who wrote in Greek) lived in the fourth century A.D. His history starts where Tacitus left off, but we possess only that part which covers the second half of the fourth century. Accurate and painstaking, there are several vivid passages describing the corruption of the period, though he did not seem to appreciate sufficiently the fact that the empire was doomed, and so sometimes conveys an air of unreality to the modern reader.

Epitomes of history were also written in considerable number, and are sometimes of considerable value, since they digest passages of historians now lost. One of the best of these is Florus's *Epitome* of Livy.

> **Law**

**CONTRASTS WITH EARLIER SYSTEMS OF LAW**

The greatest of Roman glories, and Rome's supreme legacy to mankind, is the Roman law, the development of which we are fortunately able to trace almost from the earliest times, owing to the extant writings of so many great jurists, and to the firsthand description of the working of republican courts derived from such men as the practicing lawyer Cicero.

As was seen in an earlier chapter, the first codified law of Rome was the Twelve Tables, drawn up by a committee of ten in 449 B.C. under the stimulus of the second secession of the plebs. This committee is said to have visited Greece to study existing systems of law and especially the constitution of Solon. But if the visit was ever made (it is recorded by Livy many centuries later), it was singularly unfruitful, for the Twelve Tables bear no evidence of Greek influence, being an extremely primitive document as far as we are able to judge from what has survived. They remained the basic statute law of the Romans. In addition, statute law was made from time to time by the Assembly. These laws, however, covered primarily constitutional and criminal law, which have only limited importance. They were applicable only to Rome herself and her citizens. Since no principles were involved they were incapable of wider application.

To understand the epoch-making character of the Roman contribution to the science of law, it should first be contrasted with what went before it. Until late times the Egyptian law was the word of the Pharaoh as revealed to him by the gods (*Ma'at*). In other words, each case was decided by a person, whether the Pharaoh or a judge appointed by him, not necessarily in accordance with any law or legal principles. Personal justice of this kind is common throughout the East, even to the present time. It has nothing to do with law in the Roman sense.

The Hammurabi Code of Babylonia is a series of statute laws, some criminal and some social and commercial, which name definite penalties for their contravention. Individual judges could no doubt decide whether to enforce the full penalty, but since the penalties were clearly stated, the minimum room was left for the exercise of their personal discretion. The code, in fact, was clearly designed for the purpose of preventing judges from making arbitrary decisions. The Hebrew codes were of the same nature, with the addition of certain prescribed religious practices.

The Greek city-states, in addition to possessing basic constitutional laws, had a number of statute laws of the same kind as those mentioned above. But in ordinary private litigation each particular case was decided on its merits by appeal to a jury. The jury did not have to take into account decisions made by earlier juries in similar cases. There was as yet nowhere any science of jurisprudence or principles of law which could be applied to each case as it arose, regulating the decisions of the judges. Nor did the Romans have it at the time of the Twelve Tables, which was a primitive code of the type of the Code of Hammurabi, though much simpler, as befitted a primitive society.
it was made up largely of the instructions that he proposed to give to the judges. These instructions were called *formulae*. And the edict was made up, for the most part, of decisions that had been made by his predecessors in office.

It will be seen, then, that in this way a collection of decisions would be built up which would really have the force of law, even though no statutes had been made on the subject. Statute law would, of course, be taken into consideration by the praetor, but even this he could interpret, as our judges and higher courts interpret law today. And this interpretation would probably be incorporated in the edict of the next praetor and so be binding for the future, unless a praetor for good reasons decided to depart from it—as our judges may also on occasion depart from interpretations of their predecessors.

**THE RIGHTS OF FOREIGNERS—JUS CENTIUM**

This, then, was the system for public and private law for Roman citizens, and it lasted for a considerable length of time. But cases also arose where one party to a lawsuit was a Roman citizen and one was not, and where two resident noncitizens might engage in litigation with each other in the Roman courts. If the case concerned a foreigner’s personal status, it would clearly be impossible to settle it through the *jus civile*, applicable only to citizens. So in 242 B.C. a *praetor peregrinus* or foreign praetor, whose task was to look after such cases, was elected for the first time. Thus the idea arose that foreigners also had rights, and the new law under which they were judged was called the *jus gentium*, or law of peoples. Both praetors now issued annual edicts covering the cases for which they were responsible.

**INTERPRETATION OF THE LAW—BEGINNINGS OF JURISPRUDENCE**

As the Roman state grew in importance and undertook more and more responsibilities, and legal decisions of wide significance had to be made by unqualified persons, an innovation was made which proved to be the
real foundation of Roman jurisprudence. It became the custom for certain skilled lawyers, who had held high office in the state, to assist the praetors in drawing up their edicts and in answering questions put by judges. They could also give advice to litigants. These men were not paid, nor did they hold any official position, but undertook the work from a sense of duty and for the prestige involved. Since these *juris prudentes* (men skilled in the law, hence our word "jurisprudence") were appealed to for advice, especially in cases where the law was doubtful, they became specialists in interpretation, and theirs was now the chief responsibility in the building up of new law for the future. It was among these men that the conception of equity (*aecuitas*) grew up as a principle which could override a strict interpretation of the law. In time, especially under the empire, certain individuals among them became known for the excellence of their opinions, as certain Supreme Court Justices of the past may still be quoted and accepted in the United States even though they have been long dead.

**INFLUENCE OF PHILOSOPHY—JUS NATURALE**

Many of these *juris prudentes* were strongly influenced by Stoicism, with its conception of the natural law of divine reason (*jus naturale*), which became a commonly accepted ideal, a kind of ideal law in accordance with which all statute law should be made and all legal decisions should be rendered. The strongly humanitarian viewpoint of the Stoics thus became incorporated into Roman law.

Under the early principate the same system was maintained. But naturally the edict of the praetor and the opinions of the *juris prudentes* had to take account of the new influence of the princeps; and with the increasing absolutism of the emperors the decisions in public law tended to reflect the increasing importance of the state. There was also far more statute law in the empire than under the republic. The Assembly declined as a lawmaking body after Augustus, but the Senate now became for the first time since 448 B.C. a real legislative body, though its laws were naturally in accordance with the emperor's wishes. The emperors after Augustus also issued decrees which had all the force of law. Under Hadrian the praetors' edicts were codified into a perpetual edict, leaving the *juris prudentes* and their interpretations of still greater importance than before. After Hadrian many of them began to hold official positions in the imperial service, often serving as advisers to the emperor, who now felt in need of skilled legal assistance. The law continued to develop, often in accordance with newer Greek and Oriental philosophical ideas.

By this time there was virtually no distinction between the *jus civile* and the *jus gentium*, since the vast majority of the inhabitants of the empire by the time of Hadrian, and all by A.D. 212, were Roman citizens. It was the principles of the *jus gentium*, which had always been more universal and thus more in accordance with philosophical principles, as well as more in accordance with contemporary requirements in law, which prevailed. In the last stage of the empire, the great codification of the law began. Creativeness declined under the absolutist emperors, and the opinions of the great *juris prudentes* of the past were taken as actual law, and a number of dead jurists were named whose opinions must prevail. In the event of a tie, the opinion of the supposed greatest, Papinian, was to be decisive.

**THE GREAT CODIFICATION OF THE LAW AND ITS INFLUENCE**

The Theodosian Code of A.D. 438 was a collection of imperial edicts binding in the Eastern and Western Empires. This was followed in the sixth century by the great definitive code of Justinian, drawn up by Trebonian and a group of distinguished jurists in Constantinople. This code, known as the *Corpus Juris Civilis*, had four parts: the Code, which consisted of the imperial edicts of all the emperors (*constitutiones*);
the Digest, which contained the decisions of the great juris prudentes; the Institutes, primarily a manual on legal principles for use in schools; and the Novels, a series of new laws which Justinian found necessary to complete the whole structure. Naturally the Digest was the most important part of the code for posterity, since these opinions, based on the best thought of the greatest jurists in accordance with their conceptions of the natural law, were to a large extent free from limitations of time and place. This law code, however, differed from earlier ones in that Christian influence had now been admitted to it. Religious crimes, such as heresy, were included, but on the whole the Christian influence was a gain, especially the legislation on slavery.

The influence of Roman law is almost incalculable. It is not so much that codes of law in many modern countries are still largely Roman, nor that the canon law of the Church is almost exclusively Roman; but that this civilizing work was done by the Romans once and for all, and there was no need ever to do it again. The primitive laws of the barbarian invaders of the empire were so far behind Roman law in principles and sheer intellectual grasp of the problems involved in any law code that all took freely from the Romans, and no code in the Western world has not been influenced by it. It was used as a political tool to help the development of the national state by medieval monarchs. It was so patently superior to feudal law that when the king's justice was modified Roman, and the local law was feudal, every litigant, if he had the choice, would prefer the king's justice. When Napoleon needed a new law code for France in the early nineteenth century, it was to Roman law that he went for a model.

It may be added that in the Middle Ages the great tradition of the juris prudentes was carried on by the jurists of the University of Bologna from the eleventh century onward. Indeed, the university itself only came into existence as a law school with the rediscovery of the Corpus juris civilis of Justinian, which had been lost in the ages of barbarian domination of Europe.

**Literature**

**Poetry**

In the field of literature as such the influence of the Greeks was for a long time paramount. But three new fields were exploited by the Romans—satire, the satirical epigram, and letter writing. They may also have invented the novel, of which the earliest example known to us is the Satyricon of Petronius, though among the vast lost literature of Alexandria, much of it written for pure entertainment, there may have been precursors.

**The Epic**

Much has already been said of the great epic of Vergil, the Aeneid. The story is concerned with the voyage of Aeneas to Rome after the fall of Troy, but the real purpose is to extol the glory of Rome, founded by a descendant of Aeneas. It thus becomes a patriotic poem, the first in history, and perhaps still the greatest. Since Aeneas is also a wanderer, and several of the scenes in the poem are direct imitations of Homer, the whole poem is bound to invite comparison with the Odyssey. This, in view of his purpose, is unfair to Vergil, for his work is on the whole original, with most of its best episodes not even paralleled in the Odyssey. The work is very uneven—Vergil himself intended to polish it if he had lived—and the hero is by all standards a failure, never holding either our interest or our sympathy. But the incidental scenes, and especially those in which the hero is forced to wrong innocent people in the pursuit of his mission, are moving. And there is a great grandeur in the poem, especially in the account of the fall of Troy. Vergil was a great literary artist, certainly a master of the Latin lan-

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*The Greeks had also composed epigrams, but these were, as a rule, short panegyrics of famous people and events, rather than the pointed, usually witty and often biting thumbnail sketches of Martial.*
guage. But the Aeneid is not an easy poem to appreciate in any language but the original, and without some understanding of and sympathy for his purpose. The medievals, with their special feeling for Rome, regarded Vergil as not only the greatest of the pagans, but as almost superhuman, a prophet as well as poet, and in Rome itself he was a classic as soon as he was dead, to be studied by every Roman schoolboy. His influence until the present century was probably greater than that of any writer of the ancient world.

LYRIC POETRY

The Greeks had been such masters of lyric poetry that the Romans never escaped fully from their influence, and many excellent Latin lyrics are little but paraphrases of Greek originals. Yet the subjects chosen are frequently Roman, and it was early found that the Latin language could be effectively used for lyric and that the principal Greek meters could be turned easily into Latin. Catullus is the greatest early master of the Latin lyric. Much of his work is on conventional Greek subjects, but his odes to Lesbia, a noble Roman lady who was probably also the most profligate and notorious of her generation, are deeply felt. Horace, a poet of the age of Augustus, composed his odes very carefully, and they are not always entirely successful as poetry. But most of his odes, composed both in light and serious vein, are highly polished and apparently sincerely felt. Horace’s remarkable felicity of phrase has made him perhaps the most translated of ancient poets, and his poems render well into any language. The Greek influence is mostly to be found in his choice of meters, which are nearly always of Greek origin.

PASTORAL POETRY

Theocritus, the Hellenistic Greek, was the model for all pastoral poetry, and, in the opinion of many critics, he has never been surpassed. But Vergil composed a number of poems in this style, which are collectively called the Eclogues, though they are not all concerned with shepherds and shepherdesses and the usual material of the pastoral. Several of them are charming, though recognizably imitations. But the fourth eclogue is of a different kind, containing a prophecy of the birth of a child who was to usher in the Golden Age. Christians, of course, took this to be a prophecy of the birth of Jesus, and this was probably the chief reason they looked upon Vergil as inspired. The details of the prophecy as they appear in the eclogue do not apply very closely to any child known to us, but it expresses clearly Vergil’s semi-mystical temperament, and the hopes that had been aroused in him by the era of peace inaugurated by Augustus, his patron.

DIDACTIC POETRY

The most original didactic poem in the Latin language is certainly the Georgics of Vergil, a long, sustained hymn of praise of the rural life, which really succeeds in recapturing the atmosphere of the Italian countryside in which the poet was reared. The occupations of the farmer are accurately detailed, but always with the halo of romance upon them. The poem is more finished than the Aeneid, and within its chosen compass in many ways more effective, and much of the poet’s best work is in it.

Ovid, after Vergil the most popular of Latin poets in the Middle Ages, was the most versatile and facile of all poets in his versification. In view of the variety of his subjects, he cannot be easily classified. Amongst his didactic poems are the Fasti, in which he takes up the various feast days of the Roman year and tells of the rites celebrated and their origin. His most famous, or notorious, work also falls into this classification, the Ars amatoria, or the art of loving, in which he explains the art of seduction, with many witty and intentionally sententious digressions. His Metamorphoses, one of our chief sources of information on the subject—and sometimes our only source—is a handbook of Greek mythology. These Greek stories he tells very entertainingly. His Amores are love poems addressed to passing loves, written as ever, without any real feeling, but with great facility. Ovid was finally banished from Rome by Augustus,
perhaps for his *Ars amatoria*, which was hardly in keeping with the Princeps's policy for restoring the sanctity of family life, but possibly for a more than usually outrageous exploit with Julia, the daughter of the Princeps, who was banished about the same time.

**Drama**

The Romans had no sense of tragedy in their make-up, and it is not surprising that there are no first-rate writers of tragedy in Latin. The tragic dramas of Euripides, however, as the reader will realize after recalling the discussion of this writer in an earlier chapter, lent themselves to imitation fairly well. Early in the republic various writers tried to adapt Euripides to the Latin stage, and the first important Roman poet, only fragments of whose work remain, wrote a few plays based on Roman history. The only poet whose tragedies are extant, Seneca, was not eminently fitted for his task as a tragedian, as he was unable to rid himself of his sententiousness and his addiction to false rhetoric. Occasionally a speech rings true, and there is some verbally dexterous dialogue, but very little that can be called truly tragic. And it was almost ludicrous to attempt, as he did, to imitate the Greek paraphernalia of gods when in his day no one had any belief in them. Unfortunately his influence was strong in European tragedy before Shakespeare, and the medievals, knowing nothing better, admired him. He is seldom admired now that we have the Greek tragedians in the original, and never performed.

**Comedy**

The Romans do not seem as a people to have been gifted with a natural facility for laughter. There was always some cruelty in their wit, and they did not possess the urbanity required for comedies of manners. Doubtless a people who could be entertained by gladiatorial shows would not take so easily to the more polite entertainment of true comedy. The only comedies extant were written in the first days of Greek influence under the republic, and both the playwrights, Plautus and Terence, are heavily indebted to the New Comedy of Athens. The scenes and characters of Plautus are invariably Greek, but to make a greater appeal to his Roman audience he combined elements from the Roman society of his day. They were written solely for entertainment, and in this they are on the whole successful, and revivals and adaptations of Plautus have even been successful in modern times. Shakespeare and Molière were indebted to him for some of their plots, though these, of course, also came from the New Comedy of Athens. Since we possess only fragments of the New Comedy, the plays of Plautus have a certain additional value for us. The other writer of comedies, Terence, who belonged to the circle of Scipio Aemilianus at Rome, was not interested in adding Roman characteristics to his plays, since his audience was made up of pronounced Grecophiles. They are therefore simply adaptations of the New Comedy in Latin. His style was more polished than that of Plautus, and he is more quotable. And he is believed to have added a new feature to the drama, the use of plot to sustain interest. Though this device may have already been used in some plays of the New Comedy of which we know nothing all the plays prior to Terence of which we have knowledge, tragedy and comedy alike, used only plots and situations to which the audience possessed the key. The audience knew, and the characters did not, what was going to happen, so that the entertainment consisted in watching the characters make errors which full knowledge would have avoided. The use of a plot which was unknown to the audience provided it with a new interest to hold its attention to the end of the play.

**Characteristic Roman Forms**

**Satire**

The same qualities which made the Romans unsuccessful at comedy, their seriousness, their interest in moral questions, and their caustic wit, led them to develop a new form of literature unknown to the
Greeks. A man like Aristophanes could criticize his society bitterly enough, but beneath it all there was a real love of Athens, in addition to a wild and irreverent inventiveness and boisterousness altogether alien to Roman character. When the Romans wished to criticize their society they did it as moralists and realists, and with full seriousness, and they were really indignant at what they criticized, however they might sweeten the pill with wit and even humor. The form most suitable for this is satire, which was developed for the first time by the Romans. An early satirist of whose work we possess only fragments is Lucilius, who presented scenes from the life of his time in verse, usually criticizing its vices, though some of his satires are merely descriptive of contemporary life. This simple descriptiveness disappears in the more developed form of the satire as it appears later. Horace, who acknowledges himself as the follower of Lucilius, is still genial and without personal bitterness. But most of his satires are concerned with the follies and absurdities of mankind, though some are also devoted to incidents in his earlier life. Vivid and often extremely funny, they lend themselves well to translation. Perhaps the best known is the satire about the bore who tried to coerce the poet into introducing him to his patron Maecenas, and Horace’s attempts to get rid of him.

The satirists of the Silver Age of the early second century A.D. had far more, it would appear, to criticize in their society than had Horace. Persius seems too often to be insincere and his themes are stock ones. But Juvenal, unquestionably the greatest of Roman satirists, whipped himself into a continual fury at what he saw around him, and he did not hesitate to put it on paper. No doubt his portrait of Roman society, with its clients, its legacy hunters, its gluttons, and its crooked contractors, is overdrawn, and Juvenal was a bitterly disillusioned man who took little joy from his life. But the portrait is vivid and convincing as far as it goes. It is from Juvenal that we get the famous expression “bread and circuses” for the life of the proletariat, and from Juvenal that the stereotype of the decadent society of the imperial capital has been taken by subsequent writers. He has been the model for satirists ever since.

Epigram

The Latin language was eminently suitable for epigram, and in Martial, an earlier contemporary of Juvenal, it found its master. Most of his epigrams are extremely witty and pointed, and defy translation with the same condensation in any other language. Martial was quite objective about his own work. Most of the epigrams were composed to order for anyone who would pay him, or hold out the hope of paying him. His picture of the decadent society of Rome coincides in all essentials with that of Juvenal, and all classes of Roman society came within range of his biting wit. Like Juvenal, he succeeded in making himself the model for later generations in his particular field.

Letter writing

The Greeks, for want of a postal system, did not take naturally to letter writing, although some letters attributed to Plato are extant. So this art can be credited to the Romans, and above all to Cicero, whose voluminous correspondence, which also includes some of the replies he received, presents an extremely valuable picture of the Rome of his day and of Roman politics of the late years of the republic. More than this, it presents a picture of Cicero himself which is unequalled by that of any other man in all Roman history. For Cicero did not intend the letters to be published, and he made no effort to edit them. So they reveal him with all his faults, which are apparent on the surface, while the virtues are more concealed, but still visible to the discerning reader.

In contrast, Pliny the Younger’s letters seem a little precious, having been carefully edited by the writer to show off his virtues, and more polished than is usual with people who write letters in the ordinary course of the day’s activity. But they, too, give us a
This brief account of Latin literature, which is far from inclusive, may fittingly end with a mention of the Metamorphoses of Apuleius, a prose writer of the second century A.D. The writer was a professional orator who turned his hand to the composition of tales based on subjects taken from the Greeks. The famous Golden Ass and Cupid and Psyche are still known and still retranslated today, and have never lost their popularity. But the Latin scholar is amazed at the work of Apuleius, wondering how it could be possible as early as that day for such antiquarian zeal to be employed in the writing of anything designed to be read by contemporaries. It is full of strange words, still stranger turns of phrase, and other exhibitions of what seems to be simple verbal fantasy. He coined words and phrases which we find in no other writing of his time, and no other extant writer has imitated him.

It would look as if the virtuosity of Apuleius was carefully calculated to attract the interest of the bored Roman of his day (like some avant-garde writers in the 1920's), which would not have been excited by an ordinary composition in a tongue familiar to readers. Most of the verbal ingenuity is lost in translation into any tongue, though many translators have made the attempt, in part, perhaps, accounting for his continued popularity with them, for they were thus enabled to play amusing tricks with their own languages also. The highly sophisticated and calculated artificiality of the tales of Apuleius renders them sometimes most charming in translation, but is certainly a sign that the creative period of Roman writing was over. Latin literature did not recover its vitality until the descendants of the invading barbarians took up the use of a greatly modified Latin once more in the early Middle Ages.

> Suggestions for further reading

The most noble poem in the Latin language, the Aeneid of Vergil, is available in many translations. A new translation in an inexpensive
edition, which steers a safe path between modern and archaic language and is highly recommended, is K. Guinagh, *The Aeneid of Vergil* (New York: Rinehart & Co., Inc., 1953). Other Latin authors who should be read are Lucretius, Horace, and Ovid, in addition to those mentioned at the end of the two previous chapters. There are many good translations available, especially two Classics Club editions of the two first-named poets.

On Latin literature there are two outstanding works by J. W. Duff, one of them recently reprinted. There is no other history of Latin literature which will begin to compare with these masterpieces; J. W. Duff, *A Literary History of Rome to the Close of the Golden Age* (ed. A. M. Duff; New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1953), and J. W. Duff, *A Literary History of Rome in the Silver Age from Tiberius to Hadrian* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927).


On the city of Rome itself mention should be made of the well-written and well-illustrated G. Shoverman, *Eternal Rome* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1924), Vol. 1, which tells much of the history of Rome from the point of view of the city of Rome, an original idea well sustained and carried out.

Since, above all, Rome was famed for its buildings and engineering feats, many of which still survive today, the interested student should consult W. J. Anderson and R. P. Spiers, *The Architecture of Greece and Rome* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), Vol. 2, *Rome*, which should be available in all good libraries.

Finally, mention should be made of the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, available in many editions and translations. This little book, though written in Greek and therefore not forming part of Latin literature, was written by a Roman emperor, and tells much not only of the emperor himself but of Stoic philosophy as it was understood in the Silver Age.
The Rise of Christianity

Religious conditions in the Roman Empire at the beginning of the Christian Era • The life and death of Jesus Christ • The early Christian Church • The organization of the Church • The establishment of Christian doctrine • The persistent ideal of poverty and holiness: monasticism

Religious conditions in the Roman Empire at the beginning of the Christian Era

Mention has already been made in the last chapter of the new religions that arose in the Orient and penetrated into the Roman Empire. This chapter will be concerned with the religion that was the last to arise but was destined to supersede all the others and finally, as an organized religion, to become the successor to the Roman Empire itself.

The Greek Background

In order to understand the setting for the new faith it is first necessary to review briefly the religious conditions in the Roman Empire, and especially in the Hellenistic world. With the loss of independence suffered by the Greek city-states, the old civic pride, and with it civic religion, had declined; but the Greeks had not lost their vitality and creativeness, nor their intellectual curiosity. The whole Hellenistic world had become the field for their activities, and under their stimulus a momentous change had come over the native Oriental peoples. No people in the whole Near East had remained untouched by the Greek spirit, and Greek restlessness had communicated itself to the others.

But the whole vast field of political activity which had taken so much of the energy of the Hellenes in the days of independence was now closed to them. The Hellenistic monarchical system had altogether replaced democracy, and when these monarchies themselves succumbed in turn to the Roman expansion, there was still no outlet for political aspirations save for individuals in Roman service. Roman influence in the Hellenistic world, however, was primarily in government and military affairs. The Romans usually protected and ruled this world efficiently enough, but the cultural influence was all in the other direction. The Greeks absorbed the Romans into their culture, which continued to expand ever further westward as the Romans provided the means.

Deprived of what had been the joy of his life in earlier times, the restless Greek engaged in commercial activity, transforming the economy of the Near East; he introduced his language, his art, his literature, his philosophy, his sports, and his whole way of life wherever he went. But still he was
not satisfied. Something essential had gone from his life, and for all the great show of activity too often he felt his existence was empty. The gods were pleasant myths to be explained away and Chance ruled now; but though she could be wooed, she could hardly be loved or worshiped. Nor could philosophies hold the allegiance of the Greeks. The Skeptics were busy showing that all philosophies were based on untenable assumptions and that the truth could not be known. The vacuum could only be filled by a religion which appealed to the heart, giving a meaning to the aimless life of the now cosmopolitan and rootless Greeks.

First came a revival of the native Greek mysteries of Eleusis and Samothrace, which, as Plutarch tells us, left the initiate feeling as if he had indeed had an experience of divinity. These mysteries had always demanded much of their devotees, but in return had assured them of immortality, through the undergoing of certain trials which purified the soul. And throughout the Hellenistic world the Oriental religions all experienced a revival, the cults of Cybele and Isis and of Mithra offering impressive ceremonial, festivals, ritual, and initiation, as well as purification and redemption of the soul with the aid of a mediator who sacrificed himself for the salvation of men. At last the Orient ceased to accept from the Greeks without giving in return. Now the culture became truly Greco-Oriental, with the Romans as outside conquerors, resisting or succumbing to the allurements of this culture, but always alien in the Hellenistic world.

THE JEWISH BACKGROUND

But there was one Oriental people which held itself aloof, for the Jews had already received their separate promises. The Jewish religion had absorbed elements from the other Oriental teachings, and the more orthodox Jews now believed in the future life, and they believed in the Satan and demons of Persian Zoroastrianism and Mithraism; but they also held fast to their more ancient law and ritual which, with the ascendancy of their priesthood, had become ever more strict and rigid. They remained monotheists, believing that all other gods than Yahweh were either demons, idols, or nonexistent. And above all they were looking for a Messiah who would come to redeem the faithful people of Israel; for him they must remain apart, a chosen people, the only righteous ones on earth, the only ones ready to greet him when he came. The center of the Jewish religion was the holy city of Jerusalem, which had retained a precarious independence under the Maccabees, only to fall to the arms of Pompey, and thereafter submit, first to a client king, Herod of Idumaea, and then to the direct government of Rome under an equestrian procurator. The Romans had never been able to understand the Jews. From sad experience they knew that they could not drive them into making any compromises with polytheism, not even the formal acknowledgment of the divinity of the emperor. So at last they accepted the fact and let them alone, giving them religious privileges withheld from any other subjects of Rome, for the Romans felt that the Jewish faith did not constitute any real danger. It seemed impossible that such a small and exclusive sect could expand so far that it could undermine the loyalty of the vast population of the empire.

But the Jews in Jerusalem were by no means the only Jews in the Hellenistic world. Elsewhere, in every city of importance, there was a Jewish colony which sent representatives to the great festivals at Jerusalem, willingly acknowledged the temple there as the headquarters of their religion, and from their greater wealth often sent donations for the poorer Jews of the religious capital. The widely scattered Jews of the Diaspora (Dispersion) lived in Greek cities, and were subject to the all pervading influence of Greek culture. They could not all be so strict in their religious observances as their brethren of Jerusalem. Though they studied and loved the Hebrew Law, they also studied Greek philosophy at Greek schools; they were familiar with all the intellectual currents of the Greek world. Such a one
was Saul of Tarsus, who was to become the first great Christian missionary.

Even in Jerusalem itself not all the Jews had kept themselves free from Greek influence. In the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, there were Jewish collaborators, and though these had lost power in the time of the Maccabees, others were still ready to collaborate with the Greeks and Romans when the Jews lost their independence. It was necessary for these men to play a very careful game with the Romans, for the ultimate benefit, as they no doubt felt, of the whole Jewish people. These men provided the high priest at the time of the Crucifixion, and probably a majority of the Jewish Council (Sanhedrin or Synedrion), which was entrusted by the Romans with local government, subject only to the general supervision of the Roman procurator.

But these Hellenized Jews (Sadducees) who accepted realistically the Roman rule differed in one important respect from their fellow Jews the Pharisees. They did not believe in the resurrection of the body and in immortality.

With many fervent men and women looking for a Messiah, and with no certainty of when he would come, nor how he would reveal himself, it was natural that there were many who claimed to be the Messiah. These men gathered around themselves fanatical bands of disciples, who were too often determined that their Messiah should prevail, if necessary by force. But all failed, and by the time of the birth of Jesus there was none who had been able to command the faith and allegiance of all the Jews. The Sadducees had found it necessary to suppress these would-be Messiahs, for they were held responsible by their masters for all riots. Other Jews, like the Essenes, had gone into the desert, purifying themselves by ascetic practices, but they too were waiting for the Messiah to reveal himself. And again others, like the Pharisee Hillel, had begun to teach the people that the true religion was a religion of the heart, one that emphasized love for one’s neighbor, rather than only an affair of religious observances and ritual.

Such, then, was the atmosphere in Judaea and Palestine when Jesus was born.

The rise of Christianity

The nature of the sources

We do not know as much as we should like about the early history of Christianity, and the actual life and work of its founder, for reasons not unlike those already discussed in connection with the Hebrews. And though the traditions about Jesus Christ grew up far closer in time to his actual life than the traditions about Moses, and indeed some of the writers may have known him on earth and participated in his work, the chief difficulty remains that these men were not concerned with writing a history so much as with presenting a picture which would captivate the minds and hearts of their readers. The four Gospels (the Greek word is "evangelion," meaning "good news," hence the writers were called Evangelists), which tell of the life of Jesus all present this unique personality in terms sufficiently alike for us to recognize the authenticity of the general portrait. But each Evangelist selects from Jesus' life and teachings those elements which the writer personally has felt to be essential. The portrait is thus colored by the understanding and purpose of the Evangelist himself. Matthew and Luke record the birth, and, very briefly, the childhood of Jesus, while Mark is apparently only interested in the mission of Christ. Mark therefore begins his Gospel with the baptism in the river Jordan, where this mission received its public divine approval—one of the few incidents described by all four Evangelists. John also writes only of the mission of Christ, but every word in his Gospel is deeply concerned with the divinity of Christ and the inner meaning of the impulse of love that he came on earth to proclaim.

None of the Evangelists shows any signs of having done any historical research, nor would it seem to have occurred to any of them to do so. While Matthew and Luke make brief mention of an important event in the life of Jesus at the age of twelve,
both are silent on the years between this event and the baptism at the age of thirty; and this period can only be filled, if at all, by the use of much later legends, which may have some basis of truth behind them.

Apparent contradictions in the accounts have always been difficult for commentators to explain, as, for instance, the different genealogies of Jesus which appear in Matthew and Luke, and the voyage to Egypt described by Matthew, which seems inconsistent with the Luke narrative. Yet these Gospels are all that we possess in the way of external record, and from them must be constructed such consecutive history as we can. The personality of Jesus Christ shines out so clearly from all four narratives that there has never been any real question as to their general truth and authenticity.

After the death of Christ the records become more plentiful. For the years immediately after his death the book of the Acts of the Apostles, probably also written by Luke, comes much closer to being a historical narrative than do the Gospels. Contemporary with this book are the letters of the apostle Paul to the churches which he founded. Most of these are certainly authentic. In the early second century we have the first mention of Christians from Roman sources, and from the middle of the second century there are enough Christian records for a consecutive account to be framed with some accuracy. But most of first-century Christianity and even the question whether St. Peter was the first bishop of Rome and was martyred there are not yet entirely historically established.

The Evangelist St. John writing his gospel. The eagle, always associated with St. John, symbolized, according to the inscription, the evangelist's yearning toward the heights. From a book of gospels (Anglo-Frankish), ca. 850. (COURTESY THE PIERPONT MORGAN LIBRARY, MS. 862, FOLIO 144)
The story, therefore, that follows will necessarily be drawn from the Gospels and the other books of the New Testament, with the reminder that it may not be fully accurate, and it cannot be independently verified by any means now available to us.

THE GOSPEL ACCOUNT

Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea, as prophesied by the Hebrew prophet Micah. He was born through the influence of the Holy Spirit to Mary, whose husband was Joseph of the lineage of King David. Mary had been informed by an angel that the child was to be born, and was to be a "son of the Most High." Thus far the story parallels that of Mithra, who was born by a similar divine dispensation.

While only a few days old Jesus was visited by representatives of the Oriental religions in the form of three wise men or kings, who followed a star to the cattle barn where he was lying (Matthew), and by humble shepherds to whom the birth had been
revealed by a choir of angels (Luke). After a journey to Egypt to escape from persecution by King Herod, who had heard of the visit by the wise men (Matthew), Jesus returned to Nazareth, where he was brought up in the Jewish faith. At the age of twelve he was taken to Jerusalem by his parents, who found him after some days in the temple disputing with the Jewish rabbis. The Evangelist records that his parents were astonished at his learning, thus making it clear his knowledge of the Jewish Law had been acquired by divine dispensation, and not through their instruction. When they found him he returned with them to Nazareth, where in due course he took up his father's trade of carpentry.

Thereafter there is a break in the narrative until all four Evangelists record a visit to an Essene prophet, John the Baptist, who has been preaching the imminent coming of the Messiah, and urging the people to change their way of thinking in preparation for this event. John has already declared that he himself is not the Messiah. When he sees Jesus coming he immediately recognizes him as the one who should come, "the latchet of whose shoes I am unworthy to unloose," and baptizes him in the river. A voice is heard from heaven saying, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased," and the Holy Spirit is seen descending from heaven in the form of a dove.

This is the beginning of the Messianic mission of Christ (the word "Christus" means the "anointed one"). For the next three years he preaches to the people and heals the sick, giving many signs of his Messiahship. Sometimes he teaches straightforwardly, attacking above all the strict Pharisees, whose religion is mere outward show. At other times he hides his true mes-

sage within parables, sometimes adding, even as he gives one interpretation, the words, "Let him hear who has ears to hear." He chooses twelve men to be his special aides, and these are called apostles; around him gather many more who come to listen to him. Those who decided to follow him are called disciples.

Throughout Christ's teaching there is always the emphasis that true religion comes from the heart, and that "the Law and the prophets" are comprised in two commandments, the love of God and the love of one's neighbor. Though these teachings, with their evident wealth of hidden meanings, have inspired Christians ever since, nevertheless it is not the teachings of Christ so much as his life and death and whole personality as revealed by the Gospels that have been taken by the Christian Church and Christian believers as the truest evidence for the divine origin of his mission and for the divinity of his person. The Gospels thus gave Christianity some of its human appeal over such competing religious as Mithraism and the Egyptian mystery religions in that the central figure of Christianity was a man who had actually lived on earth, and had been seen and could be remembered by his followers. The teachings have been expressed by others almost equally well, and there is nothing profoundly new in their ethics. But the inspiration of the death and resurrection has been constantly renewed in countless Christian hearts in all the centuries since.

The Gospel accounts are in substantial agreement with each other on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. After three years of preaching and healing he had aroused the resentment of many Jews who had not been convinced by his signs or his teachings. But it was one of Christ's own apostles, Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him to the leading Jews, who thereupon sent a guard to take him prisoner. Christ made no attempt to defend himself, and indeed forbade his disciples to use any violence against the guard. He had already warned them that he would be put to death and raised from
the dead after three days, but they had not understood him. When therefore they saw that he was captured and would not defend himself, they deserted him. The leading apostle, Peter, even went so far as to deny publicly that he had ever known Christ, thus again fulfilling a prophesy of his master.

Christ was then examined by the High Priest, and admitted that he was the Son of God. The High Priest and Council, declaring that this admission was a blasphemy, wished to put him to death in accordance with Jewish law, but to do so they needed confirmation of the sentence from the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate. Pilate then questioned him, but finding that his offense seemed to be only a religious one, was anxious to release him. However, when the Jews insisted that Christ wished to make himself "King of the Jews," Pilate became afraid, no doubt remembering that Tiberius was on the throne, and had recently passed severe laws against treason. He therefore confirmed the sentence and Christ was crucified. A rich follower claimed the body, and buried it in the tomb prepared for himself.

At this point it must have seemed to anyone alive at the time that Christ's mission had failed. The new Messiah had been put to death, and his followers, mostly men and women of the lower classes and of no influence, had deserted him. Like other Jewish Messiahs, of whom there had been many, he would be forgotten.
The early Christian Church

THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL AND THE NEW MISSIONARY IMPULSE

This time, however, there was a strikingly different outcome. On the third day after his death Peter, John, and a woman follower of Jesus named Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and found it empty. Then they saw their master once more alive in the body, and he showed himself to his disciples several times. This experience gave them new hope and energy, and after they had seen the resurrected Christ received into heaven, they all awaited the last fulfillment of his promise—the coming of the Helper or Holy Spirit who, according to the promise, could only come to them after Christ had died and had been resurrected. One day, when the apostles had gathered together in an upper room and after they had chosen by lot a twelfth apostle to replace Judas Iscariot, who had, in remorse, hanged himself, there was suddenly "the sound of a rushing mighty wind," and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to prophesy, and speak each in the tongue of the land of his origin. The onlookers thought them drunk, but with new inspiration they began to preach the resurrection of Christ and to make converts. One of the disciples, Stephen, addressed an assembly of Jews, accusing them of always having maltreated, rejected, and put to death their prophets. The Jews, goaded beyond their endurance, stoned him to death, making him the first Christian martyr (Greek for "witness"). Apparently the Roman officials looked the other way and did not interfere.

Present at the stoning was Saul of Tarsus, a Roman citizen, an orthodox Hellenized Jew of the sect of the Pharisees, who at once saw the danger from these new fanatical believers in a Messiah who had failed and died without fulfilling the mission expected of him. Saul therefore, with a band of determined helpers, proceeded to lead an expedition of extermination against the Christians, presumably with the aid, or at least the connivance, of the authorities. Having done his best in Jerusalem, he set out on a journey to Damascus in Syria to continue the persecution of converts in the north. On the road to Damascus he had an experience in which the crucified Christ appeared to him in a vision. This experience gave him an absolute conviction from which he never afterward wavered, leading him to regard and speak of himself as an apostle called out of due time. At first, however, he was paralyzed and struck blind; his servants brought him to Damascus, where his faculties were restored by a Christian. From this moment Saul, whom the records thereafter call Paul, was as strongly for the Christians as he had previously been against them. After a period of retirement during which he was apparently coming to an understanding of his experience on the road to Damascus, and the realization of his mission he went to Jerusalem, where he was naturally received with some distrust by his late enemies. But, even without any real authorization from the body of Jewish Christians who had now formed a church in Jerusalem as headquarters of the new religion, he set out on a missionary journey, during the course of which he took the epoch-making decision to baptize Greeks and other non-Jews as Christians without making them become Jews first, sparing them the Jewish rites and ritual which Peter had been insisting on in Palestine.

Returning to Jerusalem, Paul reached a compromise with Peter that Gentiles outside Palestine need not become Jews, while the church in Jerusalem would continue with the requirement. Then Paul set out again, making converts everywhere, especially among the Greeks to whom he, with his Greek education, was able to speak in their own language and in their own terms. At Athens itself, finding an altar dedicated "To the unknown God," he showed the Athenians who this God was, and why he hitherto had been unknown to them. With rare organizing ability and drive, he founded churches in all the places he visited, and kept in touch with them afterward
by correspondence. His letters, the earliest authentic Christian documents, expounded the new Christian theology, which seems to have been almost entirely his own work, and answered the numerous questions put to him. In all the cities Paul visited in Asia Minor and Greece, his most determined opponents were always the Jews.

OPPOSITION OF THE JEWS TO CHRISTIANITY

It cannot be stated categorically why the Jews were so determinedly hostile as a body to the Christians, although individual Jews were of course converted, especially in the Hellenistic cities. The Jewish leaders, Pharisees and Sadducees alike, had instigated the proceedings which led to the Crucifixion, but only a few took an active part in this event. The usual explanation is that the Jews were looking for a Messiah of an entirely different kind from Jesus Christ, one who would give them temporal power and not merely redeem them through suffering. Their prophet Isaiah had devoted his matchless eloquence to a description of a "suffering servant," a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,"—but it was not certain that this prophecy referred to an actual man, a Messiah. It might only refer to the people of Israel as a whole. Moreover, by no means all Jews had yet accepted the idea of a future life. If there was no such future life and no heavenly kingdom, then clearly such a Messiah as Christ was worse than useless, since his religion tended to create a schism within Jewry which could not be tolerated. All through Hebrew history there had been such schisms, and in Jewish belief these had been punished by Yahweh. They had, indeed, been responsible in part for Yahweh's continual postponement of the fulfillment of his promises. The temptation offered by Christianity, therefore, was just one more test of their faith. And even those Jews who took account of political rather than religious realities could see that Christianity represented a grave danger to the privileged status of their religion in the Roman Empire. They realized that the Romans would look upon Christianity as a Jewish sect—but potentially dangerous not only because of its exclusive monotheism but because of its zeal for conversion from which the Jews themselves had usually been free.

Christ had been a Jew, thoroughly grounded in the Law and the prophets. But he had claimed that the Law itself had to be newly interpreted, not in the manner of the rabbis, but through breathing a new spirit into it. Many were impressed by the authority with which he spoke, even daring to criticize Moses—"Moses said to you, but I say." Now St. Paul, claiming a similar authority as an apostle, was even more explicit. The Law, he wrote in a letter, is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. The Law had been given to the Hebrews because at that time they did not know right from wrong, nor did they know how God was to be worshiped and what he required of them. Now, however, under the new dispensation of Jesus Christ, they were no longer children, needing to be kept under discipline, but "sons," with their knowledge of right and wrong coming from within, through faith and love. Therefore, although Hebrew thought, formerly an exclusive possession of the Jews, was spread throughout the whole Western world by Christianity, the orthodox Jews took no pride in this dissemination of their heritage, for if this heritage was to be a possession of the world, then their mission as a chosen people was over.

ST. PAUL AS THE FOUNDER OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

On the whole Paul met with little opposition from Greeks and Romans unless, as at Ephesus, he offended the priesthood of a powerful Greco-Oriental mystery cult. But regularly the local Jewish community tried to prevent him from preaching. Several times he was thrown into prisons by the Roman authorities for causing riots, but in general it was the Romans who protected him. When at last he returned to Jerusalem, opposition to him was so strong that he was first taken into protective custody by the Romans.
Then, when he was about to be punished for his part in the riots, he used his right as a Roman citizen and appealed to Caesar (Nero). The local governor was thus forced to send him to Rome, where he was allowed a limited freedom even before his trial came up. We know nothing further of his life for certain, but tradition has it that he was beheaded during the first organized persecution of Christians in Rome about A.D. 65.

St. Paul was the real founder of Christianity as a universal religion. If the other apostles, who wished to confine Christianity to the Jews, had been successful it hardly seems possible that it could have survived. Paul also deserves to be considered as one of the most influential thinkers of history. It was no mean feat to transform what was, after all, to external eyes nothing beyond the life and death of a great prophet, into a system of theology, logical, clear, and compelling, which has stood the test of time, and is still the fundamental theological doctrine of all Christian churches, Catholic and Protestant alike.

Christ, according to Paul, had been the Son of God—a God-man—though he was also fully a man by virtue of his incarnation into a human body. Every man born into the world suffers from the sin of Adam. (“As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.”) Man would have been doomed only to hell if it had not been for the voluntary sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, which redeemed mankind through his blood, and made possible man’s salvation and reception into a blessed immortality in heaven. For Paul the necessity for man was to believe in Christ, which faith effected an inner transformation of his whole being, freeing him from the bonds of original sin, and enabling him to be good also on earth. Thus man was not saved through good works, but the good works were the fruit of his faith. The symbol of the washing away of the original sin of Adam was baptism, by which a man of his own free will declared his faith in Christ, and was received into the Church.

It should be added that, although Paul founded churches as communities of Christians who had all accepted Christ and been baptized, it was not the reception into the Church which was decisive for salvation, but the inner act of “putting on the whole armor of Christ,” allowing Christ to live within the inner self—the symbol for which was the baptism in water, which symbolically washed away the sins of the convert. Only in later days with the growth of the Church did the belief come to be accepted that the Eucharist and the other sacraments were necessary to salvation, and that the transubstantiation, the miracle of the turning of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, was the supreme need of all human beings. The baptism then became a rite to be performed in infancy, and not an affirmation of faith by a believer; from childhood, then, a Christian was cleansed from original sin and was thus eligible for Heaven even though he never lived to participate in the other sacraments.  

THE APPEAL OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE ROMAN WORLD

Christianity, as it emerged from the mind and heart of St. Paul, was eminently fitted to make the deepest appeal to religious men and women throughout the world. It promised salvation in the hereafter to all who would accept Christ, and this acceptance was simply an act of faith. Thus, in spite of its complex theology, perhaps never understood by more than a small minority of its adherents, it was basically simple. It was no respecter of persons. The meanest slave was eligible for salvation, and to him it also offered the fullest compensation for his hard life on earth—which was merely a testing ground for the hereafter. No distinction was made between men and women, and there were no difficult trials and initiation ceremonies to be undergone by the convert. And in early days there was a belief in the imminent second coming of Christ to judge the world, so that the faithful Christians might not even see death. No religion

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3 It should be pointed out that there are other varying interpretations of the teachings of St. Paul, and that what has been said here is still in dispute among theologians.
in the world of the time, not even the mystery religions, could offer as much to its converts—community fellowship, a sense of mission and urgency, a promise of a blessed immortality, and a systematic theology and philosophy which could satisfy even the Greek mind when later it set to work on it. And if at first Christianity lacked gorgeous ceremonial, this was later added in full measure by the Church. And in the recorded sayings of Christ it had a fund of ethical and moral teachings which could satisfy even the Roman feeling for active morality.

Yet it did not appeal in early times to the upper classes among either the Romans or the Greeks; indeed, for centuries it was primarily a religion of Greeks and Orientals, with comparatively few Roman converts, no Roman pope for two centuries, and hardly a single Roman martyr. The Romans, even when they were correctly informed about it, regarded it as a religion for slaves and foreigners, and it was difficult for them to accept as a redeemer a man who had belonged to a despised people and had suffered a slave's death in a remote part of the empire. His origin and manner of dying offended their class consciousness and pride of race, while the Greek intellectuals considered his teachings at first as philosophically negligible. In time, however, as the Greeks learned more about the religion, many of them began to take an active role in the formulation of Christian theology, and, especially in the early days of the Byzantine Empire, they entered passionately into theological controversy.

Physical conditions in the Roman Empire, however, were ideally suited for the spread of Christianity. The establishment of the Pax Romana made it possible for missionaries to travel in perfect safety from one end of the empire to the other, and the strategic Roman roads provided an ideal means of communication. The common languages of Greek and Latin could be understood everywhere. And Roman protection was extended to all without discrimination, at least until the new religion was proscribed as a subversive organization. And, as we have seen, any missionary like Paul who happened to be also a Roman citizen had special privileges in addition to the general protection extended by the Roman Empire to all its subjects.

**Roman Measures Against Christianity to the Conversion of Constantine**

In general, as we have seen, the Romans were tolerant of all religions, and gave hospitality in their shrines to the gods of all their subject peoples. They would have been entirely willing to include Christ among these divinities. But the Christians refused to acknowledge the existence of the other gods, or else categorically condemned them as demons. And this intolerance made the Christians refuse even to pay formal obedience to the dead emperors as gods. This refusal was, to the Romans, not a religious but a political offense, and when it became dangerous it had to be severely punished. The Jews had long been known to possess similar subversive views, but since they made no attempt to convert, and did not make themselves conspicuous, they were generally tolerated except by such a mentally unbalanced emperor as Caligula. But the Christians kept themselves apart in small communities, with simple ceremonies such as common meals during which they celebrated the last supper of Christ and his disciples. Few Romans could believe that Christian practices were really as simple and harmless as they appeared, and it was easy for their enemies to say that they performed hideous rites in secret. Even the eating of bread and the drinking of wine, which in the early days of the religion they seem to have regarded simply as symbolic of the body and blood of Christ, brought accusations of cannibalism upon them. And since many of their early communities held all goods in common, they were accused of undermining society.

So when Nero, after a serious fire had broken out in Rome (A.D. 64), was himself accused of setting it, it was not too difficult for him to turn the accusation against the Christians, inspiring the first important per-
secution. Tacitus, who recorded the fact of the accusation, did not think the Christians set the fire, but he did regard them as "haters of the human race," and for this reason worthy of punishment. The Roman citizens among those condemned, traditionally including Paul, were beheaded, while of the remainder most were killed by wild beasts in the arena, the Roman method of execution which economically served for entertainment as well as satisfying the needs of justice. St. Peter also probably perished in Rome at this time, but, according to tradition, by being crucified upside down. Yet even in this persecution, as at all times in Roman history, anyone who recanted, and was willing to prove he was no Christian by formally acknowledging the divinity of the emperors, was spared.

The laws against Christians remained on the statute books, but were only sporadically enforced. Pliny, governor of Bithynia in the early second century, asked his master Trajan if he should enforce them, and was told that he was not to seek Christians out, but that he must punish them if they were brought before him for trial and either confessed or refused to recant. In the reign of Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 177) forty-eight Christians were executed in Lyons, but this seems to have been done by the Roman authorities at the demand of a mob, presumably drawn from adherents of competing religions. This massacre was followed by a decree against all subversive religions which were likely to lead to riots. In the middle of the third century the emperors Decius and Valerius, in an attempt to halt the anarchy of the time and revive loyalty to the throne, issued a number of decrees ordering the Christians to take part in the official state worship. But though there were some martyrdoms and recantations, the laws were soon abandoned with the deaths of their authors, and the decrees were even officially rescinded by their successors.

In the early fourth century, just before the acceptance of Christianity by Constantine, a new series of decrees were issued by Diocletian and Galerius, which were this time put energetically into effect. Diocletian's new oriental absolutism (to be described in the next chapter), with the monarch a god on earth, obviously could not tolerate the state within a state that the Christian sect had now become. But though many Christians fell away from the Church at this time, the faithful remained steadfast, and it was soon seen that the religion was too powerful to be exterminated merely by force. In 311 Galerius issued an Edict of Toleration, and the following year Constantine won his battle of the Milvia Bridge under the sign of the cross. In 313 he and the Eastern Emperor Licinius jointly prepared the so-called Edict of Milan, granting equal toleration to all religions in the empire.

Constantine, though not baptized a Christian until he was on his deathbed, took an active interest in the religion, presiding over the important Council of Nicaea, which defined the doctrine of the Trinity. During the fourth century, under imperial protection, except for two years under Julian the Apostate, the Christian religion in spite of considerable opposition to it throughout the empire, made rapid progress, even in rural areas where the old gods had never altogether lost their appeal. When at the end of the century (A.D. 392) Theodosius I decreed that henceforth Christianity was to be the only religion in the empire, the countryside perforce had to submit and adopt at least the forms of Christianity. But it would probably have been difficult for any observer to detect much difference. Instead of pagan deities, Christ was enthroned; instead of the pagan shrine, a church was erected. But it is clear that these folk knew little enough of the teachings or theology of Christianity, and the festivals and ceremonies of paganism for the most part were incorporated directly into the new official religion.

* Most modern opinion holds that there was no actual Edict of Milan. The matter was discussed by the two emperors, and Licinius later issued an imperial rescript on the subject from his headquarters in the East. Constantine had already made clear his own position.
The organization of the Church

IN THE PROVINCES

As the Church grew, so naturally did the complexity of its organization. St. Paul himself, as we have seen, kept in touch with all the congregations he had founded, giving them advice and visiting them when he could. As yet there were no priests or Church officials of any kind, and the simple ceremonies and meetings did not require the services of men set aside for purely religious duties. The affairs of the churches were managed by elders, active men in the congregation who took the initiative in matters of religion. But as ever more congregations were organized and it was realized that they might drift apart both in doctrine and in practices if left to themselves, it became clear to the leaders that some kind of more elaborate organization was necessary to keep them united. Living, as they did, within the Roman Empire, there was obviously one particular pattern of organization that could best be imitated, the organization of the empire itself. Within the congregations three hierarchies differentiated themselves in the process of time: deacons, whose task was to give help to Christians in their ordinary daily affairs and especially to take care of the administration of charity; presbyters, who looked after religious affairs of the church; and then an individual leader, called an overseer or episcopus, from which comes our word "bishop."

In early times neither presbyters nor bishops were in any way superior to the ordinary layman, nor did they go through any special ceremony when they were elected to their position. But by the end of the second century, with the elaboration of the ceremonial of the Church, and the growth of the belief that its services were needed for salvation, these clergy became set apart as a class of real priests who were ordained by the bishops. And this ordination, like baptism and the Eucharist, had now become a sacrament, while the ceremony of ordination had now become a ritual conferring special sanctity upon the holder. For several centuries more it was the congregations who chose their bishops; but once chosen, these men had full monarchical power within their churches. As time went on, it became necessary to have archbishops whose seats were usually in the Roman capitals, or chief cities, of the provinces and who were in charge of all the churches in their respective provinces. These men were called metropolitan. The bishops in the whole empire met from time to time in ecumenical (universal) councils, presided over by the metropolitan or by the Bishop of Rome (later called Pope), to consider doctrinal problems and to discuss matters which concerned the Church as a whole.

IN ROME—THE BISHOP OF ROME—PETRINE SUPREMACY

The bishop of Rome had a peculiar position as the head of the Church in the capital city of the empire. Probably as early as the second century A.D. the Roman congregation was the largest in the empire. The Church in Rome, according to tradition, had been founded by the apostle Peter, who had been martyred and buried there. He thus became the first bishop of Rome. Though there is as yet no certain documentary evidence of this fact, there is no reason why it should not be true; at all events, it was generally believed by the middle of the second century A.D., since lists of the bishops of Rome were compiled about this time, and the first name on the list was always that of Peter. The tradition was also confirmed by a passage in the Gospel of St. Matthew, in the course of which Christ himself had said to Peter: "Thou art Peter (Greek for rock), and upon this rock I shall found my Church." Then he had given to Peter "the keys of heaven" and told him, "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in the

The Latin word pope merely means "father," a title given by courtesy to other priests than the pope. It is not known for certain when the word "pope" was first applied exclusively to the bishop of Rome.
heavens, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in the heavens."*

But it was a long time before St. Peter's position was supposed to confer any supreme authority upon his successors. Other bishops claimed to be the equal of the bishops of Rome, and it was usually the reputation and personality of individual bishops which gave them whatever authority they might possess in spiritual matters. Ambrose, bishop of Milan in the fourth century, was clearly the most influential bishop of his day, and was able to force the emperor himself to do penance for a massacre he had committed. Augustine, the great bishop of Hippo, tells us in his *Concessio*ns that he himself would never have accepted the authority of the Church if it had not been that he discovered from this passage in Matthew that the Church had been founded by Christ, who had delegated authority to Peter. Peter then had delegated this authority to his successor, and so on down to Augustine's own time. This gradually became the accepted doctrine of the Church. The Catholic Church today still derives its authority from the fact that the popes are traced back in a direct line to St. Peter (Petrine succession).

As long as an emperor ruled in Rome, the bishop's authority was naturally limited to his spiritual domain. But when Honorius, Emperor of the West, removed his court to Ravenna at the end of the fourth century, the bishop was left as the chief dignitary in Rome, and at times he performed the functions of a Roman ruler in the city. One great pope, Leo I, negotiated with Attila the Hun, and succeeded in diverting him from the city, and the same pope negotiated for the safety of its inhabitants during the sack of Rome by the Vandals. As the Roman provincial administration gradually collapsed in the fifth century, under the impact of the barbarian invaders, the bishops in many of the provinces took over from the helpless Roman governors, and tried to protect the interests of the people as best they could. They looked increasingly to the pope (as we may now call the Bishop of Rome) as their chief guide in political policy as well as for spiritual leadership. Pope Leo I was given official recognition by Emperor Valentinian III of Ravenna, who conferred upon him full authority over all the bishops in the empire, an authority which he did not hesitate to use, demanding implicit obedience from them and pronouncing final decisions in matters of doctrine.

* The establishment of Christian doctrine

THE QUESTIONS NOT ANSWERED BY ST. PAUL.

St. Paul, as already mentioned, was the founder of Christian theology; but his teachings, usually given in response to definite questions put to him by his churches, were very far from satisfying the inquiring minds, especially of his Greek audience. Early in the history of the Christian Church his authority was accepted as that of an apostle chosen by the resurrected Christ to explain the nature of his relationship to God the Father and other mysteries of the religion; and by A.D. 170 his letters, together with letters of the other apostles, the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and most of the present books of the New Testament were accepted as canonical or inspired books. These are the basic books of Christianity, and nothing else written by any later Christians has quite the same authority. Other men might add to this theology, but these men were not apostles; they had never known Christ personally on earth, and there was no inherent reason why one man's ideas on the subject should be better than any other man's. Yet clearly all the questions that could be asked had not been answered by Christ, Paul, or the other apostles. And it was equally

* This is the literal translation of the Greek (Matthew 16:19). It should be added that some scholars have rejected the whole passage as spurious, while Protestant theologians deny the interpretation placed upon it by the Roman Catholic Church, since there is no reference to the word "sin" always associated with it in Catholic doctrine. The Greek merely says "whatever you bind, . . ." ( ἐὰν δεῖξῃ),

* Neither, of course, was Paul one of the original apostles. But he claimed to have been personally chosen as an apostle by the resurrected Christ, and his authority was accepted by the second century A.D. by all Christians.
clear that some questions really did need answering. Moreover, many men came into Christianity after earlier experience in the mystery religions, and they were not all ready to abandon what they had been taught before conversion.

While most Romans, as was to be expected from such an unphilosophical people, were more interested in the organization of the Church and its day-to-day activities, the Greeks and Orientals were by no means content simply to believe. They wanted to understand. At the heart of Christian theology, however, there is a mystery. The religion was monotheistic, like its predecessor Judaism. But yet at the same time there is a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—a belief which later led the Muslims to attack the Christians as tritheists (having three Gods). This central Christian mystery was, of course, accepted by most Christians as a mystery not to be resolved by reason, and some of the early Christian teachers instructed their congregations not to think about the matter at all. Tertullian, for instance, an African bishop, stated openly that the more absurd an idea appeared to be to the unaided human reason, so much the more meritorious it was in the eyes of God to believe it, since such faith involved a purposeful humbling of the rational faculty, and humility had been enjoined upon his followers by Christ himself. But questionings would not be stilled, especially among Greek converts to Christianity. What was the true relationship between the Father and the other persons of the Trinity? How did the Father-God beget a Son? Where was the Son of God before he became a man? If he was really a God, then did he suffer when he was crucified?

In the first four Christian centuries there was endless division between different Christian thinkers on these problems. At the one extreme were the Gnostics, who insisted that Christ was a spiritual being whose physical body was only a phantom, while at the other extreme were the Arians (followers of Arius of Alexandria), who claimed that Christ was only sent from God, possessed divine sub-

stance, but was in no sense coequal with God. In the middle was Athanasius, whose opinion was finally accepted as orthodox (literally—correct opinion), and who stated substantially the present doctrine of the Catholic Church on the nature of the Trinity.

But questions concerning doctrine were by no means the only ones to be considered in the first few centuries of the Christian Era. When it became a settled belief that the sacraments of the Church (or rather those of them taken by the layman) were necessary for salvation, the question naturally arose as to whether the faithful partaking of the sacraments was alone necessary for salvation. If a man sinned and yet partook of the sacraments, would he be saved? Paul had already been forced to deal with the question of whether faith alone without good works was sufficient for salvation. An affirmative answer might be taken as permission to sin, as Paul’s opponents insisted. If God knew in advance who was to be saved, and God by definition must be all-knowing, then how could man be said to have free will? If everything had been predetermined, then man was not a free being at all, but only a kind of puppet in the hands of God. Would it not be better, argued Pelagius, to say that man must work his way into heaven by his deeds? Then, Augustine retorted to Pelagius, what became of God’s saving grace? How could man force God to save him if God were omnipotent? If God’s son had sacrificed himself for the sins of the world—and this was the central teaching of Paul’s theology—then salvation must be a gift of God. What was man’s own share in his own salvation?

DOCTRINAL HEBRESIES

By the time of the conversion of Constantine many of these differing opinions had already been stated publicly by their proponents, but there was no evident way of establishing the truth. Constantine himself, however, anxious to put an end to the strife, called a council at Nicaea (A.D. 325), over which he presided. Here the bishops of the empire assembled and a statement of beliefs, or a creed, was agreed upon. Majority opin-
ion was against Arius, whose teachings had been making considerable headway in recent times. The result was that Arius himself was banished and Christians were forbidden to preach his doctrines on the nature of the Trinity.

However, this proscription of Arianism was not final. During the same fourth century some of the emperors of Constantinople preferred the simpler teaching of Arius and had Arianism proclaimed as the true doctrine. This temporary ascendency of Arianism had momentous consequences, for it was during this period that many of the barbarian peoples were converted to Christianity, and it was the Arian heresy (from the Greek word for choice) that was accepted by them in preference to the teaching which Athanasius had proclaimed and ultimately became orthodox. The popes in Rome had never accepted Arianism at all—a fact which probably contributed to the later acceptance of the pope as final arbiter in matters of faith and doctrine.

The heresies, however, were far from suppressed, and struggles over doctrine constantly broke out during the next centuries, especially in Constantinople. The chief Church official in Constantinople, the patriarch, who was appointed by the emperor, frequently differed from the pope in Rome. Backed by all the prestige of the empire, the patriarch and his master frequently adopted theological positions at variance with those of the pope, while the latter considered himself, and was considered generally in the West, as having a spiritual authority far above that of the servant of an emperor who might be only a successful warrior of no learning whatever. In the eleventh century there was a final split between the Eastern and Western Churches, ostensibly over a theological question, but complicated by a real question of jurisdiction between the Churches of the East and West in relation to the newly converted barbarians. The split between the Churches persists up to the present time, though for a period in the thirteenth century they were briefly united by force when Constantinople was captured by a party of crusaders from the West. The Coptic Church of Abyssinia parted company with both the Eastern and Western Churches on a theological question as early as the fifth century A.D. and is still independent.

NEW AUTHORITATIVE DOCTRINE—THE CHURCH FATHERS

Gradually the doctrine of the Petrine supremacy became accepted in the West, and by the end of the fifth century few would have questioned the right of the pope to declare the true doctrines of the Church by virtue of his authority as the successor of Peter. By virtue of this authority he could state which of the early Christian writings had to be accepted as containing correct teachings, which among them were in the direct tradition of the apostles themselves and thus had access to directly inspired information, if not themselves inspired. Thus grew up the authority of the so-called “Apostolic Fathers” of the Church, both Greek and Latin, whose teachings were to be regarded as orthodox. Certain creeds were adopted as correct formulations of Christian faith; the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible, translated by St. Jerome, became the authoritative Latin text; and in later times such doctrines as Purgatory and the immaculate conception of Mary the mother of Jesus became accepted as part of Church doctrine, though not appearing in the Bible itself.

The earliest of the Latin Fathers of the Church was Ambrose (339?-397) Bishop of Milan, a powerful churchman who was especially important because of his insistence on the right of the clergy to discipline offenders, a right of cardinal importance in the attempt of the Church to maintain the unity of Christendom. He was also a preacher of great persuasiveness who was instrumental in converting many leading pagans, and bringing them into active work in the Church. One of his converts was Augustine. In his sermons St. Ambrose, like Pope Gregory the Great in a later century, gave a great deal of practical advice which was accepted as authori-
tative in the life of the early Church. St. Jerome (ca. 340–420), another Latin Father, translated the authoritative version of the Bible, and wrote many tracts on theology. He was a supporter of the orthodox position on the Trinity, and attacked and refuted heresy.

But by far the most influential of these Latin Church Fathers was St. Augustine (354–430), who was made bishop of Hippo in North Africa by his congregation, and then devoted his life not only to the duties of his bishopric but to evolving a theology which became in its essentials the accepted doctrine of the Church, even though some of his most extreme views were not stressed owing to their momentous consequences for human free will. Augustine has left us in his Confessions a complete account of his intellectual and spiritual struggles before his conversion, which are of the greatest importance for our understanding of the conflicting intellectual currents of the time. Always conscious of his own guilt and sinfulness, like Martin Luther, who resembled him in so many respects, he could only believe in a real conversion of the heart. But for a long time he could not bring himself to accept Christianity, which he was inclined to despise because it left too many questions unanswered. Tempted by the dualistic doctrine of Manichaeanism, he never really freed himself from it, believing most fervently in the power of evil, which he had experienced within himself. Then he immersed himself in the last great pagan philosophy of Neoplatonism, which also taught the evilness of matter, and the necessity of overcoming all material desires for the purpose of attaining a mystical union with God. This also finds its place in Augustine's theology, and there is an extraordinarily moving passage in the Confessions where he describes such an experience, which came to him as the result of his conversion.

The real question, therefore, for Augustine, it will be seen, was what need there was for a Church as mediator between man and God, and why there should be a Church at all. Indeed, Martin Luther, a deep student of Augustine, did break away from the Catholic Church, while not deviating from St. Augustine save in this one matter. The human will, said Augustine, following St. Paul, is not free, and the human being is bound by original sin. He cannot even acquire any true knowledge merely out of himself. But Christ's sacrifice had redeemed mankind, and thereafter it had become possible for man to receive grace, as a heavenly gift. Grace alone can enable man to know the truth, and to do good. And he accepts the Church teaching that grace can be obtained only if a man truly believes and receives the sacraments. The Catholic Church alone can administer these sacraments. Where did the Catholic Church receive this power? Directly from Christ to St. Peter, as we have seen, and so through the succession of popes.

This, however, does not mean that man is necessarily saved by faith or by receiving the sacraments, for God has infinite foreknowledge and infinite power. Augustine therefore comes to the conclusion that God has predestined some men for salvation and some to damnation. Man can never know for certain whether he is saved, since this is entirely in God's hands, and within his knowledge alone. In logic this position is irrefutable, and Thomas Aquinas and the medieval scholastics were forced to wrestle with the problem again. But predestination was never stressed in the Catholic Church, and not until John Calvin in the sixteenth century was it stated in this extreme form again. The remainder of the doctrine—the
powerlessness of human thinking and willing, and the necessity for grace—became part of orthodox Christian thought.

Augustine was also a pioneer in another field of thought at least as influential as his theology. An earlier Christian Father, Eusebius, had written an *Ecclesiastical History* which interpreted all the events of his own and earlier times in the light of the Old Testament, and especially of Hebrew prophecy. But Augustine went much further, and in his *City of God* wrote a history designed to show that with the coming of Christ an entirely new phase had opened. Attacking the pagans who claimed that the sack of Rome by Alaric was due to the desertion of the old gods by their worshipers, Augustine declared that this was part of God's scheme. Rome belonged to the "City of Man," which was only temporary and must pass away, to give place to the "City of God" on earth, which will endure forever, the beginnings of which had already been made under the Hebrew theocracy, and now from the coming of Christ must be continued by the Christian Church. And Augustine with great passion and power describes God's whole plan for the world, the creation and fall of man and the old dispensation, followed by man's redemption in the new age and the building of the City of God. It need hardly be pointed out how much this conception owes to the Hebrew interpretation of history, already discussed in an earlier chapter.

In Augustine's own thought it is clear that the perfect City of God can never exist on earth; but it is the ideal to which all Christians should aspire, and the beginnings of the building can be made in the here and now. Christians in subsequent ages, however, took it to be the ideal of Christendom, a working plan for all Christians to follow, justifying the extermination of heresy as treason to the City of God, and later justifying also the extermination of infidels as a fulfillment of God's plan for the unity of all men on earth in the Christian religion. The *City of God* was perhaps, after the Bible, the most influential book in the medieval world.

> The persistent ideal of poverty and holiness—Monasticism

From very early times there was opposition to the Church as an organized institution, and especially in the East, where Roman organization had not been so greatly admired as by its inheritors in the West. These dissenters could point to the teachings of Christ himself on poverty and its spiritual value, and to his advice to the young man who asked him what was necessary for salvation. Christ had replied that he should sell all his goods and follow him, "but the young man went away sorrowful because he had great possessions." These men were deeply influenced by Oriental thought, and indeed by the mystery religions, which taught that the true path of salvation was by purification on earth and an inward acceptance of the Divine. They did not believe in the machinery of salvation, as propounded by the Church, regarding it as too complex and too legal, too much in the nature of a Roman contract to be the real path to salvation. Yet at the same time they fervently believed in Christ and the central truths of the Christian religion as taught by Christ himself. Determined on self-purification, some went alone into the desert, fasted and prayed and inflicted tortures upon themselves, trying to mortify their evil nature. Others lived in small communities, holding their possessions in common, and aiding each other in their self-mortifying practices. These ascetics were regarded by all the people as holy men, so that it was difficult for the official Church to say that they were heretics.

But they did present a real problem for a Church which had chosen a different path, one that entailed organization, material resources, and political power. Their lives were a standing reproach to such a Church gradually becoming immersed in worldliness. Both in the East and in the West, however, the Church proved flexible enough to accept popular opinion of these hermits and anchorites, sometimes canonizing them as saints, even the famous St. Simeon Stylites, who
lived on a pillar for more than thirty years without even space to lie down. But it did attempt also to organize them. By the end of the fourth century the moderate Rule of St. Basil was adopted, which prescribed an orderly, regular life for these monks, as they were called. They no longer lived in the open air or in the desert or in caves, but in a communal dwelling house or monastery, in which each did a share of the work required for their subsistence. Most monks of the Eastern Church still live under the fourth-century Rule of St. Basil.

In the West asceticism of the kind possible in Egypt and the East was more difficult, as the climate in most parts is not conducive to a solitary outdoor life throughout the year. But the ascetic practices found favor with those who wished to devote their whole lives to prayer and worship, and we know of many solitary hermits and hermits already living in communities in the time of St. Jerome, who spent much of his eloquence in defending the practice. It met severe opposition from those who objected to the monks on the ground that they were too often merely escaping their social responsibilities; and when women also began to organize themselves into monasteries or nunneries Jerome had to take up the cudgels on their behalf also. St. Martin of Tours (316–397), who spent most of his life destroying the last remnants of paganism in France after the decree of Theodosius forbidding the practice of any religion but Christianity, was criticized sharply by his superiors for his own personally ascetic regimen, although he never was a monk. But in time the monasteries became institutionalized, both for men and for women; and it became a recognized sign of holiness that a man or woman should submit to mortification of the flesh while on earth, even if such people did not live according to a recognized Rule. If they lived by a Rule they were called "regular" clergy, or sometimes just "religious," since they devoted their whole lives to religion. They were distinguished from the "secular" clergy, whose duties lay in the outer world.

At the beginning of the sixth century an acceptable Rule which was applicable to all Western monasteries was drawn up by St. Benedict, who had begun his religious career as a hermit. When, however, his fame as a holy man began to attract many followers, he changed his manner of living and founded the monastery of Monte Cassino, instituting an orderly regimen which was blessed by

The monastery of Monte Cassino, in southern Italy, as it was before it was destroyed during World War II. It is now being rebuilt.
Pope Gregory the Great. The monks at Monte Cassino and all those who lived by the Benedictine Rule had to take vows of poverty and obedience to the abbot, the head of the community. They had to cut off all ties with their families and their previous lives before entering the monastery. Periods were set aside each day for prayer and worship; the rest of the day was to be spent in manual labor, either in the fields, which were cultivated with great care and made to yield all the food required by the community, or in the monastery itself. No monk was permitted to own anything at all; everything was to be handled by the abbot, whose word was law within the monastery. Monks slept in a common dormitory and ate in a common dining room.

By the eighth century the Benedictine Rule was adopted by the vast majority of monasteries in the West except the Irish, and for centuries it was the model life for the religious, and faithfully observed by those who had chosen it. Even when abuses began to creep in, all those who undertook reforms returned to the Benedictine Rule or some modification of it, as the ideal Rule for a religious community. There was no doubt that in spite of its initial reservations the Church was wise to permit and ultimately take the lead in organizing these communities of monks. For if it was necessary to institutionalize the Church, and the papacy had no doubts on this necessity, then it was also necessary to take care of those deeply earnest men and women who wished to devote all their lives to their religion, and to live a communal life of poverty that seemed to them more in accordance with the teachings of Christ. As long as the monks continued to live holy lives they were a standing example of the virtues of Christianity; they troubled no one, and at the same time they absorbed into their communities all those who might have attacked the Church for its institutionalism and worldliness. It is surely no accident that those later medieval heresies which stressed poverty and asceticism as the true Christian ideal never arose while the monasteries were still truly religious communities and practiced poverty and abstinence; but that when they no longer fulfilled this function and the monks became notorious for laxity in morals, idleness, and luxurious habits, such a heresy as that of the Poor Men of Lyons obtained numerous adherents and for a long time constituted a real threat to the Church, calling forth a St. Francis and a St. Dominic to set the example once more of saintly lives spent in the earliest tradition of Christianity.

The Irish monasteries alone did not conform to the Benedictine Rule and some monasteries founded by Irish missionaries persisted for a long time on the Continent. The reason for this situation is to be found in the manner in which the Irish had been converted to Christianity. Ireland had been a land of clans, with a very primitive system of government; it had never been conquered by the Romans. St. Patrick, who had been attracted by Oriental monasticism before going to Ireland, succeeded in converting many of the savage chieftains and with them their clansmen. Instead of setting up a church on the Roman model, he allowed the clan to become the congregation. There were no priests except monks, and these did not live in the same isolation from their fellow men as in Western Europe, since they had also to perform the same functions as the secular clergy. They undertook the task of converting the other clansmen who had remained heathen while at the same time they lived in monasteries, practicing austerities, and gaining a great reputation for both piety and learning. Remaining for centuries unconnected with the Church in Rome, they were unaware even of many of the newer teachings of the Church. The result was that they developed a Christianity that was never institutionalized in the Roman manner, and they retained a fervor, especially in missionary activity, that had begun to disappear from Europe. St. Columba converted some Celtic tribes in Britain before they had yet been visited by official emissaries of the Church, St. Columban penetrated into Gaul and made converts in places where Christianity had as yet no foothold and founded
monasteries there; another Irishman founded the great monastery of St. Gall in what is now Switzerland. Moreover, once the first monks had gained a knowledge of Greek, it continued to be taught in the monasteries, and was never allowed to die out in Ireland. The only great philosopher of the Dark Ages in Europe, John Scotus Erigena, was an Irishman.

But this progress was rudely checked in Britain. Pope Gregory I (the fourth and last of the officially recognized Latin Fathers of the Church), of whom more in the next chapter, at the end of the sixth century sent a missionary to Britain named Augustine, who succeeded in converting the South. As this Catholic Christianity progressed northward it came into contact with the communities converted from Ireland, which had quite unknowingly adopted a different form of ecclesiastical usage. Both sides agreed to accept the decision of a synod at Whitby (664), presided over by the king of Northumbria. The question hinged upon the Petrine supremacy. The Irish could point to no such authority as that of the pope, descended from St. Peter. Their failure was decisive. The Roman Church received the award, the new English Church was organized after the Roman manner and the monasteries accepted the Benedictine Rule; in time even the Irish themselves accepted the inevitable, and adopted the discipline and organization of the central Church in Rome.

Suggestions for further reading

Every student should of course read as much of the New Testament as possible—the Gospels for the story of the life and death of Jesus Christ, the Acts of the Apostles for the only near-contemporary account of the foundation of the Christian religion and the missionary journeys of St. Paul, and the epistles of various apostles for the first efforts to build a Christian theology and to deal with the practical problems that came up in the first century A.D. in the light of Christian ethical teachings. For translations to be used, see Chapter 5, where the Old Testament translations are considered.

Study of the development of early Christian doctrine is made difficult by the personal beliefs of the authors of books on the subject. Naturally, Catholics and Protestants interpret both history and doctrine from divergent points of view. There is probably no work available which would satisfy all parties. Moreover, Christian doctrine was never simple, and any books that attempt to make it simple are likely to be misleading. One of the best is certainly G. P. Fisher, The History of Christian Doctrine (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), but the student should have a real interest in the subject if he is to read the book fruitfully. It cannot be skimmed through. A very simple account, entirely accurate but limited in scope, of the rise of Christianity, with no visible bias, is E. R. Goodenough, The Church in the Roman Empire (Berkshire Studies in European History; New York: Henry Holt & Co., Inc., 1931). This book, which barely attempts, however, to define or deal with Christian doctrine, achieves what it sets out to do, that is, to give a clear and simple account of the facts, about as well as it can be done.


Many students will no doubt have obtained a great deal of their information about early Christianity from novels, or from movies made from these novels. Most works of this sort are neither historically accurate, in so far as we possess the facts, nor anything but misleading. In general, they are sentimental rubbish. An exception might be made, however, for the sympathetic, non-Christian works of Shalom Asch. In particular, The Apostle (tr. M. Samuel; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1943), which tells, although necessarily with fictional embellishments, of the life and work of Paul, is a real aid to the effort to re-imagine the atmosphere of the first Christian century. Asch sticks closely to the known facts, and his additions and interpretation are believable.

The epoch-making and influential work of Augustine should certainly be studied, especially the Confessions (which throw a revealing light
on the great bishop himself and on the struggles an intellectual pagan had to make before he could bring himself to accept Christianity, a religion which was, as yet, rather anti-intellectual) and the City of God. Far the best available translation of the former is Confessions of St. Augustine (tr. F. J. Sheed; New York: Sheed & Ward, 1943). Several translations of the City of God are available, but none is entirely satisfactory. Much of the book is repetitious, but since it remains probably the most influential work in the field of political thought, it should be attempted. Easily available is the City of God (tr. and ed. M. Dods, 2 vols.; New York: Hafner Pub. Co., Inc., 1948). For a good though brief commentary on the political thought of Augustine, the student is referred to Chapter 10 of G. H. Sabine, A History of Political Theory (New York: Henry Holt & Co., Inc., 1937).

Finally, attention should be drawn to a masterly study of the problems involved in the conversion of Constantine to Christianity, and of the political and religious issues of the time, in Setton's chapter, "The Triumph of Christianity," in K. Setton and H. Winkler, eds., Great Problems in European Civilization (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1954); here a judicious selection from primary and secondary sources is made which permits the reader to make up his own mind on the matter.

(See also under Duckett in the Readings for Chapter 14.)
IV The Centuries of Transition
Church of the Holy Wisdom (Hagia Sophia, Sancta Sophia) at Constantinople, built by the Emperor Justinian. This building embodied altogether new principles of architecture. Especially difficult was the erection of the huge dome. The angle of this photograph sets off the commanding position of the church, which is often obscured from other directions by the modern Turkish buildings. The minarets close to the church are later additions dating from the period when the church was used by the Muslim Turks as a mosque. In the foreground is the Mosque of Sultan Ahmed, one of the minarets of which appears just in front of the camera. (COURTESY TURKISH INFORMATION OFFICE)
The End of the Roman Empire, and the Establishment of Successor States

The beginning of the end • Re-establishment of discipline: totalitarianism • External dangers to the empire • Barbarian conquest of Italy • Barbarian kingdoms of the West • The end of an era

The beginning of the end

THE MILITARY AUTOCRACY OF SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS (193–211)

The murder of Commodus in 192 was the signal for the opening of a period of outright domination of the Roman emperor by the army, which was to last till the fall of the empire. The first half of this period, up to the accession of Diocletian, was characterized by the increasing disintegration of the civil government under a series of military usurpers whose chief, and sometimes only, ability lay in the military sphere. The empire itself was, on the whole, successfully defended against external pressure on the boundaries, but at tremendous cost to its internal stability. The second half was characterized by the development of a totalitarian state under a civil administration backed by a usually obedient professional mercenary army, directed by an absolute emperor. Without going into the question at this stage of whether wiser policies on the part of the emperors could have prevented this sequence, which culminated in the fall of the empire and the survival of a truncated Eastern Empire under absolutist government, it is clear that it was the policies of the early third-century emperor, Septimius Severus, that set the process in motion.

He himself owed his position to his military ability alone, which was sufficient to enable him to defeat several other contenders. African by birth but Roman in education, and with a Syrian wife, he had no personal or sentimental attachment to Rome and her institutions. He frankly despised the Senate, and showed no understanding of the political and economic basis of the empire. Certainly the pretense that the government was a principate with himself as first citizen, that it was a partnership between ruler and people, had long been outmoded. And it was demonstrably true that the ruler was made and unmade by the various armies of the state. But the armies still had to be fed, paid, and clothed; and if their requirements were not to be always forcibly taken directly from the people that provided them, then some basis of consent must be retained. Moreover, since the empire’s prosperity, such as it was, was based to such a large extent upon the production of the cities, and it was...
the cities which provided the bulk of the tax money for the troops, it was not wise to destroy the urban middle classes for the sake of the army, the peasants, and the urban proletariat. Whether the policies of Severus had any such intention or not, their result was to set in motion the process which led inexorably to the impoverishment and ultimate destruction of the middle classes and the independent municipalities which had provided the solid substructure of the older empire.

To pay for his increased army it was necessary both to increase taxes and to take more active steps to see that they were paid. Severus therefore kept a very strict watch upon all provincial governors, brought many provincials into the imperial service, and in this respect his administration was superior to those of his immediate predecessors. His object, however, was not in any way to lighten the burdens of the provinces and municipalities, but to see that his treasury was full. For this purpose he initiated the policy of making municipal magistrates personally responsible for the collection of the taxes. If they were not paid in full, the magistrates themselves had to make up the difference. To see that all sources of income were tapped and that all officials were kept to their duty, he inaugurated a secret police to report directly to himself on any failure to fulfill obligations and to warn him of any tendencies toward treason. On the other hand, he won the approval of the proletariat by increasing its dole from the state, and passed other special legislation which protected its interests.

THE ASCENDANCY OF THE PEASANT ARMY

But the real danger of the policy of Severus was in the favoritism he showed to his legions. Their pay was considerably raised, and many concessions were made to them which had the effect of impairing their usefulness to the state, while incidentally lowering their efficiency. Married soldiers were allowed to live with their wives in towns behind the lines, auxiliary divisions were given permanent lands, and social clubs in the army were encouraged. This policy made the troops relatively immobile and unfit for service on an endangered frontier. It also made them less willing to fight and less amenable to discipline. Time after time in the third century we hear of mutinies and of the assassination of military leaders when they called upon the troops to fight in defense of the frontiers or tried to instill some discipline into them. Moreover, Severus now made it possible for all provincial soldiers to rise to the position of centurion, which carried with it equestrian rank. Since this was the class favored both by Severus and by his successors for all posts in the imperial bureaucracy, the result was that a military career became the best means of entry to the highest positions in the state, and civilian rule was gradually replaced by military. The very highest offices in the imperial service brought their holders within the senatorial aristocracy, which carried special privileges. Thus the senatorial order became increasingly filled with successful soldiers who acquired large tracts of land and settled down, unencumbered by taxation, having in their progress from the ranks avoided any payment of taxes whatever, and having acquired a vast contempt for those more productive members of society upon whom fell the whole burden of their upkeep. Thus the army became a privileged career, and the military caste, pampered and favored by Severus and all the third-century emperors, became a state within the state, entirely irresponsible, and giving its support only to those rulers who perpetuated its position and catered to its demands.

By opening to soldiers from the ranks the way even to the crown itself, the emperors might have attracted into the army men from the upper and middle classes. But, though Italians and provincials of equestrian rank did continue to provide some of the officers, the bulk of the army was recruited, by design, from the peasantry. It has even been suggested that this was a deliberate policy to increase the class struggle between the peasantry and the urban middle classes. It would seem more probable, however, that
the conscript army could only find recruits in sufficient number from the peasantry, and that the concessions made to them were of the kind more likely to appeal to a largely illiterate and semicivilized peasantry which had always found it difficult to make a living from the land. The result of the whole policy, as doubtless intended, was to undermine the position of the upper classes and infiltrate them with uncouth but able soldiers; but it was probably not foreseen that the army itself would become progressively barbarized, nor that it would prefer its privileged life behind the lines to defending the state. The soldiers preferred to follow only those leaders who promised them the most at the least cost to themselves in military activity. So many emperors were assassinated by rebellious troops during fifty years of the third century that only one of eighteen such “emperors” died peacefully in his bed.

FIFTY YEARS OF ANARCHY—THE “BARRACK EMPERORS” (235–284)

There is no need to dwell on the lives, activities, and sudden deaths of these “barrack” emperors. No real rule of succession was observed, though on a few occasions fathers were in fact succeeded by sons who had made appropriate donatives to the legions; frequently there were several competing emperors supported by their own troops but not accepted by any others. On several occasions the Germans penetrated into Gaul, once even passing the Alps and only meeting ultimate defeat in northern Italy. For ten years there was a separate kingdom of Gaul with complete independence. Without effective central administration, tax collecting was by the rough-and-ready method of requisition of supplies and forced levies of money. Almost the whole of Roman Asia acquired a virtual independence for a time (267–273) under the leadership of a desert city named Palmyra, and its queen, Zenobia. The middle classes and active peasants were progressively impoverished; it hardly seemed worth while to plant crops or to engage in any commercial activity when so little could be kept from the insatiable maw of the army.

Near the frontiers the Germanic barbarians at times were able to enter the empire and plunder at will.

But at last a succession of emperors from Illyria was able to re-establish discipline in the armies. And though the greatest of these, Aurelian, was himself murdered (275) after enjoying only five years of supreme power, it was not before he had restored Asia to the empire, defeated the Parthians, brought Gaul back to her allegiance and unified the old Roman Empire almost within her ancient boundaries, though the province of Dacia added by Trajan had been lost forever.

► Re-establishment of discipline—Totalitarianism

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ABSOLUTE GOVERNMENT—DIOCLETIAN AND HIS ASSOCIATES

When Diocletian (285–305) became sole ruler of the empire in 285, having vanquished his only serious rival, he was faced with problems beyond the capacity of any ruler to solve. The years of anarchy had impoverished the middle classes to such an extent that desperate measures to ensure their continued service to the state and payment of taxes had already been put into effect; the industrial and agricultural workers were already being regimented in a similar manner. Trade had been meeting increasing difficulties, not only because of the insecurity of transport but because of constant depreciations of the currency. The Illyrian emperors had been driven to the expedient of inviting warlike barbarians to serve in the imperial armies for pay, and even in the ranks of the officers barbarians were rapidly becoming as frequent as Roman citizens. But at least these barbarians were usually willing to serve; and, being professional soldiers, they fought better than the peasantry of the earlier part of the century and were better disciplined, not having yet grown to look upon the army as a privileged existence, entitling them to live indefinitely off the civilian economy without giving services in return. On the other hand, they owed no
## Chronological Chart

### Roman Empire
- Murder of Roman Emperor Commodus 192
- Reign of Septimius Severus 193-211
- Edict of Caracalla—Extension of Roman citizenship to virtually all free inhabitants of the empire 212
- Murder of Emperor Alexander Severus 235
- "Barrack Emperors" 235-284
- Palmyra declares independence under Queen Zenobia 267
- Capture of Zenobia and sack of Palmyra by Aurelian 273
- Murder of Aurelian 275
- Accession of Diocletian 284
- Diocletian chooses Maximian as colleague (Augustus) 285
- Appointment of two "Caesars" 293
- Edict limiting prices of goods and labor 301
- Persecution of Christians 303-311
- Abdication of Diocletian and Maximian 305
- Galerius emperor of the East, Constantius of West 305
- Death of Constantius in Britain, Constantine saluted as emperor 307
- Death of Galerius 311
- Battle of Milvian Bridge, death of Maxentius 312
- Constantine emperor of West, Licinius of East 312
- "Edict of Milan" 313
- Execution of Licinius 324
- Constantine sole emperor 324-337
- Council of Nicaea 325
- Foundation of Constantinople 330
- Conversion and death of Constantine 337
- Advance of Huns into empire, defeating Goths 372
- Goths permitted across Danube by Emperor Valens 376
- Battle of Adrianople—Death of Valens 378
- Stilicho the Vandal becomes imperial master of troops 400
- Honorius moves Roman capital to Ravenna ca. 400
- Sack of Rome by Alaric and Visigoths 410

### Roman Empire (cont'd)
- Aetius becomes master of the troops under Valentinian III 430
- Aetius defeats Visigoths in Gaul 436
- Rise of Attila to power among Huns, moves west 445
- Battle of Chalons—Partial victory of Aetius over Attila 451
- Aetius defeats some Franks, remainder permitted into Gaul 451
- Attila invades Italy 452
- Death of Attila 453
- Murder of Aetius by Valentinian III 454
- Sack of Rome by Vandals under Gaeseric 455
- Puppet rulers in Rome 455-476
- Odoacer deposes last emperor ("Fall of Rome") 476

### England and France
- Roman legions leave England 407-442
- Franks penetrate into Gaul 431 onward
- Aetius defeats some Franks, remainder permitted into Gaul 451
- Clovis consolidates Franks into kingdom 481-511
- Merovingian kingdom 481-754
- Conversion of Clovis and Franks to Roman Catholicism 486
- Invasions of England by Angles, Saxons, and Jutes 5th and 6th centuries
- Mission of St. Augustine of Canterbury to England 596-597
- Conquests of Angles, Saxons, and Jutes completed by 615
- Influx of Celtic Christianity into England from Iona 633 onward
- Synod of Whitby—Triumph of Roman Catholicism over Celtic Christianity 664
- Charles Martel "mayor of the palace" in France 714-741
- Pepin crowned king of the Franks (Pepin the Short) 754
lovers were loyal to their paymaster the emperor, but to no one else.

Finally, there was no acceptable method of succession to the throne, and no apparent way of preventing usurpation by the strongest commander.

Diocletian was in no sense an innovator. But he was a distinterested ruler, with no personal ambitions—he abdicated later in accordance with a plan he devised for a succession without bloodshed—and he had many years of life in front of him in which to accomplish his reforms. His general plan was to accept conditions as they were and to create formal institutions in keeping with them, and, by instituting a strong government, try to preserve the empire at least from the anarchy of the previous fifty years. In this he was, on the whole, successful, in spite of the failure of his new principle of succession. The empire did survive in form for nearly another two hundred years, and a substantial part of it, the later Byzantine Empire, ultimately gained a new lease of life and survived for a further thousand years.

In a word, his plan was to make of the whole empire one centrally administered state of the kind now called totalitarian. This necessitated the final abolition of the principate in theory as well as in fact. But Diocletian also realized that the administration of the empire and the defense of its boundaries against the increasingly dangerous barbarians were far too much for one man. He therefore invited Maximian, another Illyrian general, to act as his colleague in the empire, sharing the title of Augustus. Maximian and he then chose two seconds-in-command, with the title of Caesars. The two Augusti were to retire after twenty years in office, to be succeeded by the two Caesars, each then naming a pair of Caesars who would in turn succeed them. Unfortunately

1 The system has often been called "oriental absolutism," but the latter is a very vague term, since the Orient has known many different degrees of absolutism, while the analogy with modern totalitarian states, with their emphasis on guns instead of butter, is clear.
not all these potentates were as disinterested as himself, nor were the sons of the Augusti willing to be discarded in favor of generals of greater experience, even under parental pressure. The scheme actually never worked at all except when Diocletian was able to compel the Augusti to keep to their agreement, and civil wars continued until Constantine (312-337) established for good the hereditary principle, in spite of the danger that the empire might fall into childish or incompetent hands.

The division of the empire into two parts, however, survived the abdication and death of Diocletian, though without the refinement of the two added Caesars. And the scheme of the two Augusti and the two Caesars proved effective enough in his own lifetime to enable him to put into effect the necessary administrative reforms that made the empire into a totalitarian state. The frontiers were guarded, a number of minor revolts were quelled, and the expanding Persian Empire was held in check.

REORGANIZATION OF ARMY AND PROVINCES UNDER IMPERIAL CONTROL

The army was considerably enlarged, friendly barbarians were allowed to settle in frontier districts with an obligation to military service, companies of barbarians, sometimes even under their own chiefs, were welcomed, while the more warlike sections of the empire provided further conscripted recruits; if not of high quality their discipline and training were better than they had been for years. Diocletian also organized a force of picked men who could be moved from one part of the empire to another as danger threatened, helping to stiffen the resistance of the resident legions. The army was under the direct command of the emperor and his associates, who were all experienced generals, so that there was less opportunity for local armies to revolt and try to set up a new emperor.

The number of the provinces was increased by subdivision to 101, with every governor an appointee of one of the emperors, and subject to control by vicars who had about seven provinces each (dioceses), who in their turn were responsible to four prefects, personal representatives of the four rulers. The vicars, however, had the right of direct appeal to Diocletian, as senior emperor, against decisions of the prefects. Thus was established a graded hierarchy responsible to the emperor and his associates alone.

Diocletian and Maximian as Augusti now took divine titles although they did not call themselves actual gods. They withdrew as much as possible from direct participation in public life, instituting an elaborate court ceremonial of an Oriental kind, including prostration and kissing the hem of the emperor's robe when the privilege of an audience was granted. The persecution of Christians which accompanied the elevation of the monarchy has been discussed in the last chapter. Many new temples were built to the old gods, while there was an insistence on greater observance of the imperial cult.

REGIMENTATION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LIFE

The imperial bureaucracy and its task

It was clear at once that the expenses of the new administration could not be less than the old. The increased burden of the army and the building program could be met only by increased and more efficiently collected taxes. And this collection must also entail an increase in the unproductive army of imperial bureaucrats whose task it was to see that the taxes were paid. Diocletian's solution was simply to use his army and his bureaucrats, including secret police and paid informers, to ensure the collection, and hope to keep up the necessary agricultural and industrial production by all the legal weapons available to him, enforced by his officials and his army.

Compulsory agriculture—The coloni

The armies during the period of anarchy had been accustomed to requisition supplies. Diocletian now took away the arbitrary and casual requisitioning and made it regular and legal. Having little idea of the productive value of the various lands in his empire, he assessed them in accordance with
the numbers of cultivators employed and the land under cultivation, irrespective of the fertility of the soil and the probable yields, which were more difficult to measure. This tax was then collected by his officials, regardless of the actual ability to pay or the hardship payment entailed upon individual farmers. Since many farmers tried to escape their obligations and left the land, by the time of Constantine they were forced to remain on it, whether they were owners, tenants, or sharecroppers. If they left they were still liable for the tax on the land they had left, and if found they were returned to it. Though still theoretically freemen, they were practically serfs. These farmers were called coloni. Manumitted slaves were now free only in name also. They remained tied to their masters and bound to work for them. If they did not pay their masters due "reverence," a phrase which could be made to cover any refusal to obey instructions, they could be returned to their status of slaves.

The privileged landowners

On the other hand, the large landowners who still employed some slaves, and had always a number of coloni on their lands, were often able to avoid taxation altogether, as they were in many cases too powerful for the imperial officials to dare to antagonize them. During the period of anarchy these landholders had often been able to increase their estates when the small farmers had fallen irretrievably into debt or had had their livestock driven off by the rapacious armies. From this time onward the large landowners were the only people to profit by the imperial policy, and many of them, who had been soldiers or imperial officials themselves, had obtained legal immunity from taxation. Assisted by slaves and coloni who were com-
pletely dependent upon them, they were rarely forced by even the strongest emperors to pay taxes commensurate with their income, for a squadron of troops would have been needed to enforce the collection. Many of the luxurious villas of these privileged aristocrats still survive, especially in France, some of them with their own manufacturing establishments which produced a variety of goods; even luxuries, with large storehouses for provisions, the whole fortified as if for security against possible imperial emissaries as well as against invading barbarians. These villas are the forerunners of the medieval manors.

Compulsory state service—The curiales

We have already seen that Septimus Severus inaugurated the system of making municipal magistrates personally responsible for the collection of taxes. Naturally few wished in these circumstances to become magistrates, however much prestige the position might bring them. Diocletian made it compulsory for men of a certain property qualification to hold these positions. In addition to taxes to the emperor, they were compelled to pay for local games, public buildings, and their repairs, and were personally responsible for seeing that all such work was carried out satisfactorily. Constantine laid the burden of this taxation upon the whole body of people eligible for these offices, who were called curiales, once a title of honor but now a badge of municipal servitude.

The only way for the curiales to escape their onerous position would have been to rise to the senatorial class and receive tax immunity. But this also was made impossible by decree in the century after Diocletian. If they left their class, then their children would have to undertake the curial obligation instead. If they tried to escape by joining the army, they were summarily returned to their previous duties. And, forced to find means to pay the taxes and other obligations, they naturally tried to obtain as much as they could from their own tenant cultivators or coloni; thus the class struggle was intensified more than ever. With no chance of escaping their involuntary servitude, faced on the one side by the imperial officers and on the other by a bitterly hostile peasantry, and with a complete lack of incentive, this middle class, which had previously been the backbone of the empire, was mercilessly crushed. Its gradual disappearance was one of the chief causes for the economic decline and ultimately the fall of the empire.

Compulsory industry—The collegia

The regimentation in industry was equally severe. As early as the second century urban workers had been encouraged to form themselves into guilds or collegia, according to the particular goods produced or services rendered. An early third-century emperor organized into monopolies under state control all collegia supplying goods to the capital. The same control was exercised over merchants and manufacturers engaged in purveying supplies to the army. Under the Illyrian emperors and Constantine, all city workers were finally organized into castes under strict state control, with each worker bound to follow the trade of his father. We know of hereditary castes of bakers, shippers, millers, and others, but it is not known whether all industry was thus regimented or if any escaped. None, however, escaped the ubiquitous tax collectors.

Thus with coloni, curiales, and artisans all forbidden to change their occupations and unable to improve their status, the entire class structure of the state was stratified, and the totalitarian empire firmly established. The only way of avoiding one's obligations was to bribe the tax collectors; and we hear of numerous cases of such corruption in the following two centuries. But even bribery amounted to nothing more than an irregular alternative to taxes, and could only modify the impositions for a brief period.

CONSTANTINE AND THE PERFECTING OF TOTALITARIANISM

Economic and military policy

After his prescribed twenty years of rule Diocletian celebrated a jubilee in 305, and
then retired, dying much later in 313. His colleague Maximian, however, was not yet tired of power. Diocletian at last persuaded him to relinquish it, but Maximian preferred to hand it over to his sons rather than to the properly appointed Caesars. An intermittent civil war then broke out which was concluded by a great victory in 312 won by Constantine, son of a man who had been Caesar while Diocletian was still on the throne. Diocletian, who survived these brief wars, contented himself with exhortations issued from his huge fortress-palace at Salona (now Split, in Dalmatia). For a further twelve years after Constantine's succession to the empire in the West the new emperor tolerated an Eastern colleague, Licinius, in charge of the empire in the East. Then they came to blows, in part because of the latter's studied policy of persecuting Christians and trying to restore the old religion. Constantine prevailed and in 324 became sole emperor.

The policies of Constantine were in full accord with those of Diocletian, but after over thirty years of experience it was now possible to see in what respects they had failed. Constantine concluded only that they had not yet been carried far enough. He increased the imperial bureaucracy still further and clamped the machinery of repression still tighter. By the end of his reign the totalitarian state was complete, and the hereditary caste system no longer had any loopholes in it. Each man was securely fixed in the position in which he had been born; and his obligation to fulfill his quota of work and provide a surplus for the ever more insatiable needs of the army was absolute. The police and the bureaucracy were ubiquitous in ferreting out any source of income, returning escapees to their duty, and requisitioning food and supplies when money was unavailable.

Though Constantine reformed the coinage it is clear that there was not enough precious metal available even to keep the
wheels of trade and industry revolving, much less to provide the agricultural workers with hard cash. As we now know, some of it had left the empire altogether for distant places such as India, which had always had a favorable trade balance with the empire. Increasingly taxes were paid in kind, and there was a gradual return to a barter economy and self-sufficiency on the large estates. The surplus of raw materials thus collected by the emperors presented a further problem, which was solved in the classic totalitarian manner. The emperors set up industrial establishments of their own with conscripted hereditary workers manufacturing for the needs of the emperor and the army. These factories were under the control of imperial bureaucrats, and formed the pattern for the great imperial monopolies of the later Byzantine Empire.

Constantine completed the barbarianization of the army by carrying Diocletian's policies to their logical conclusion. The old frontier legions which had been at least recruited from Roman citizens, even though they had been little enough influenced by Roman civilization, were now degraded to a local militia, and troops still drawn from the citizen body were made inferior in status to the German mercenaries. The real army was a mobile field army, recruited from the neighboring barbarians, chiefly the Germanic tribes in the West, and the Sarmatians on the Danube. The elite corps of cavalry, the crack troops of the empire, were entirely composed of German mercenaries. It was possible for the foreign mercenaries to reach the highest position in the army and become magistri militum, or masters of the troops. From the time of Constantine onward, and especially in the fifth century, we find German masters of the troops far more powerful than their puppets who wore the purple and were still called emperors. As a rule the barbarian leaders did not aspire to the throne themselves—a possible reason for the choice of barbarians for the supreme military position. But this army, at least in the hands of Constantine, was the most efficient instru-

In terms of the Romans had possessed in centuries for its two primary purposes—the defense against unauthorized barbarian immigration and armed attacks into the empire, and the enforcement of discipline upon the civilians who paid for its upkeep. Always increasing as defense needs grew more imperative, it devoured the substance of the civil population, laying its heavy, unproductive hand upon all enterprise until the Roman empire collapsed from within under the impact of foreign peoples with a population almost certainly far short of theirs. But the army at least served to introduce many of the most able barbarians to the civilization of the empire, which trained them and gave them military experience—which many of them used in later years against the empire itself.

**New Rome on the Bosporus**

The most significant act of the reign of Constantine, however, was the founding of a new capital near the incomparable site of ancient Byzantium on the Bosporus at the entrance to the Black Sea. This city, called Constantinople, quickly grew to surpass Rome. The eastern provinces of the empire, though equally ground down by taxation, never sank to the level of the more agricultural West. Some cities continued to thrive and trade continued, if less luxuriantly than in the past. It was certainly for this reason that Constantine founded his new capital in the midst of this area. The western provinces hardly served to support themselves and their defense, while the defense needs in the East were not so vast. Moreover, the provinces themselves provided some surplus for luxuries appreciated by the now entirely Orientalized court of the first Christian monarch.

Constantinople was also a port, which Rome had never been; it could be made impregnable by sea and strongly fortified by land. Not very far from the capital was the river Danube, more easily defended than the distant Rhine. Time and again the barbarians threatened the Danube, and on some occasions they crossed it and reached almost to
Constantinople. But faced with the formidable bastion of the city itself, they realized they could hardly conquer it with their crude weapons. When, therefore, the emperors suggested to them that the West was an easier target, Alaric, Theodoric, and other barbarian leaders took the hint, and Constantinople was left in peace. Not until the barbarian "crusaders" from the West took it in 1204 against what was little more than a token defense did it ever succumb to an external invader.

For the adornment of his new capital Constantine sent for the best artists and craftsmen of the empire. But their talent proved to be far from adequate to the opportunity. Constantine then proceeded systematically to pillage Greece. The ancient Greek shrines were made to yield up their sculpture of the glorious age of Hellenic art. Trophies of the battle of Salamis, marble columns from temples to the Greek gods, possibly even the Olympian Zeus of Phidias, by all accounts the noblest sculpture the world has yet seen, priceless manuscripts from Alexandria and other Hellenistic cities were brought into Constantinople, where they survived for many more centuries, cheek by jowl with the inferior, badly built, and artistically tasteless artifacts of the age of Constantine. The bulk of these works was destroyed in the early thirteenth century by Latin "crusaders" ignorant of art and interested primarily in the precious metals of which so many of these works of art were made. What was not stolen at this time was largely destroyed by fires set by both the "crusaders" and their victims.

Constantine himself ruled over the united empire, and he ensured the succession of his sons to the throne. But he realized it was too vast for efficient rule by one man; and, having two sons, he divided it. Thereafter, though in theory they were each co-emperors of the whole, the empire was in fact divided between two emperors, one resident in Constantinople, the other with an official residence in Rome, but more often living in Milan, Trier, or Ravenna, an impregnable city in the marshes of north-eastern Italy where, amid the invasions of the Goths, the emperor felt safe enough to neglect the interests of the empire with impunity.

**External dangers to the empire**

**Barbarian infiltration**

The Germanic tribes, general characteristics

We have already had occasion to refer to the infiltration of barbarians into the Roman Empire. Naturally this description of the invaders is not the preferred term in Germany and Northern Europe where the whole process, which occupied several centuries, is known as the *Völkerwanderung*, or the migration of peoples. Without attempting to pronounce on the native excellences of these peoples, it is clear that they were imperfectly versed at this time in the practices of civilization which had grown up in cities, of which these peoples had none.

Julius Caesar and Tacitus among the Roman historians had described the manners and customs of the German peoples in their day—Caesar briefly from the point of view of an alien conqueror; Tacitus actuated, in part at least, by a desire to contrast the noble savage with the effete and decadent Romans of the capital at the beginning of the second century. These accounts, valuable as they are, need to be treated with some caution. Tacitus himself had probably never been in Germany, and his picture, convincing though his incomparable style makes it, is only based on information received from others. Nevertheless the facts of his *Germania* coincide in essentials with later records based on the first-hand observations of later times.

In physical characteristics the Germans were, as a group, taller than the Roman peoples from the Mediterranean area; many of them had reddish or blond hair which they wore long. The country which they inhabited was infertile, swampy, and heavily forested; to the Germans, therefore, life was a con-
stant struggle for survival. Their chief joy in life appears to have been fighting, and many of them knew no other occupation. Though by the fourth century they had moved from "savagery" to "barbarism," and cultivated some crops, their chief occupation remained hunting and food gathering. They possessed large numbers of domestic animals, especially pigs and cattle with which they supplemented their food supply. Their agricultural practices were wasteful. When one piece of land was exhausted they moved on to another. However, like the Dorian peoples who invaded and conquered Greece, they had the use of iron, and the weapons of at least the leading warriors were made of that metal. Both in their manner of living and in many features of their political and social organization they strongly resembled the North American Indian as he was known to the Americans of the colonial era.

As in all primitive societies, their basic unit was the family, and a number of families composed a clan or tribe. The clan had a hereditary chieftain who was the leader in war and peace. There was also a tribal assembly of all free men who met in council to decide policies suggested by the chief. If they agreed they showed their assent by clashing their shields. In later times many tribes would unite under a king; as a rule when the Romans came in contact with them it was with the king they had to negotiate, and the kings and the tribes consolidated under them with whom they had to fight. The only distinctive organization not to be found in the other primitive peoples studied in earlier chapters was the comitatus, or league of companions. In a fighting people it was to be expected that powerful warriors would sometimes arise who held no hereditary position. These men would attract around themselves others who looked to them for leadership. Such organizations were encouraged by the Germans. They fought together, and if necessary died together. The leader looked first to the needs of his men, and they in turn were bound to him by the strongest ties of loyalty. In this institution we evidently have the germ of the later feudal relationship between lords and the vassals who were tied to them by an oath of fealty, and owed military service to them.

Such law as these peoples possessed was based upon the tribal relationships. It was the duty of a family or tribe to avenge the death of its members or exact monetary compensation for it. The tribal council might act as arbiter but without considering so much factual evidence as the number and quality of the oaths taken by supporters of both sides. In cases of doubt, single combat might be prescribed, the loser thus being proved guilty; or, in the case of men of inferior status and women, an ordeal would be called for, from which if the victim emerged without serious damage he could safely be presumed to be innocent.²

The men of the German tribes spent most of their lives in fighting or looking after the animals, the women stayed home and looked after the household, while the slaves, who had some personal freedom though tied to the land, looked after such crops as the tribes possessed. Not being closely attached to any piece of land, it was not difficult for whole tribes or nations to migrate, either in search of better pastures or crop land or from simple restlessness. None of the Germanic peoples had moved very far from the nomadic life; while other barbarian peoples who now began to endanger the empire were still truly nomads, who pushed the more settled peoples before them, and, as a result, set an even larger migration in motion.

These migrations of people are as old as history. We have already noticed the Achaean, Ionian, and Dorian invasions of Greece. In the fourth century B.C. the Celts migrated all over Europe and into Asia, and

² It has been thought by some that the institution of compurgation (joint swearing) by "oath-helpers," mentioned here, was the origin of the modern jury, especially since twelve was the number of oath-helpers most commonly used. However, it is now generally believed that the jury system in England originated in the medieval French practice of sending out officials to inquire into various matters of interest to the kings, about which evidence was taken on oath.
were defeated by the Romans only with great difficulty, not before Rome itself had been thoroughly sacked. At the turn of the first century B.C. the Germanic Cimbri and Teutones had penetrated far into Italy, and could not be defeated until the Romans had reorganized their army. The rulers of the early Roman Empire after a few abortive efforts, decided that it was impossible to civilize and conquer the barbarians beyond the borders of the empire, and contented themselves with building fortifications to defend its boundaries. For several centuries this defense was successful.

When at last new groups of barbarians began to threaten again, the danger came from Eastern Europe rather than from the land known to the Romans as Germany. But the threatening peoples were still Germanic in origin. By this time they were a far more formidable enemy than the earlier primitive Germanic tribes, having learned new methods of warfare from contact with less primitive peoples. Many of them now fought on horseback and used the lance and improved armor. These were the Goths, Vandals, Burgundians, and Alemanni. They in turn were followed by native Germanic groups who had never migrated to Eastern Europe, and were armed with pikes and battle-axes, with wooden shields carried on their left arms, fighting on foot and lacking mobility, but powerful in defense, and terrifying when they appeared in large numbers. These peoples were the Franks, and the Angles and Saxons who conquered Britain. Among them only the leaders rode on horseback; and they lacked the ability to produce the superior military equipment used by their less primitive predecessors.

Behind the Germanic groups were the Sarmatians, a warlike people who gave much trouble to the Byzantine Empire with their raids into the Balkans, but who for the most part remained in southern Russia; and the Slavs, who at this time lived in a more primitive manner than any of the other groups, but whose capacity for resisting and absorbing conquerors enabled them to survive when most of the more warlike groups had disappeared. These Slavs moved into eastern Germany and Central Europe in the wake of the migrating Germanic peoples, and stayed there, many of them to this day, as well as infiltrating into the Balkans. Behind all these peoples, again, were the Asiatic Huns who relentlessly moved westward, pushing the other peoples in front of them.

The Goths

Relations with the empire—A great island of civilization into which they were not permitted to penetrate naturally exercised a powerful fascination on those barbarian peoples who were closest to the Roman frontiers. Within the empire were settled towns, law and order, luxuries, and a way of living entirely alien to them but nonetheless attractive for that. The disciplined legionsaries of Rome were always more than a match for them save in exceptional circumstances, and they hesitated to try conclusions with them unless pressure from the rear forced them to violate the Roman boundaries in spite of themselves. On the other hand, they fiercely defended themselves against attacks from the Roman side. While they may have at all times expressed contempt for the civilized Romans on the other side of the barrier, great numbers of them seem to have hungered for a different kind of life, and not only for the plunder of a successful raid. When the Roman emperors found that they could no longer rely upon the empire and the citizen body to defend their boundaries, and especially during the half century of anarchy when individual Roman generals seeking the supreme power would take troops wherever they could find them, then it was natural to turn to these barbarians whose trade it was to fight, who were strong and warlike, though lacking the training which would enable them to defeat the Roman legionsaries.

So from the third century we find individual barbarians and whole tribes being enrolled into the army, receiving training, and acquiring some knowledge and understanding of Roman civilization. They were
not, of course, at first loyal to Rome or to the empire, impersonal entities quite alien to their experience, which was always of men rather than institutions. Few indeed can ever have grasped the idea of the Roman Empire. But they did take to disciplined military life, and did not lose their warrior spirit; and they were far more loyal to their new leaders than most of the Roman peasants who had been conscripted into the army, were scarcely more literate than the barbarians, lacked warlike spirit, and yet looked upon themselves as a privileged caste.

It was, therefore, natural for the Roman soldier-emperors to look more and more to the barbarians, especially to the Goths, and, in the East, to the Sarmatians, for the real core of their armies. As long as they needed troops there were unlimited numbers of barbarians available to them, who served for pay, who obeyed orders, who did not want to set themselves up as emperors, and who in their simplicity would put up with more hardships than would the citizen conscripts. Thus arose the military policy of the late emperors, especially Constantine. They were managers of a totalitarian state which had to be kept down by an iron rule, and whose citizens had to be forced to work and to pay taxes. Many of these emperors no doubt believed in the Roman Empire, believed that no price was too high to pay for its formal preservation. And few indeed probably realized what the result would be: that instead of the Romans civilized the barbarians and making them into good civilized servants of the empire, it was the empire that would be barbarized by the Goths and their successors, and that the whole superstructure of an imperial universal state would collapse from within, when the real cement that held it together, the free municipalities and the economy and culture based on them, finally crashed and gave way. The Romans, as has been said, were not an imaginative people, and few were their thinkers who perceived the inevitable end even when it was almost upon them.

The policies adopted by the emperors were dictated by the immediate circum-
stances of each case. There never was a settled, agreed policy for keeping the barbarians in check. The earliest Goths were recruited for the army as individual soldiers, perhaps a comitatus, or even a tribe. When in later times large bodies of barbarians clamored for entry into the empire, with their wives and children, they were allowed to come in as coloni, were given land to cultivate which they were not permitted to leave, and agreed to give military service for the privilege. When in the late fourth and fifth centuries the boundaries became increasingly difficult to defend, whole tribes and even nations with their kings violated the frontier openly and settled down in land that had been Roman territory. When the emperors got around to it they legalized the position by giving these peoples the status of allies, foederati, bound by treaty to Rome and expected to defend their newly acquired lands against the next comers. This they often did, the Goths having little friendship for the Franks, and even the West Goths (Visigoths) little enough for the East Goths (Ostrogoths), and vice versa. And all united, as we shall see, against the Huns. Other groups applied for permission to come in as allies in advance, and were allowed in, upon the signing of a treaty; but these in many cases found the Roman officials uneasily patronizing and predatory, reluctant to carry out the terms to which their masters had agreed.

Gradual barbarization of the Romans—It was to be expected that once the boundaries were defended by barbarians, some at least of their kinsmen would be admitted without formalities, and that gradually the frontier provinces would become predominantly barbarian. As a privileged caste also the soldiers would have little respect for the Roman citizens who were living in virtual slavery under constant threat from themselves, the emperors, and the imperial bureaucracy. If they were not paid promptly they could always loot a few cities, for which they had little respect but much envy. The Romans, whose cities had been destroyed by the Goths, could not hope to recover in
the circumstances of the fifth century. Thus, gradually, and especially after the invasion of the Huns which forced over more peoples over the imperial boundaries, the peoples of the empire became themselves barbarized, sometimes joining the hordes and plundering their neighbors, protected only by some of the assimilated barbarians who now regarded themselves as Romans and by those few landholders who could still maintain their independence in spite of barbarian infiltration.

Conversion of the barbarians to Christianity—One softening influence, however, should be noticed. For much of the fourth century Bishop Ulfilas (ca. 311-383), of partly Gothic ancestry himself, but educated in Constantinople, had been working in the Gothic vineyard. He gave the Goths their first writing, including a Gothic Bible, and converted great numbers of the West Goths, who passed the new religion on to many of the East Goths and Vandals who were in close contact with them. The type of Christianity, however, to which he converted them was Arianism, which had been the accepted doctrine in Constantinople during the good bishop’s period of study, and which in any case was far more likely to be acceptable to the simple barbarians than the more mysterious teachings of orthodox Christianity. Thus all the earlier barbarian peoples who invaded the Roman Empire were converted to Arian Christianity, ultimately bringing upon themselves difficulties when an orthodox pope and an orthodox emperor used their heresy as an excuse for the invasion of Italy and the destruction of the East Gothic kingdom. The organization of the Arian Church in the areas inhabited by these peoples was also of material help during the most severe period of the barbarian invasions when the imperial government broke down. In Gaul, later Frankland, however, most of the bishops remained orthodox, giving great help to the orthodox Frankish King Clovis at the end of the fifth century in the establishment of his authority over most of the territory which had been Gaul.

THE BARBARIAN INVASIONS

The advance of the Huns (372-451)

While the first stage of the entry of the barbarians into the West is marked by slow infiltration, with the agreement, if not always active support of the emperors, the second stage consists of true invasions, not intentional on the part of the invaders, but forced by the westward advance of a central Asiatic people, the Huns. These people, according to the records of their enemies, were a group of short, squat, strong warriors who came riding into Europe on horses, which they seldom left, being believed by the Goths even to sleep on them. Their numbers do not seem to have been overwhelming; but they could move very rapidly, giving the appearance of great numbers. They were yellow-skinned, beardless, and to the Westerners incredibly ugly, and terrifying. They showed no mercy.

Involuntary advance of the barbarians into the empire

The Goths and other Germanic peoples were unable to hold their own against the assaults of the Huns. Most of the Ostrogoths were penned in near the Black Sea, while others escaped to the Carpathian mountains. Large numbers of the Visigoths, pushed by the Huns, congregated on the Danube, the boundary of the empire, and petitioned the Eastern emperor to allow them to cross into safety. The emperor, Valens, faced with such massive immigration, was uncertain what policy to adopt. At last he made up his mind to accept them as foederati; but as soon as the Goths were in Roman territory the imperial officials proceeded to plunder them, carrying off some of their people as slaves, and refusing to supply the remainder even with food. The fiercely independent and numerically superior Goths finally took matters into their own hands and made their way towards Constantinople, plundering and ravaging as they went. The emperor called to the West for aid. But his young nephew Gratian, who had succeeded to the throne in 375, was fully occupied with a campaign against the Alemanni. After a few successes
won by his generals, Valens became more confident and rejected the advice of his nephew, who urged him to wait for the arrival of his own force. Taking the field himself, Valens was disastrously defeated in the battle of Adrianople, and was killed shortly afterwards while trying to make his escape (378). His successor promptly made terms and tried to carry out the original treaty. But the Goths were now firmly ensconced in the empire, with their own kings and leaders, a constant menace to the emperors, sometimes paid salaries and serving in the imperial armies, sometimes taking the law into their own hands, wandering up and down Europe.

But the Eastern emperor held two trump cards denied to the emperor in the West. The heart of his territory was defensible. His important towns were strongly fortified, and Constantinople itself was impregnable to barbarian arms. And the emperor, commanding the resources of the only remaining prosperous area in the empire, had access to ready money. The combination of these two was sufficient to enable the Eastern Empire to survive the worst that the barbarians could do. The emperor was willing to take them into the army and pay them well; and they could not, on the other hand, hope to conquer him unless he should be as foolhardy as Valens. There can be no doubt also that the Oriental splendor of the imperial court made a deep impression on the barbarians and convinced them that the emperor possessed power greater than he actually had at his disposal. At all events, it was possible for him to convince the ambitious barbarians that pickings were easier elsewhere.

The barbarian invasions in the West—Visigoths, Vandals, Franks, Burgundians, Bretons—So it was upon the now greatly enfeebled empire in the West that the Goths concentrated their attacks, opposed for a few years by a Vandal general in the service of Rome, then on his death marches into Italy, and sacking Rome, as will be described in more detail in the next section devoted to the fortunes of Italy. From Italy they moved into Gaul and thence into Spain, where in 419 they were allowed to form their own kingdom as allies of the empire. They were later driven from Gaul by the Franks.

At the beginning of the fifth century the Vandals, themselves driven relentlessly by constant pressure from the westward advance of the Huns, moved into Gaul without meeting much opposition, plundering and burning as they went. From the fact that the Roman prefect a few years earlier had been transferred to southeastern Gaul it seems clear that the empire had given up hope of defending the Rhine and the North. It took three years (406–409) for the Vandals to eat up the resources of Gaul ("the whole of Gaul burnt like a torch," as a contemporary poet described it) and cross over into Spain. After a few years in Spain, they were driven by the Roman armies and their Gothic allies into the extreme south. Here they found in Gaiseric a great leader who, through the treachery of the Roman governor in Africa, was allowed to cross the Strait of Gibraltar into Africa, where he founded a kingdom (429). This kingdom was later recognized by the Roman emperor as another ally. But by this time the emperor exercised hardly even a nominal sway over his numerous barbarian allies.

Behind the Vandals came the Franks and the Burgundians. The last great Roman general, Aetius (magister militum, 430–454), permitted the Franks to stay in northern Gaul, again as allies; while the Burgundians moved, also with his assent, into southern Gaul along the valley of the Rhone, and into the area now known as Savoy. Taking advantage of the general movement, a group of Celts, severely harassed by the activities of another Germanic group, the Saxons, who had sent expeditions to Britain from about 440, passed over from their home in Britain into northwest Gaul, the land now called Brittany.

The lifting of the Hun menace

In the early fifth century the Huns, who had been largely responsible for the barbarian movement in the first place, united under the leadership of a chieftain named
Attila, and resumed their westward drive (445). For some time they had hovered near the frontiers of the Eastern Empire, forcing the emperors to pay them an annual tribute. But when at last one of them refused, Attila, possibly realizing he could not hope to do more than carry out sporadic raids for plunder, or perhaps acting on a suggestion from some Eastern traitor, decided, like the Goths before him, that the West offered more scope for his enterprise, and he invaded Gaul. In the crisis all the barbarian tribes remembered their duty to Rome, and, spurred by terror of the Hun, they stood and fought under the Roman imperial general Aetius. This was the battle usually called Chalons (451). It was not a clear-cut victory for either side; but Attila deemed it prudent to retreat to a prepared position, from which he began to threaten Italy. But he died the following year, and the Hunnish confederation dissolved, remnants settling down in Europe but others returning to Asia, where later they became part of the Avar horde. Their only permanent settlement in Europe was in Hungary, later to be settled by another group of barbarians, the Magyars.

Thus was the Hun menace lifted, leaving those barbarians who for nearly a century had been forced by the relentless pressure of the Huns to defend themselves at the expense of the Roman Empire, now able for the first time to take charge of their own destinies.

Barbarian conquest of Italy

Nominal Imperial Rule from Ravenna

After the death of Constantine, as we have seen, the Western half of the empire had its own co-emperor, but, without access to the more prosperous part of the Roman dominions, it fell into a swift decline. For brief periods during the century the East and West were again united, and the façade of empire was successfully maintained for most of the fourth century until the pressure of the Huns started the barbarian movements again. When the dangers became acute at the end of the century, Honorius, the western emperor, moved his capital to Ravenna (ca. 400), leaving the pope as the real ruler of Rome. Thereafter most of the emperors were either children, feeble-minded, or both. They lived in a hothouse atmosphere of intrigue, surrounded by eunuchs, courtiers, clergy, and women. But they were still officially rulers of the empire, and it was with them that the barbarians negotiated. Secure in their stronghold of Ravenna, which, fully fortified and surrounded by marshes, could not be conquered with the resources available to the barbarians, many of these emperors behaved with an astounding lack of foresight and sense of responsibility. Beset by fears of treachery and even ignorant of what was going on in their territories, they still imagined themselves the potentates that earlier emperors had actually been. They treated the barbarians, including their own generals, too often with a lordly disdain. The result was that the generals were forced to take matters into their own hands, and do the best they could to preserve the empire. And yet the emperors, on at least two occasions, rewarded them, in the one case with execution, and in the other with assassination. By the end of the fifth century the last of these successors of Constantine was deposed by the barbarian general of the day, who merely assumed the kingship without opposition. This was the so-called fall of Rome in 476.

Rome under Papal Rule

The position of the pope

In Rome itself the pope was the real, but not the nominal, ruler of the city. Only his influence was able to temper the ferocity of the barbarians who invaded Italy three times during the century, twice sacking Rome. The imperial generals were away from Italy, defending the northern provinces. On each occasion it was the failure of these generals that allowed the barbarians to enter the defenseless peninsula. The popes organized such defense as there was, negotiated with the enemy, and superintended the reconstruction. The old Senate, now only a munic-
ipal council of Rome, gave occasional aid; even consuls continued to be elected, but they were not allowed to exercise any real power. The only well-organized and effective body in Rome was the clergy, under the authority of the pope.

Sack of Rome by Alaric (410)

The first attack came from Alaric the Visigoth, who had marched over from the Danubian provinces. The barbarian imperial general Stilicho twice defeated him; but the emperor Honorius suspected his general's loyalty, and had him executed. The Goth was thus given a free passage into Italy. No army was there to meet him, the emperor remaining safely defiant in Ravenna when Alaric asked him for land in Italy for the settlement of his people. The Roman citizens offered Alaric a ransom for their city, but he wanted land, not cash. Exasperated with the stubborness of Honorius, Alaric then appointed an emperor of his own, a Roman noble. But when this gentleman also was either unwilling or unable to grant his demands, Alaric and his troops lost patience and sacked Rome for three days. But the Gothic king died within a year, and the emperor patched up a treaty with his successors. The Visigoths moved off to greener pastures.

The invasion of Attila (452)

For forty years Rome survived, and was partly reconstructed under papal direction. It was now little more than a defenseless provincial city, no longer the seat of empire, and grievously depopulated; but it still housed the spiritual head of Christendom. After his check at Chalons Attila looked around for an area for his next year's campaigns, and Italy looked like an easy conquest. It is said that he hoped for a marriage into the imperial family, a suit not altogether discouraged by the lady herself, who was tired of her nunnery and wrote him letters whose content can only be guessed. But Attila could gain no satisfaction from her brother, the emperor at Ravenna. He therefore took matters into his own hands, invaded Italy, and approached the gates of Rome. Here the pious legends say that he was checked by Pope Leo I, who appeared with all the regalia of his office, and a procession of acolytes bearing candles. The barbarian was dismayed—or perhaps bought off with the remains of the treasures of the Church. At all events he retired to winter quarters in the north of Italy, gave up hopes of a bride from the imperial family, and satisfied himself with a beautiful barbarian princess. He died shortly afterward and his empire vanished with him.

Sack of Rome by Vandals (455)

But the barbarians were not yet through with Rome. Only three years later, at a moment when Aetius, the Roman victor of Chalons, had just been assassinated by the emperor Valentinian III (a murder quickly avenged by friends of the general), Gaiseric, the terrible king of the Vandals, sailed from Carthage with a fleet of barbarians bent on plunder. Sailing unmolested up the Tiber in their shallow-bottomed boats, the Vandals entered Rome. Again Pope Leo interceded, but was able to win nothing but the lives of the citizens. The Vandals then sacked the defenseless city for two weeks. When their ships left, laden with booty, Rome was little but a desolate ruin, her temples pillaged, her palaces sacked and burned, and everything of any value that had not been hidden from the barbarians was on the way to Africa.

THE BARBARIANS IN ITALY—THE END OF IMPERIAL RULE ("FALL OF ROME," 476)

For another twenty years the imperial rulers in Ravenna exercised a nominal sway over Italy. But the real rulers were the barbarian chieftains who bore Roman titles and commanded the army, which was still Roman in name. Emperors were made and unmade at will until one of the generals, Odoacer by name, finally decided to put an end to the solemn farce. The last emperor, a child rejoicing in the name of Romulus, the little Augustus (Augustulus), was formally deposed, his imperial insignia confiscated and
sent to Zeno, the crafty emperor of the East, as a token that there was no further emperor in the West. Though he proclaimed himself king of Italy, Odoacer thus showed himself willing to acknowledge the overlordship of the Eastern emperor, who was theoretically still lord of the whole united empire. Doubtless Odoacer thought him sufficiently far away and sufficiently occupied to be of no danger to his Italian sovereignty. Thus was the fall of Rome, which had stood for almost a thousand years in proud independence, consummated by the simple act of a barbarian general, without fighting, and with little noticeable change even in the form of the government. For a long time the imperial officials had been powerless, with the clergy alone keeping their Roman-inspired organization intact. Even under Odoacer, the Senate still sat as the municipal council of Rome, a position of honor but no authority; and even consuls continued to be solemnly elected. But all real power was now in the hands of the army and its generals. The army itself was made up of various Germanic tribesmen under the leadership of Odoacer himself, whose origin is unknown. He has been thought by some scholars even to have been a Hun, though he was originally called Herulian. High positions in the state were reserved for the barbarian rulers. Relations with the papacy were correct but not cordial, for these barbarian peoples were all heretical Arians and thus unacceptable to orthodox Christians. Not until Justinian’s reconquest of Italy, to be described later, was the papacy to be freed from its difficult position as an island of orthodoxy within a sea of heresy.

OSTROGOTHIC KINGDOM OF ITALY—THEODORIC (493–526)

But Odoacer was not to enjoy his new crown in peace. His army, though loyal to him, had no united body of tribesmen behind it. It was a formidable enough body of military men, but not strong enough to defend itself against a powerful united people. And such a people under Theodoric, probably the greatest of all barbarian generals and administrators, this army was now to be called upon to meet.

We have seen that the Ostrogoths (East Goths) had early submitted to Attila, and had been penned into a territory near the Black Sea. When this menace was lifted the Ostrogoths began to stir again and look for land for settlement. They made a treaty with Constantinople under which they became allies of the empire, and a young prince named Theodoric was sent to the capital as hostage. Thus he was educated in Constantinople, learned to understand and respect Roman institutions and even Roman law, and gained military experience. When his father died and he became king of a section of the Ostrogothic people he continued friendly relations with Zeno, emperor at Constantinople, was made a Roman citizen, and a master of the Byzantine troops. But later, when Theodoric consolidated all the Ostrogoths under his rulership, the emperor began to worry, and thought it would be safer to divert Theodoric and his people to the West, where he had no objection to the expulsion of Odoacer. Theodoric, taking the hint, led his people over into Italy and drove his opponent into Ravenna, from which, however, he found it impossible to dislodge him. Resorting to treachery under cover of peace negotiations, Theodoric was able to murder his rival, and became sole ruler of Italy, with a united Ostrogothic people behind him (493).

His reign of thirty-seven years was a remarkable example of the importance of good government to the prosperity of a country, even one as ill-used as Italy had been in the last centuries. Unnumbered by an imperial heritage, facing no enemies who could not be easily handled, keeping Constantinople at a safe distance and without cause for complaint against him since he scrupulously acknowledged the overlordship of the emperor, Theodoric gave a government to the Italians such as they had not known for centuries. The Goths were assigned land in Italy, apparently by the simple expedient of dispossessing a few large pro-
prietors and repopulating land that was not being worked for lack of cultivators, while those who were not in the army settled down as farmers. The Roman administration of government and justice was maintained, the Senate remained, on the whole, loyal to the king, and taxes were drastically reduced, as there was no longer such need for them. Agriculture and commerce revived; even private enterprise began to appear. Theodoric dredged the harbors, rebuilt aqueducts, and restored the cities as far as he could with his limited means. No longer having a vast empire to maintain, and with a greatly reduced population to support, Italy became the self-supporting territory that she has always had it in her power to be. The pope continued to maintain correct relations with the king though he was an Arian; and Theodoric in return made no attempt to convert his orthodox Roman subjects to Arianism.

There was even a brief revival of culture, with the two great scholars Boethius and Cassiodorus the chief ornaments. Boethius, foreseeing correctly the certain loss of all Greek culture in the West under the barbarian monarchy, spent much of his life translating the logical works of Aristotle into Latin, and writing textbooks based on the dying Greek knowledge, but suitable for the barbarians and barbarized Romans who alone would remain to study them. Unfortunately he became suspected of treasonable designs against the throne, and was cast into prison. Here he wrote the Consolations of Philosophy, which has been read ever since, and was especially popular in the Middle Ages. Ultimately he was executed by order
of Theodoric. His shade, however, may have been compensated by the knowledge that his textbooks and translations did indeed survive to become the chief intellectual diet of generations of medieval students. Cassiodorus, however, long outlived the Gothic king, supervising the translating and copying of manuscripts in a monastery which he founded on his own estate. He also wrote a History of the Goths.

RECONQUEST OF ITALY BY THE
BYZANTINE EMPIRE

Italian policy of Justinian

Theodoric's kingdom, however, did not survive his death. It was evidently only his personality that held it together. Civil war disrupted the kingdom, the succession, as so often in the Germanic kingdoms, being disputed between several contestants; in 535, Justinian, the emperor of the East, decided that the time was ripe for the restoration of the old Roman Empire, as it had been and always ought to be. The emperor Justinian was also a strong zealot for the orthodox faith as long as he was allowed to interpret it himself. In the laudable aim of extinguishing Arianism, he had the moral support of the papacy in Rome, and whatever more tangible support it could give him—at least until the popes recognized that Justinian's authoritarianism extended to the field of religion also.

Destruction of Ostrogothic kingdom—
Economic and strategic consequences

In a long-drawn-out and ruinously expensive war, Justinian's generals, Belisarius and Narses, reconquered Italy piecemeal. Behind them came the imperial bureaucracy and the tax collectors from whom the fortunate Italians had been free for a generation. The Ostrogothic nation resisted to the last, and was virtually destroyed, Italy was devastated; twenty years of warfare in which neither side showed any mercy was the final crippling blow to a country which had been able to recover from so many in the past. From this she never recovered for centuries.

Justinian, leaving an exarch, an imperial official, to rule Italy from Ravenna on his behalf, and a pope grateful for his orthodoxy but disliking intensely his autocratic manner of dealing with spiritual matters which he had acquired in his own capital, turned his attention to other affairs. He died soon afterward, having saddled his empire with a territory almost useless for exploitation, and incapable of self-defense against any barbarian horde that wished to enter.

INVASION OF ITALY BY LOMBARDS (568)
—PARTITION OF ITALY

The Lombard conquests (568–605)

This was not long in coming. Justinian had not been in his grave three years before the Lombards, another Germanic people, but by far the least civilized of any that had hitherto penetrated into Southern Europe, nominally Arians also, but in fact nearer to heathenism, swept into northern Italy, where there was no one left to oppose them. This time they made no compromises with the emperor, nor were they interested in Roman civilization. The Italians lost their estates, which were simply sequestrated by the Lombards. Northern Italy was consolidated under their rule in seven years, and they began to push southward. The exarch of Ravenna maintained his stronghold, still theoretically the ruler of Italy under the emperor, but neither he nor the rest of Italy could obtain any support from the various emperors of Constantinople, who were fully engaged elsewhere. Nor did the emperors give any aid to the other isolated areas in Italy under their nominal rule. And there was no such partly civilized king as Theodoric over the Lombards. They were united only for conquest and plunder. Thereafter their separate leaders (dukes) took what they could, and maintained it as their own private possession. By 605 all Italy except Ravenna, Naples, Rome, and parts of the extreme south were in the hands of the barbarians.

Remnants of Byzantine rule

What remained to the empire from the
warfare of Justinian was the isolated and useless Ravenna, and the south. Rome acknowledged the overlordship of Constantinople on the principle that a distant overlord is better than a local one, especially if he is powerless to intervene. Since such acknowledgment carried with it no obligation to obedience, the popes were content to make it for centuries to come. And the pope of Rome was now at last in fact its temporal lord also. He was the spiritual lord of all Christendom, the owner of many scattered estates in Italy which had been given to the Church in the troubled times, and the defender of Rome against the barbarian Lombards from whom he had managed to keep his city intact.

Position of the papacy—Gregory I (590–604)

This was the work of one man, one of the greatest of the popes, a Roman by descent, a saint, and a gifted administrator and diplomatist, Gregory I, the Great.

It is possible that the Lombards, vastly superior in numbers as they were, could have taken Rome by force if they had united against it. But they seem to have respected the person of the pope, and perhaps the sanctity of the city, in spite of the fact that they were only nominal Christians, and a heretical sect at that. At all events, they never made any serious effort to do so, perhaps in part because of their internal disunity. Thus for centuries the popes were able to exist, often isolated and always precariously, until they were rescued in the eighth century by the orthodox Frankish kings. Gregory, who had at an earlier stage in his life been an official agent of the papacy in Constantinople, knew how useless it was to look for help from this quarter. He therefore accepted the position, and negotiated directly with the Lombards, while the emperor continued to bid him resist, and for many years refused to accept his arrangements. Ultimately the empire recognized the conquests; and Gregory through the negotiations was allowed to keep his city and the territory around it.

Such a position, in spite of its precariousness, had certain manifest advantages. As a temporal ruler the pope continued to owe a nominal allegiance to Constantinople, an allegiance which could not be enforced, but still gave him legal title to his position, and perhaps served to keep the Lombards away from his city. As a spiritual and temporal leader he had just shown himself as a true shepherd of his people, thereby greatly enhancing his prestige. He began to improve his position still further by directing missionary enterprises, especially the successful mission of St. Augustine to England (596), and a further mission to Spain, where the Visigothic king was at last converted from his Arianism to orthodox Catholicism. Gregory took careful thought for the position of the clergy in Christendom, and wrote several works giving them guidance and practical advice on the care of souls. His instructions to bishops remain the fundamental work on the subject, explaining in a simple manner the different kinds of cases with which they would be called upon to deal, and how the instruction varied in each case. As explained already, he also fully supported the work of St. Benedict in his reform of the monasteries.

Perhaps the most important of Gregory’s work was his insistence that all the clergy of Europe should obey the papacy and receive instructions from it. He was not too successful in France, where the appointment of the clergy was largely in the hands of the Merovingian kings, but the bishops nevertheless listened to him with respect, and later popes could quote Gregory as authority for their own claims. Newly converted Spain and England accepted the overlordship of the papacy from the first. And wherever there were orthodox clergy in Italy, they too accepted his supremacy. Though Gregory could not actually alter the domination of the Church by the state in Constantinople, he constantly repeated his claim that all the Eastern bishops and the Patriarch of Constantinople were subordinate to the Holy See by virtue of the Petrine supremacy. In all these things he gave a lead to the popes
who followed him. For, though the practice of appointing bishops by lay rulers was never abandoned in France and Germany, and discipline could hardly be enforced, the clergy nevertheless did look to the papacy for guidance in spiritual affairs when they felt the need for it; and this dependence largely remained even when the papacy fell into weak hands, and when Constantinople and the Eastern Empire drifted entirely away from papal rule.

**Barbarian kingdoms in the West**

**THE ASCENDANCY OF THE FRANKS**

**Conquest of Gaul by Clovis (481-511)**

When we last mentioned the Franks, they were following the Vandals into the land that was then called Gaul but thereafter was to be known as Frankland or France. Meeting little opposition from the few remaining Romans, the Franks first set up several kingdoms in the north under separate kings. But in 482 a young prince named Clovis became the ruler of one small kingdom clustered around the modern Tournaï. Able and ambitious, he began to expand his kingdom to the south by judicious murders, treachery, and open warfare. France at the time was peopled by Visigoths, Burgundians, Alemanni, as well as the old Gallo-Romans, including a Gallic noble who called himself king of Rome. Defeating this pretender first, Clovis then drove the Alemanni back across the Rhine into Germany (to which they gave their name, Allemagne in the French language) and incorporated their
kingdom into his; then he turned south and drove the Visigothic remnants into Spain to join their fellow tribesmen; and at last, having disposed also of his fellow Frankish kings, he consolidated a kingdom not much smaller than the present-day France (481-511).

Conversion of Clovis to orthodox Catholicism

Clovis, as it happened, had a Christian wife, Clotilda, who was orthodox and not Arian; after his victories he allowed himself to be converted by her clerical adviser and with him his Franks, thus being the first barbarian group to deviate from the otherwise universal Arianism. Publicly baptised at Rheims by a Catholic bishop, by this act he gained the support of the entire clergy of France, who now rallied to his aid. This was no mean help, since they controlled what was left of the old Gallo-Roman administration, while the remainder of the old Gallo-Roman population, also orthodox Christians, offered Clovis at least their moral support. From this time onward the Frankish monarchy remained the papal favorite among secular powers, and it was to the Franks that the papacy looked for help and military aid when it became involved with the Lombard kings, in preference to the official overlord of Italy away in Constantinople who was too prone to lapse into heresy and was inclined to treat papal claims to supremacy with disrespect.

The Merovingian kingdom

After the death of Clovis, his kingdom, according to Germanic custom, was divided between his four sons, who spent most of their lives fighting against each other, though they united against all non-Frankish outsiders, consolidating their total dominions by the addition of almost all the remainder of modern France. The Merovingian kingdom (418-754, so called after Meroveus, grandfather of Clovis) was sometimes under the rule of one member of the family and sometimes subdivided. But until the eighth century at least one of his descendants occupied the throne, though in later years the authority of the kings was only nominal and the real power was in the hands of hereditary officials, chief stewards, who are usually, and incorrectly, called mayors of the palace (major domus). Ultimately, one of these officials deposed his titular master with papal approval and became king of the Franks himself.

It is difficult to generalize about the state of the country in Merovingian times. Some of Gaul had been thoroughly Romanized, and remained so, even under alien monarchs. On the whole, it can be said that the Latin element tended to prevail. The French language has barely four hundred words of Germanic origin, all the remainder being of Latin origin. Much of Roman law and even Roman governmental system remained, especially in the center and the south, while in the north German customs prevailed. On the other hand, the barbaric habits of the kings; their addiction to murder, wholesale and retail; their lack of care for commerce and trade so long as they were able to have the Oriental luxuries, especially of dress and ornament, in which they delighted; their general propensity to treat their territories as if they were private estates to be exploited for their own gain; and their failure to control the rapacity of local, semi-independent chiefs called counts—all these tended to push the unhappy country further into barbarism, which historians have politely called a fusion between German and Gallo-Roman culture. This fusion undoubtedly existed, and the result, after many centuries, was the modern kingdom of France, but far more Latin than Germanic—in this showing once again how the superior culture tends to absorb the lesser, if the lesser, like the Frankish culture of this period, has less to offer. The best that can be said for the Merovingian monarchy is that, by providing government of a sort and by not interfering too drastically with institutions they were incapable of understanding and with a culture that meant nothing to them, they preserved France for a brighter future when the Dark Ages which had fallen
on all Europe at last should come to an end.

As in all other matters the Merovingian kings were dictatorial and arbitrary in their policy toward the Church. They insisted on making all higher appointments themselves, or at least in supervising them. The result was that the choice was not always suitable, and morality does not seem to have been one of the more important qualifications for office. However, there were many good choices among the bad, and there can be little doubt that, on the whole, the bishops were several degrees better than the counts, with whom they shared the authority within

the territories under their control. While we hear of bishops who publicly boasted of their adulteries, who adopted the trade of highwaymen in addition to their spiritual duties, who daily used to drink themselves into a stupor and celebrate Mass without taking the trouble to recover their sobriety, of bishops who went to war in full armor and of at least one who admitted to regicide, the record would be incomplete without mention also of many who spent their lives looking after the poor and humble and defending them against the secular power, many who administered justice faithfully, and many who were true shepherds of their
flocks. The bishops and clergy were a reflection of the times in which they lived and of the monarchs who appointed them.

THE ANGLO-SAXON KINGDOM OF ENGLAND—
INVASION (440–615)

In the early fifth century the Roman legions in Britain revolted, and finally left the country to its fate (442). The northern walls which had protected the country from the Celtic Picts were promptly overrun by these invaders, while other Celts from Ireland, called the Scots, came over by sea. Saxons from Germany, and later a people called Angles, usually collectively known as Anglo-Saxons, together with some Jutes from Denmark, invaded Britain from the east, driving the Celtic population, including the
recent arrivals from Ireland and Scotland, into the west of the country, and setting up kingdoms of their own, the Angles and Jutes in the north and east, and the Saxons in the South. These conquests were completed by 615. The original Celts, who had never fully accepted Roman culture, though they had been, for the most part, converted to Christianity, fled into the extreme west of the country, and relapsed into barbarism, retaining their Celtic language to this day (Welsh); they were not reclaimed into England until the fourteenth century. The Celts (Britons) who remained in England were thoroughly Germanized by the invaders, and the country became in all essentials a Germanic one. This Anglo-Saxon realm was even able to survive the fierce raids of the Northmen, who invaded repeatedly from the late eighth to the eleventh century, and at one time gave England, as the country came to be called, one of the greatest of its kings (Cnut). The Irish and Roman Churches soon competed for converts among the English, as described in the last chapter, the Roman Church finally obtaining one of its most constantly faithful clergy and people, subject to discipline from the papacy. The English kings made no attempt to defy the Church or interfere with clerical appointments until after the Norman Conquest in the eleventh century. This was the most successful and permanent of the Germanic kingdoms, of all that the barbarians invaded during these migrations the only country which survived as a truly Germanic entity.

THE VISIGOOTHIC KINGDOM OF SPAIN (507-711)

The Visigothic kingdom of Spain, conquered after many efforts in other directions by the Visigothic people, remained under Gothic control until the beginning of the eighth century, with the exception of a small area in the south which was conquered by Justinian in 554 and held by the Byzantines for a few years. Being the most civilized of the German barbarians, they fused more easily with the Romanized Spaniards than did the Franks with the Gallo-Roman peoples of France. This was especially true after the conversion of the Visigoths to Catholic Christianity in the late sixth century. Roman law was maintained as well as elements of the Roman government, with the Goths providing the ruler, though they remained a small minority in the country. The Spanish language has very few words of Germanic origin, remaining almost as close to Latin as is Italian.

But the Goths declined in military ardor during their two centuries of rule, and were no match for the invading Muslims under Tarik (711), even though the latter were only one comparatively small unit among the numerous Muslim armies. As soon as the Muslims brought over their first reinforcements the kingdom succumbed without serious resistance. The Muslims later conquered almost all Spain, though they were unable to make any headway in France.

THE VANDAL KINGDOM IN AFRICA—ITS EXTINCTION BY JUSTINIAN

The Vandal kingdom in Africa, founded by Gaiseric, survived only until the early sixth century. After the death of the great leader the government disintegrated, with civil war and disputed successions among the chiefs. One such dispute gave Justinian, the Emperor of Constantinople, the opportunity to interfere and add this Arian kingdom to orthodox Christendom. This was accomplished in one expedition under the brilliant Byzantine general Belisarius (533).

The end of an era

With the fall of the Roman Empire we reach the end of an era. Though the successor-state in the East, known as the Byzantine Empire, survived for almost a thousand years longer, this civilization was so different from the old Roman Empire that it cannot be discussed profitably in a history of the ancient world. The achievements of Greco-Roman civilization were far from lost, even in the West; but the destruction of its political system and the decline of its culture as a
living creative force threw Europe into a condition of political, social, and cultural degradation which used to be called the "Dark Ages." If these centuries are not believed by modern scholars to be as dark as earlier historians thought them, the term remains not altogether inappropriate. It was a period of fermentation which ultimately proved to have in it the potentiality for new life and creativity; but while the fermentation was in process life was dark indeed, and no one could have foretold what would arise from it. Other countries which have had great cultures in the past have never emerged from their stagnation, and it was possible that Europe might have followed their example.

The conditions which made possible the Greek and Roman achievements had disappeared, as it proved, forever. The Roman Empire had survived as long as it had because it was able to make use of the old city-state culture which was the distinctive achievement of the Greeks. The empire had succeeded in the one field in which the Greeks had failed; it had provided a political framework under which the ruinous intercity warfare was no longer possible. But the later empire had destroyed the basis for its own government when, by relentless pressure, it undermined the ability of the cities to survive as independent entities. It was not possible to force them to produce in the same way as they had produced under their own impetus; and though the peasant has always been ready to work his land under the most tyrannous oppression, either by landlords or by monarchs, Europe was too vast to treat as if it were an Egypt, and no emperor could be strong enough to keep every landlord in Europe directly subject to him and obedient to his orders. So no basis remained for absolute government; the army could not be maintained with the cities refusing to work, and with the peasants out of the control of the absolute monarchs. The army was merely an instrument for compulsion, and it could not itself produce.

With the destruction of the cities, land alone remained; and for the next few centuries the rule of Europe was in the hands of landlords, sometimes nominally subject to monarchs, but actually exercising almost independent control of comparatively small areas which were not beyond their capacity to rule. With the subsequent rise of cities it again became possible for monarchs to unite with them and subject the landlords to control; but it has never been possible up to this time to exercise this dominion in areas as large and with as wide and varied a culture as the territory ruled by the Roman Empire.

This is not to say that this fact was ever understood by contemporaries. To the people who could remember, or whose institutions had been formed by the Roman Empire, it seemed that the natural form of government was a huge universal state ruled by an emperor who, at least according to Christian thought, was responsible to God, or perhaps to God's spiritual representative on earth, the pope. If this no longer suited the new condition of Europe, then it must be imposed by force. Charlemagne, as it happened, succeeded by the force of his personal genius in subjecting most of the landlords to discipline in his day and compelling them to acknowledge his authority. But all they had to do was to sit out his lifetime and throw off his out-of-date despotism as soon as he was dead. In this they were backed by all the effective force of the times.

The papacy, seeking a similar restoration of the empire in a different form, would probably have liked an emperor, obedient to itself in spiritual matters but exercising supreme authority in the secular sphere. This arrangement would have been more convenient, but the basis for such an authority was nowhere to be found. The emperor of Constantinople before the division of the Eastern and Western Churches refused to accept the overlordship of the papacy, even in spiritual matters. And the Holy Roman Empire was usually only a shadow empire, unable to maintain undisputed authority even within Germany, and could not even aspire, after Charlemagne, to the rulership of Europe.
survived outside the Church in the Dark Ages Roman and Greek rationalism was not lost forever. When the human mind awakened again—when, with Anselm, it was first found necessary to prove the existence of God—the process was set in motion that led to modern Western civilization. And the work of the Greeks and Romans, gradually recovered and assimilated, had no mean share in it.

**Suggestions for further reading**

There have been so many studies on the fall of the Roman Empire that it is impossible to make a really satisfactory choice. Each book is inclined to stress some factors to the exclusion or minimization of others, as, indeed, this text itself has been forced to do. In the author's opinion the most adequate account within a reasonable space is F. Lot, *The End of the Ancient World and the Beginnings of the Middle Ages* (tr. P. and M. Leon; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1931). This book offers a useful synthesis of causes for the decline and fall, with a very thoughtful evaluation, and the whole is presented with an admirable clarity. H. St. L. B. Moss, *The Birth of the Middle Ages*, 395–814 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1935), offers a good brief general picture of Roman civilization in the last centuries of the Roman Empire, and gives much essential information on the barbarian invasions and the establishment of the barbarian kingdoms, with a clarity not usually found in books about this confusing period. From the point of view of a classical scholar primarily interested in the culture of this period, Miss E. S. Duckett gives an admirable survey, country by country, of the new barbarian kingdoms and the interaction of the Romans and barbarians, its effects upon the old Roman culture. There is a particularly sympathetic account of Boethius, and a picture of the world of Pope Gregory I, which should be read in connection with the material at the close of Chapter 13. This book is E. S. Duckett, *The Gateway to the Middle Ages* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938). Utilizing in particular the Latin writings of this period, Miss Duckett succeeds in giving a very fresh and interesting account, with many quotations not easily found elsewhere. Dill's masterpiece, long a classic in this field, should also not be missed.
especially the long quotations from the writers of the fifth century which show so clearly the decadence of the time and the surprising ignorance of the Romans that their Empire was on the verge of collapse: S. Dill, *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire* (2nd ed., rev.; London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1921). Finally, the heritage of Rome and what it meant to the world are well handled in C. Dawson, *The Making of Europe* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932), a thoughtful work, only a small part of which is devoted to Rome.


For students interested in the Merovingian kingdom of Gaul there is a very complete study by Dill also in this field, *Roman Society in Gaul in the Merovingian Age* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926). This book appears to be slightly misnamed, since it does not exclusively deal with, nor even especially emphasize, the remnants of Roman culture in Gaul, as might be expected. It is, nevertheless, an exhaustive study of Merovingian society, as far as it can be described from the numerous literary sources extant, and there is as yet nothing in English which will supersede it, though in France there has been much study in recent times of the extant nonliterary sources which will in time round out the picture more fully. A competent survey of Anglo-Saxon England, adequate for the general student, will be found in the Pelican book, D. Whitelock, *The Beginnings of English Society* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1952).
pronunciation key

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The symbol (‘), as in *mother* (müθər), is used to mark primary stress; the syllable preceding it is pronounced with greater prominence than the other syllables in the word. The symbol (’), as in *grandmother* (grānd’möθər), is used to mark secondary stress; a syllable marked for secondary stress is pronounced with less prominence than the one marked (‘) but with more prominence than those bearing no stress mark at all.

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<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
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<tr>
<td>ä</td>
<td>act, bat</td>
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<td>ə</td>
<td>zeal, lazy, those</td>
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Foreign Sounds

ä as in French anä [a vowel intermediate in quality between the ä of cat and the ä of calm, but closer to the former]

KH as in German schi; Scottish loch [a consonant made by bringing the tongue into the position for k, as in key, coo, while pronouncing a strong h]

N [a symbol used to indicate nasalized vowels as in hon. There are four such vowels in French, found in un bôon vin blanc (oen bōn vān blān)]

ö as in French feu; German schön [a vowel made with the lips rounded in position for ö as in over, while trying to say ä as in able]

y as in French tu; German über [a vowel made with the lips rounded in position for öö as in ooze, while trying to ö as in easy]
Index

(Note: Page references to illustrations are given in bold face; page references to maps are given in italics.)

A
Abbasids, 106
Abraham, 116, 120
Abydos (a bi' dîs), 55
Abysinian, 406
Achaean Greeks, 128
Achaean League, 280, 289
Achaeanus (a kâ' anz), 130ff.
Achamnians, 260
Achilles (a kil' ëz), 184ff.
Acropolis (a krôp' a lis), 192, 255
Actium (ák' tî am, -shî-), battle of, 301, 345
Acts of the Apostles, 116, 394, 404
Adrianople, 430, 431
Aegean (a jê' an) civilization, 108, 128-137
bibliography of, 138
as bridge between Egypt and West, 137
decline of, 130
definition of, 129
Greek civilization influenced by, 137
influence of, 137
contrasted with Hebrew and Mesopotamian, 137
map, 131
Western civilization influenced by, 137
Aegean Islands, 181
Aegina (a jî' na), 200
Aegospotami (ê' gas pót' a ml'), 218
Aeneas (I nê' as) (Aineas), 305, 366, 385
Aeneid, 358ff.
Aeolians (ê' o' lî anz), 181, 181
Aeschines (ê' shî' ko nêz'), 263, 270
Aeschylus (ê' shî' ko las or, exp. Brit., ês'-), 235, 236, 261
dramas of, 233
Greek thought expressed by, 229
Aesclapius (ê' sî' kâ' plî as or, exp. Brit., ês'-), 250
Aetius (ê' shî as), 430, 432, 433
Aetolian League, 280, 280, 324
Afghanistan, 140
Agado (a' gã da), 92
Agamemnon, 128ff., 184ff.
Agora (a' gô' ra), 192, 201, 223
Agriculture (see under particular civilizations)
Agrippa (a' griipp' a), 344
Ahab (ê' háb), 128
Ahimma, 171
Ahmosa 1, 58
Ahriman (a' rô mân'), 105
Ahura-Mazda (ê' hôr ra mâz' da), 20, 105, 369
Aineias (see Aeneas)
Ainira-Mann (see Ahriman)
Ajar, 237
Akbar (êk' bôr) the Great, 148, 150, 163
Akhetaton (a' kë' tî' tôn) (see Tel-el-Amarna)
Akhnaton (a' kô' nà' tôn), 31ff., 61-66, 64
art under, 63, 63, 65
monotheism of, 65
religious reforms of, 63-65
failure of, 66
Akkadians (a kâ' di anz, a kâ'-), 78
Sumerians conquered by, 92
Arlaric (êl' â rîk), 408, 425
Rome sacked by, 433
Alba Longa, 305
Albigensians (êl' bâ' jên' si anz, -shanz), 105
Alcaeus (êl' së' as), 298
Alcibiades (êl' sô bô' ë dëz'), 243
Alcidamas (êl' sid' a mês'), 239
Alemanii, 427
Alexander the Great, 271-278, 273
Alexandria founded by, 274
Aristotle, help from, 247
relations with, 271-272
Athens defeated by, 210
bibliography of, 300
character of, 271-272
conquered people, policy toward, of, 272, 273
conquest of Persians by, 99
conquests, results of, 277
Darius defeated by, 103, 274, 276
INDEX

Alexander the Great (Cont.)
- death of, 276
- Egypt conquered by, 274
- empire of, 275
- breakup of, 276
- Greco-Oriental civilization founded by, 99
- Greece conquered by, 190
- Greek characteristics of, 274
- India conquered by, 144, 159, 276
- marriage of, 276
- Orientalism of, 276
- patriotism of, 273
- Persia conquered by, 274, 276
- Phoenicians conquered by, 114
- planting of polis by, 272, 273
- propaganda of, 273
- Romans contrasted with, 302
- Sparta, revolt against, 274
- statue of, 257
- tactics varied by, 273
- Thebes conquered by, 270

Alexandria, 274, 279, 281, 284, 354
- Museum of, 289
- Pharos of, 292
- poetry in, 298–299
- Allia, battle of, 317

Alphabet (see under Persia, Phoenicians)
- Alps, 304, 323
- Altamira (ál’tä mē’rā ’rā), 18
- Ambrose, 404, 406
- Amenemhet (ā’mən ēm’hēt) 1, 54
- Amenemhet m, 54
- Amenhotep (ā’mən hō’tēp) n, 41, 42
- Amenhotep n, 61, 66
- Amenhotep rv (see Akhnaton)
- Ammianus Marcellinus
  (ām’in mär’sə lē n’ nas), 382
- Ammon (ā’mən ’n), 117, 118
- Amon (ā’mən), 40, 43, 55, 67, 72
- restoration of, 68
- Amon-Re, 55, 58, 61
- Amores, 386
- Amorites, 78, 92, 93
- Amphictyonic (ām’fik’tī ēn’ ik) Council, 268
- Amphictyonic League, 211
- Philip of Macedon, membership in, 270
- Amphipolis (ām’fip’ō līs), 266, 267
- Amphissa (ām’fis’ə), 270, 271
- Amurru (see Amorites)
- Amynatas, 267
- Anaxagoras (ān’āg sāg’ə ras), 232, 239, 247
- Anaximander (ā nāk’ sō mān’ dar), 230
- Anaximenes (ān’āk sm’ī nēz), 230
- Anaximander, 147
- Andromache (ān drōm’ e kē’), 186
- Angles, 427, 441, 441, 442
- Anglo-Saxons, 441, 442
- Annals, 381
- Anchises, Saint, 444
- Antigone (ān tig’ə nē’), 237
- Antigonus (ān tig’ə ras) Doson, 210
- Antigonus Gonatas, 276
- Antioch (ān ti’ ə k), 421
- Antiochus (ān ti’ə kəs) m, 323, 324
- Antiochus rv Epiphanes
  (i pî’ə nās), 119, 393
- Antiphon, 240
- Antisthenes (ān tis’ nēz’), 284
- Antonine dynasty, 381
- Antoninus Pius, 361, 361
- Antony, Mark, 341f.
- Cleopatra, relations with, 344
- Octavian, rivalry with, 344–345
- suicide of, 345
- Anu, 86–87, 93
- Anytus, 243
- Aphrodite (āf’rə dī’ tē), 186, 233, 238, 294, 296
- Apollo, 184f.
- Apollo Oracle (see Delphic Oracle)
- Appollonius, 290, 299
- Apology, 243
- Apostolic Fathers (see Church Fathers)
- Appian Way, 316, 317
- Apalus, 86
- Apuleius (ā pū’ə lē’sə), 389
- Aquinas, Saint Thomas, 241, 407
- Arabs, 366
- Aratu, 91, 368
- Arabians (ār’ ā mē’ra n), 96, 97, 108, 113, 117
- Hebrews, relations with, 113
- language of, 113
- origins of, 113
- Aramaic (ā rā mā’ ək), 113, 277
- Arbela (ār bē’ lə), battle of, 275, 276
- Arch of Constantine, 377
- Arch of Triumph, 378
- Archaeology, 12–13
- Archbishop, 403
- Archimedes (ār’kō mē’ dēz), 239, 290
- Architecture (see under particular civilizations)
- Archaia (ār’kō nō’), 202, 204, 208
- Areopagus (ār’ ā pō’ə gōs), 202ff.
- Ares (ār’ē dēz), 233
- Ariste (ā rā tā’), 241
- Argonautica, 299
- Argos, 195, 197, 200, 217
- Arianism, 405, 406, 429ff.
- Arians, 405
- Aristarchus (ār’ ā tār’ kōs), 289
- Aristides (ār’ ā tī’ dēz) the Just, 215
- Aristophanes (ār’ ā tō’ ə nēz), 210, 233ff.
- choral lyrics of, 259
- Sophists criticized by, 240, 262
- women in, 225
- Aristotle (ār’ ā stōt’ āl), 186, 238, 246–250, passim
- Alexander the Great, help to, 247
- pupil of, 246, 265
- relations with, 271–272
- atomic view rejected by, 232
- biological classification of, 247
- causality in, 248–249
- drama as catharsis in, 235, 237
- encyclopaedic knowledge of, 250
- ethics of, 233, 249–250
- exile of, 224
- Greek thought expressed by, 229
- in Hellenistic Age, 284
- life of, 246
- logic of, 246
- Lyceum founded by, 246
- moderation of, 249–250
- physics of, 248
- pioneer work of, 247–248
- Plato contrasted with, 247
- polis in, 190
- Politics of, 188
- Roman civilization influenced by, 302
- scientific mind of, 246
- state, ideal and practical, in, 249
- universal genius of, 246
- women, opinion of, in, 224
- Arians, 405, 406
- Ars amatoria, 386, 387
- Art (see under particular civilizations)
- Artemis (ār’tō mē’ s), 238
- Aryans, 141, 143–144
- Asia Minor, 109, 129
- Asoka (ā sō’kā), 144–147, 148, 163
- benevolent rule of, 163
- Buddhism, conversion to, of, 144, 172
- and caste system, 146
- character of, 145–146
Asoka (Cont.)
discontent in, 202
education in, 225-226
industry in, 221
imperialism, economic basis of, in, 218-222
jury system of, 206-208
life in, 222-223
mercenary troops of, 267-268
moral decline of, 240
Pelasgic War against, 216-218
Pisistratus' rule in, 204-205
political development of, 201-202
political parties in, 204-205
poverty of, 222-223
Roman civilization contrasted with, 222-223
slavery in, 193, 210
Thebes, accusations against, 270
unification of, 201
women in, 210, 224-225
Xerxes, conquest of, 214

Atman, 228

Athena (αθηνα), 184ff.

Athenian democracy (see Athens)

Athenians, 181ff.

Roman wars contrasted with, 302
See also under Athens

Athens, 187ff., 217
agriculture in, 218-219
Alexander the Great, defeat of, 210
aristocracy in, 211
art of, 203, 204, 207, 220, 224, 225
Assembly of, 206, 208-209
banking in, 222
Boule of, 206
citizen class in, 223
Cleisthenes' reforms in, 205-207
coinage of, 222
colonies of, 219
colonization by, 194-195
commerce of, 219-220
Council of, 206
defeat by Philip of Macedon, 210
Delos Confederation led by, 214-216

democracy of, 188, 201, 208-211
economic discontent in, 202
education in, 225-226
exports of, 220-221
industry in, 221
imperialism, economic basis of, in, 218-222
life in, 222-223
mercenary troops of, 267-268
metropolis in, 223-224
moral decline of, 240
oligarchs, rule of, in, 211
Pelasgic War against, 216-218
Pisistratus' rule in, 204-205
political development of, 201-202
political parties in, 204-205
poverty of, 222-223
Roman civilization contrasted with, 222-223
slavery in, 193, 210
Solon's reforms in, 202-204
Sparta, contrasted with, 195
supremacy of, 218
tax system of, 222
Thebes, accusations against, 270
unification of, 201
women in, 210, 224-225
Xerxes, conquest of, 214

economic policies of, 354-355
Egypt under, 350
empire, boundaries of, 352
evaluation of, 358-359
government under, 347-348
law under, 354
monarchical realities under, 347-348
morality under, 357-358
powers of, 348
problems of, 345-346
provinces, reorganization of, under, 350-352
public works under, 355
religion and, 369
religious policies of, 357-358
republican forms under, 347-348
Roman Senate under, 348
Rome under, 353-354
slavery, policy toward, of, 356
social policies of, 357-358
successor of, 348-349
successors of, 359-362
traditions, preservation of, under, 357
triumphal arch of, 350
unemployment, policy toward, of, 356-357
See also Octavian

Aurelian, 369, 417
Aurelius, Marcus, 349, 361ff., 402
Avars, 432, 438
B

Ba, 47-48, 48n.

Babylon, 92ff., 93

Cyrus, conquest of, 102
Hittites, conquest of, 109
Kassites, conquest of, 109
renascence of, 99-100

Babylonia, 75, 92-95, 93

Assyrians conquered by, 95-96
astronomy of, influence upon Hellenistic Age, 289
Canaan influenced by, 115
Hammurabi Code, observance of, in, 95
polytheism of, contrasted with Hebrew monotheism, 121
See also under Mesopotamia

Bacchae (βακχα), 238

Bacchantes, 235

Bacon, Roger, 250

Bactria, 275, 276

Bactrian kingdom, 144

Baluchistan, 276

Baptism, 400

Barbarians (see under Roman Empire and specific main entries)
INDEX

"Barrack emperors," 417
Basil (bāzd'al) 1, 452n.
Basil, Saint, 409
Basilica, 374
Basilica of Constantine, 374
Basques, 435
Baths of Caracalla, 374
Behistun (bāhīz tūūn), 80
Beirut (bārū tūūt, bārū tūūt'), 113
Belisarins (bēlīz sārī lās), 436, 442
Belshazzar (bēlīshāz' ār), 102
Benares (ba nā'rīz), 144, 172
Benedict, Saint, 409, 437
Benedictine Rule, 410, 411
Beneventum, 318, 319
Benjamin, 117, 118
Bethlehem, 395
Bhagavad Gita (bāgūd' ā vād gārī tā), 143n.
Bible, 372
Bibulous (bībūlū lās), 388
Bishop, 403
Black Bull, 2
Blue stones, 23
Bodhisattvas (bō dzī sāt'vā waz), 173
Boeotia (bō' ē shā), 179, 277
Boethius (bō'ē thī ās), 435-436
Boghaz-Keui (bō gāz' kū ī), 109
Bologna University, 385
Book of Daniel (see Daniel)
Book of the Dead, 58, 61
Book of Exodus (see Exodus)
Book of Isaiah (see Isaiah)
Book of Job (see Job)
Book of Jonah (see Jonah)
Book of Numbers (see Numbers)
Boscoareale (bōs' kō rā ā lā), 354
Boule (bō'ū lē), 204, 206, 209
Brahma (bī; Dem. brā'ē), Tycho, 289
Brahma, 120, 121n., 169, 169
Brahmin priests, 144
Brahmins, 146, 148, 160-161
Breasted, James Henry, 37, 48
Briséis (bri sē' īs), 184
Britain, 129, 140
See also England
Bronze Age, 19, 24-25
Italy during, 304
Brutus, Decimus, 339, 341, 342
Brutus, Marcus, 339, 343, 359
Buddha, 147, 167, 172-173
Buddhism, 144ff., 167, 167, 172-173
Asoka, conversion to, 144, 172
origins of, 172
Burgundians, 427, 431
Roman Empire invaded by, 430
Burma, 416
Burrus, 360
Byblos (bībī lās), 52, 113, 114, 114
Byzantium, 194, 424, 446

C

Caesar, Gaius and Julius, 349
Caesar, Julius, 335, 336-340, 341, 368, 374
administration of, 338
consultship of, 336
dictatorship of, 339
fallings of, 346, 347
Gaul campaigns of, 337
Germans described by, 425
historianship of, 380
internece struggles after murder of, 341-345
military prowess of, 336
mistakes of, 339, 340
moral of, 339
Pompey, rivalry with, 336-338
reforms of, 338-339
rise of, 335-336
triumvirate after murder of, 343-344
as writer, 338
Caesarion, 344
Caligula (ka lig'ya lā), 360, 361, 362, 401
Callicles (ka lī'kē lēz'), 240
Callcrates (ka līk' rā tēz), 255
Callimachus (ka lim'ka sās), 212
Callithenes (ka līs'mō thē nēz), 276
Calvin, John, 127, 407
Cambyses (kām bē'sēz), 69, 102
Campania, 313, 317, 318, 322
Canaan, 115ff.
Babylonia, influence upon, 115
Egypt, conquest of, 115
geophysical characteristics of, 115
Mesopotamia, influence upon, 115
Canaanites (see Canaan)
Canaan (kān'ē), battle of, 322, 323
Canton, 150, 155
Camute (ka nūt'), 442
Capua, 304, 317, 322
Caracalla (kār'ē kāl'ē), 362
Carchemish (kār'ē ke nīsh, kār'ē'), 97, 99, 109
Carnac, 22, 22
Carneades (kār'ē nē'ē dēz'), 287
Carolus (kār'ē lās) Magnus (see Charlemagne)
Carthage (kārī lī), 336, 340
Carthage, 114, 304ff., 323, 484
Rome, treaty with, 319
wars with, 321-322
Cassiodorus (kāsh'ō dō'raös), 435, 436
Cassius (kāsh'ē as), 339, 343, 359
Caste system, 160-162
See also under India
Cathari (kāth'ē ri), 105, 369
See also Albigensians
Catholic Church (see Church)
Calline (kāt'ē lin), 335, 379
Cato the Elder, 324, 326, 368, 379
Cato the Younger, 335, 336
Catullus (ka tūl'ē), 386
Cave of Las Monedas, 18
Cella, 252
Celts, 441, 442
Italy invaded by, 304
Roman Empire invaded by, 430
Censors, 332
Censorship, 312
Ceylon, 146
Charonea (kārō nē'ē), 287, 290, 271
Chalcedon (ka lē'don), 194, 457
Chalcidian League, 269, 290
Philip of Macedon, conquest of, 268
Chaldea (kāl dē'ē), 93
Chaldeans, 78, 98-102
astrology of, 86, 100
astronomy of, 100
influence upon Hellenistic
Age, 289
conquered by Persians, 102
conquest of Hebrews, 99, 119, 127
empire of, 99
Persia, conquest of, 102
religion of, 100
Chalons (shā lōn'), battle of, 431, 432, 433
Chalymes (ka lī tēz'), 25
Champollion (shām pō lyōn'), Jean François, 37
Chance, 392
Chandragupta (chān'drā goōp'tā) n., 147, 159
Chandragupta Maurya (mor'ē yo), 144
Charlemagne (shār'ē lā mān'; Fr. shār' lā mān'ē), 106, 358, 443ff.
Children of Israel (see Hebrews)
Ch'in, 153, 154, 164
China, 150-158
ancestor worship in, 166
art of, 151, 164, 165, 166
bibliography of, 176
Ch’in dynasty of, 153, 154, 164
Chou dynasty of, 152
civil service in, 156
communists in, 162
“Contending States” period in, 152–153
family in, 162–163
as basic social unit in, 159–160
feudal system of, 153
geophysical characteristics of, 150
Greek thought contrasted with, 228
Han dynasty of, 153–154
fall of, 156
historiography of, 151
India, contacts with, 140
similarities with, 158–159
the individual and community in, 160
isolation of, 139
land ownership in, 162
landowners as bureaucracy of, 154, 156
Manchu rule in, 158
map of, 155
Ming dynasty of, 158, 158
Mongol rule over, 157–158
peasant revolts in, 156, 158
poetry of, 166
prehistory of, 151
racial stocks of, 150
religion of, 166–168
rivers of, 150
rulers of, compared with those in Western civilization, 164
role of, in, 163–164
Shang dynasty of, 151–152
Sung dynasty of, 156
T’ang dynasty of, 156
time, conception of, in, 166
toleration of religions in, 167
unification of, 153
village as basic political unit in, 159–160
Western civilization, contrasted with, 159
reciprocal influences of, 159
Chou dynasty, 152
Christ, 396
See also Jesus
Christianity, 368, 391–412
appeal of, 400–401
Arianism in, 405, 406
asceticism in, 408–411
background of, 391–393
basic writings of, 404
bibliography of, 411–412
chronological chart of, 395
church organization of, 403–404
clergy in, 403
doctrines of, 404–408
early church of, 398
Gnostics in, 405
Greek religions, influence upon, 391–392
Hebrew heritage of, 119
Hebrew history, influence upon, 116
Hebrew religion, influence upon, 120, 127
heresies in early, 405–406
India, religions of, influence upon, 174
Jesus, nature of, in, 405
tradition of, in, 393–398
Jews, opposition to, 399
Mesopotamian influence in, 106
Mithraism, similarities with, 369
monasteries in, 409–411
as official religion, 402
Paul’s work for, 398–400
persecution of, 401–402
Persian religion, influence upon, 103
Petrine succession in, 406
predestination in, 405
Roman law, influenced by, 355
sacraments in, 405
sin, conception of, in, 53
sources for history of, 393–394
split in Eastern and Western Churches of, 406
Stoicism, influence upon, 286
toleration of, 402
Trinity in, 405, 406, 407
Zoroastrianism, influence upon, 105
See also Church and specific main entries
Chronos, 233
Church, Latin, as official language of, 367
Merovingian kingdom, relations with, 440
Roman Empire, influence upon, 362
Church Fathers, 302, 371, 406
Chrysippus (kṛś sīp’as), 287
Chu, 158
Chu Chuan-Chung, 156
Churchill, Winston, 180, 521
Cicero, 305, 335ff., 366ff.
eclecticism of, 371
letters of, 388
as orator, 379–380
Roman law described by, 382
Stoicism interpreted by, 371
Cimbrı (šim’bbrı́), 427
Cisalpine Gaul, 325, 336
City of God, 408
City-state (see under Polis)
Civilization (see under Society and particular civilizations)
Clan (see under Society)
Classical Age (see under Greek civilization and Pericles)
Classics, Chinese, 156
Claudian family, 327, 328
Claudius, 352, 360, 381
Cleanthes (kli̇̄n thē̄̄z), 287
Cleisthenes (kli̇̄s’θa nē̄̄z’), 204, 205, 207
military reforms of, 207
political reforms of, 205, 206
Cleomenes (kli̇̄m nē̄̄z), m, 195
Cleon (kli̇̄ n), 188, 216, 217, 240, 260
Cleopatra, 338, 344, 345
Antony, relations with, 344
suicide of, 345
Cleruchies (kli̇̄r’ū kli̇̄z), 219
Clotilda, 439
Clouds, 240, 260
Clovis (kli̇̄v’vis; Fr. kli̇̄ v ves’), 429, 438–439
conquests of, 438–439
coronation of, 439
Clytemnestra (kli̇̄ t’am nē̄̄s’ trā’), 236
Cnossus (nōs’as), 130, 131, 131, 136
Cnut (see Canute)
Code of Hammurabi (see Hammurabi Code)
College of Pontiffs and Augurs, 312, 368
Collegia, 422
Coloni, 421
Colosseum, 374, 375, 376
Columbia, Saint, 410
Columban, Saint, 410
Comitatus, 426
Comitia centuriata, 308, 332
Comitia curiata, 307, 308
decline of, 309
Comitia tributa (see Tribal Assembly)
Commerce (see under particular civilizations)
Commodus (kōm’das), 361, 415
Concilium plebis, 309
Confederation of Delos (see Delos Confederation)
INDEX

Confessions, 404, 407
Confucius, 152, 153, 163–164, 173 as god, 167, 168
Constantine, 369, 378, 402ff. army under, 424
Constantinople founded by, 424–
425
division of empire by, 425
succession to Empire of, 423
totalitarianism under, 423
Constantinople, 406, 421
founding of, 424–425
Consuls (Roman), 307
"Contending States," 152, 153
Copernicus (kō pō' n̄ ka kas), 248, 289
Nicolaus, 248, 289
Coptic Church, 406
Corecyra (kō rē's ra), 194, 217
Corinth, 194ff., 217
Cor law, 270
Corneille, 333, 339
Crawall, 25
Corpus Juris Civilis, 384
Corsica, 321, 323
Counts, 439
Covenant, 124
Cow-goddess (see Hathor)
Crassus, 334, 335, 336, 340
death of, 336
Pompey, rivalry with, 334–336
Creon (krē' ön), 237
Cretan, 108, 113, 128–137, 131
Achaean, influence upon, 130
art in, 133–136, 135–137
bibliography of, 138
bull leaping in, 133
decline of, 130
Egypt, commerce with, 129
geophysical characteristics of, 129
government of, 130–131
Greek civilization influenced by, 137
hygiene in, 136
language of, 128, 134
as link between Egypt and
Greece, 30
as parent of Aegean civilization,
129
religion of, 131–132
resources of, 129
snake goddess of, 132
social relations in, 132
sports of, 132
writing of, 130, 134
Cretians (krē'ti an; krē'si hā), 248
Croesus (krē' sas), 113
Cro-Magnon (krō má nōn; Fr.
krō mā nyō̆ s) man, 13, 17–18
cave paintings of, 17–18, 18
skull of, 15
toolmaking of, 17
Cro-Magnon, 22
Crucifixion, 393, 397, 399
Ctesiphon (tēs' fā̆ fō̆ n), 279
Culture, off.
diffusion of, 7, 36
See also under Society and par-
ticular civilizations
Cuneiform writing, 80
Cupid and Psyche, 389
Curiale, 422
Curia, 422
Curia honorum, 348, 350
Curialae, 312
Cybele (si'bē lē), 368, 392
Cynics, 284–285
Stoics compared with, 286
Cyrus the Great, 102, 113, 212

D
Dacia (dā' shə lā, -shə), 351, 352,
360, 417
Damascus, 108, 113, 118, 398
Daniel, 102
Damien, 424
Darius (dā' rē' as) 1, the Great, 102–
103
India conquered by, 144
Ionians, revolt against, 212
postal system improved by, 103
Darius III, 273, 274, 276
Dark Ages, 443
Darwin, Charles, 4, 230
Dating, 20
method of, developed in Alex-
andria, 297
radioactive carbon technique of
20, 20n.
David, 117, 124–125
Day of Atonement, 91
De rerum natura, 371
Deacon, 403
Deborah, Song of, 117
Deccan, 140, 147, 148
Deccanvirs (dē sē' vār z), 310
Decius (dē' shūs), 402
Declaration of Innocence, 54
Delos, 211, 213
Delos Confederation, 214–216ff.,
215
Delphic Amphictyony (see Am-
phictyonic League)
Delphic Oracle, 194, 211, 268
and Socrates, 242
Delta, 34, 58, 68
Deme, 205
Demeter (dē mé' tar), 235
Democracy, 5, 6
Primitive, 5, 78–79, 57, 307
representative, 6
See also under particular civiliz-
ations
Democritus (dī mók' rā tas), 232,
285, 366, 371
Demosthenes (dī môs' thā nōz),
188ff., 262ff.
as model orator, 379
Philip of Macedon, foe of, 267
Philippics against, by, 342
Philippics, 268
Demotic writing, 70
Destiny (see Moira)
Deuteronomy, 126
Devil, 126, 478
Dharma (dār' ma; native dūr' ma),
146
Diaspora (dī ās' pō rā), 392
Dictator, 308
Dido and Aeneas, 299
Dike (dī' kā), 234
Diocletian, 362, 402, 417, 419–
423
agriculture under, 420–422
army reformed by, 420
centralized control by, 419
class stratification under, 422
coloni under, 421
consolidation of empire by, 419
decay of, 423
division of empire by, 419, 420
emperor worship elaborated by,
420
palace of, 374, 423
reforms of, 419–420
succession plan devised by, 419
Diodotus (dī dō' tā), 188
Diogenes (dī jō' nōs), 284, 285
Diomede (dī' mē dé'), 186
Dionysus (dī' nē sas), 234, 235,
237
Divide and rule, 315
Divine kingship (see under Egypt)
Divine Reason, 174, 370
Divine Right of Kings, 164
Dolmens, 22
Dominic, Saint, 410
Domitian, 360, 362, 381
Dorians, 130, 181
Sparta settled by, 195
Draco, 202
Dravidians, 143
Druids, 24
Drusus, Livius, 328
Drusus the Younger, 331
Dukes, 436
Dungi, 92
Durga, 168
Dynasty, 35n.
INDEX 453

e
Ea (see En-ki)
Earth Mother, 368
East (see Far East and particular civilizations)
Ebers Medical Papyrus, 72
Ecclesia (see Athens, Assembly)
Ecclesiastical History, 408
Ecclesiasticus, 127
Ecclesiastae, 210
Eclogues, 386
Ecumenical councils, 403
Edict of Milan, 402
Edict of Tolerance, 402
Edictum, 383
Edom, 117
Egypt, 29–74
achieved, 70–73
Aegean civilization as link between West and, 197
agricultural finds in, 21
Alexander the Great, conquest of, 274
architecture of, 72
art of, 7, 56, 57, 60, 63, 65, 69
Assyrians, conquest of, 68, 96
under Augustus, 350
bibliography of, 73–74
calendar invented by, 36
Canaan conquered by, 115
chronological chart of, 33, 67
civilization of, summary of, 73
as cradle of civilization, 29
Crete, commerce with, 139
as link between Greece and, 130
decline of, 69
Delta of, 34, 38
divine monarchy of, 7, 30–31, 39–44
nature of, 40
Eighteenth Dynasty of, 58, 60
Eleventh Dynasty of, 54
Ethiopia, conquest of, 68
Feudal Age of, 51
Fifth Dynasty of, 47, 51
First Dynasty of, 30ff.
First Intermediate Period of, 51–54
central government, decline of, during, 51–52
justice, conception of, during, 52–53
pyramids, decline of, during, 51
sin, conception of, during, 53
social upheaval, during, 52
Fourteenth Dynasty of, 58
Fourth Dynasty of, 46, 51
geography of, 37–38
gods of, 39–40
government, form of, in, 34
Greece contrasted with, 30–31
Greek art influenced by, 228
Hebrew civilization contrasted with, 34–35
Hebrews, as allies of, 119
as slaves in, 116
during Hellenistic Age, 281–282
history, lack of sense in, in, 72
sources for, 37
Hittites, competition with, 109
Hykso, conquest of, 57–58
immortality, belief of, in, 49n.
importance of, 29–31
independence of, loss of, 68–69
language of, 37
laws in, contrasted with Roman law, 382
written, lack of, in, 5, 43
literature of, 72
Lower, 38–39
map of, 38
mathematics in, 71
medicine in, 71–72
Mesopotamia, civilization contrasted with, 34–35, 76
accepted by, 58, 75
religion contrasted with, 85–86
Middle Kingdom in, 31ff., 54–58, 72
art, decline of, in, 56–57
justice during, 54
monarchy, restoration of, during, 54
pyramids, restoration of, during, 54
religion during, 55–56
social justice during, 55
weaving shop of, 56
monarchy of, 34
Nebuchadnezzar, wars with, 99
Neo-Hebrews in, 20
New Kingdom of, 31, 40–41ff., 58–69
afterlife, importance of, during, 61
Akhnaton, revolt of, in, 61
conquests during, 59–60
decline of, 66, 68
divine monarchy during, 58
foreigners, importance of, during, 59–60
Hykso, expulsion of, during, 58
priesthood, rise of, during, 60–61
religion of, 58–59
religious reforms in, failure of, 66
revolution, failure of, during, 66, 68
slavery during, 60
social life during, 59–60
Thutmos in, achievements of, during, 59
Nile and, 32, 34, 40
Nineteenth Dynasty of, 40, 47, 60, 66
Old Kingdom in, 31, 37ff., 69
architecture of, 48–49
art of, 49–50
creativity of, 48–51
medicine in, 51
religion of, 49–51
social life in, 59
Persians, defeat of, 30, 69
Pharaohs of, 39–44
See also as main entry and under particular dynasties
polytheism of, 65–66
predynastic period in, 35–36
government during, 36
jar of, 36
priesthood in, 43
under Ptolemies, 281–282
pyramids of, 28, 44–48
See also as main entry
religion of, 39–40
importance of, 232
Roman religion influenced by, 369
as river valley civilization, 32
Second Dynasty in, 44
Second Intermediate Period in, 31, 57–58
Seventeenth Dynasty in, 58
sin, idea of, in, 53
Sixth Dynasty in, 47, 51
stability of, 30–31, 41, 43
Third Dynasty in, 38, 46
Thutmos empire of, 59
Twelfth Dynasty in, 57
Twentieth Dynasty in, 68, 69
unification of, 36, 38–39
uniqueness of, 29–30
Upper, 38–39
writing in, 7–8, 36, 70, 70–71
See also Pharaohs and Pyramids
Eightfold Path, 172, 173
Elagabalus (ēl ā'gāb' ā las, ē' làs), 369
Elamite script, 80
Elamites, 78, 92
Elba, 303
Eleusis (ēl'ēsīs), 235, 372
Elgin marbles, 256, 378
INDEX

Elijah, 128
Elisha, 113
Elohim (éló’him), 124
Eloquent Peasant, Tale of, 53, 72
Empedocles (empéd’kə kléz’), 231-232, 250
England, 220, 221, 410ff.
invasions of, 441-442
map of, 441
En-kî (én’kē), 86, 93
Enlil, 86, 90, 91, 93
Ensi, 85, 87-89
Enunna Elah, 86
EOanthropus Dawsoni (see FLit-
down man)
Ephesus (éf’sə səs), 399
Ephraim (éf’rōz, éf’rəz), 199, 218
Ephraim, 118, 124
Epic of Gilgamesh (gil’gə məsh’), 91-92
Epicetetus (ép’ik tē’tas), 370
Epicurism (ép’kə rē’zəm, ép’kə rē’brəzəm), 255-256, 371
Epicurus (ép’kə rē’zuəs), 232, 285-286, 366, 371
Epiprizes (é p’rəzəs), 181
Epirus (ép’rəs), 290, 323
Epitome of Lycy, 382
Equities (ék’wə təz’), 328, 331, 348
See also Knights (Roman)
Erastrianism (ér’ə strə trə təs), 290
Eratosthenes (ér’ə tōs’ə tha nəz’), 290
Erechtheum (ér’ə sk thē’əm), 189, 251
Erigena (ér’i jə,nə), John Scotus, 407n., 411, 415-418, 422
Eros, 294
Esarhaddon (ē sə rə həd’an), 68, 96
Essenes (ē sə’ēnəz, ē sə’ēnəs’), 393
Ethiopians, 38
Egypt conquered by, 68
Etruria, 304, 318
Etruscans, 318
Italy invaded by, 304-305
Roman architecture influenced by, 373-374
Roman civilization influenced by, 305
Roman religion influenced by, 368
Roman sculpture influenced by, 377
Rome dominated by, 305-306
Euoea (é ō’ē ə), 181, 212, 213
Euocharist, 400, 403
Euclid, 290
Eudoxus (ū dōk’sə səs), 248n.
Euhemerism, 288
Eumeaus (ū mə’əs), 184
Eumenides (ū méν’ə dəz’), 236
Euphrates (ū frə təs’), 31, 75ff., 93
Nile contrasted with, 34
Euripides (yōr’ə p’rə dəz’), 233, 238-239ff.
Roman drama influenced by, 357
women in, 224
Europe, 438
Eurydice (yō’rə dək’sə sə), 235
Euryymedon (yōr’ə rim’ə dən’), 215
Eusebius (ū sə’biəs), 408
Evangelists, 393
Evans, Sir Arthur, 128
Exarch, 436
Exodus, 60, 117, 120
Ezekiel, 69, 125
Far East, 139-176
chronological chart of, 145
Greek thought, influence upon, 228
rulers of, compared to, those of Western civilization, 164
to Hebrew rulers, 164
study of, reason for, 139
Western civilization, relations with, 139
See also under particular civilizations
Fasti, 386
Fathers (see Church Fathers)
Fertile Crescent, 75
Feudal Age (of Egypt), 51
Final Cause, 248
First Commandment, 125
First Intermediate Period (see Egypt)
Fiscus, 348
Flamininus (flā’mə nəs’), 191, 323
Flavian dynasty, 349, 360, 381
Florus, 382
Foordatii (fō’də rə ti’əs), 428, 429
Formulae, 383
Four Noble Truths, 172
France, Italy contrasted with, 303
Francis, Saint, 410
Franks, 427, 428, 430, 435, 438
Gaul invaded by, 430, 438
Roman Empire invaded by, 430
Frogs, 226, 233, 260
Funerary papyrus, 60
Furies, 236, 239
G
G ratio, 71
Gaiseric (gā’sə rık’), 430, 433, 442
Galba, 381n.
Galen, 372
Galen (gā’lən), 402
Galleo (gā’lə o’l), It. gā’lə lə’o, 248, 289
Gandhi, 143, 160, 161, 171
Garden of Epicurus, 285
Gassendi, Pierre, 371
Gaul, 30, 429
Franks, invasion of, 430, 438
as independent kingdom, 417
Roman Empire, relations with, 417
Vandals, invasion of, 430
Gauls, 318
Italy invaded by, 304
Rome invaded by, 317
Gautama (gō’tə mə, go’-), Buddha (see Buddha)
Geb, 40
Generation of Animals, 247
Genius, 348, 358, 367
Gentes, 307
“Gentry class,” 154, 155
Geography (see under particular civilizations)
Geometry (see under particular civilizations)
Georgics, 357, 358
German Empire, 215n.
Germania, 425
Germans, 417, 425-427
Caesar as historian of, 425
cominutus of, 428
description of, 425-426
feudal relationships among, 426
kingsdoms of, 435
Roman Empire invaded by, 427
Tactus as historian of, 425
calibran organization of, 426
Gerousia (jə rō’sə zə), 199
Cibbon, Edward, 261
Gilgamesh, Epic of, 91-92
Gizeh (giz’ə), 28, 44
Gnostics (nōst’s təks’), 405
God (see under particular civilizations)
Golden Age, 389
Golden Fleece, 299
Golden Section, 71
“Good Emperors,” 349
“Good Emperors” Era, 360, 361
Gothic Bible, 429
Goths, 427-430
conversion of, 429
Roman Empire, invaded by, 429–430
relations with, 427–429
Rome sacked by, 433
Spain conquered by, 442
Government (see under Society and particular civilizations)
Gracchan Revolution, 327–329
Gracchi, 313
Gracchus, Gaius, 328–329
Gracchus, Tiberius, 327–328
Granicus (grá níˈkəs), battle of, 274, 275
Græpe paranomon (græˈp əˈpar əˈnə mənˈ), 209
Great House (see Pharaohs)
Great Pyramid (see under Pyramids)
Great Wall, 153, 154, 155
Greece, 179–300
Achaeans, absorption in, 137
Alexander the Great, conquest of, 190
architecture of, 72
art in, 70
Chalcidian League, of, 266
climast of, 170
colonies of, 193, 193–195
dark age of, 181–182
Egypt contrasted with, 30–31
federation, attempts at, in, 265–266
geophysical characteristics of, 179–180
Hebrews conquered by, 119
Hellenistic Age in, 278–281
immigration into, 180–181
Italy contrasted with, 303
Macedonia, conquest of, 198, 211, 265
map of, 217, front end paper (right)
people of, 180, 181, 181
Persian Wars in, 212–214
Philip of Macedon, conquest of, 265, 267
polis, decline of, in, 265
poverty of, 179, 180
rivalry between cities of, 211
Rome, conquest of, 281, 323–324
science in, 70
See also Greek civilization and specific main entries
Greek civilization, 179–300
Aegean civilization, influence upon, 137
architecture of, 251–255, 253–255
Roman architecture, influence upon, 374
art of, 251–257
balance, ideal of, in, 251
concept of, 251
Egyptian influences upon, 228
Minoan influences upon, 228
Mycenaean influences upon, 228
Athens in, 201–211
See also as main entry bibliography of, 226–227
chronological chart of, 183, 269
Drama of, 235–238
religion as expressed in, 235
group, invention of, during, 230
historiography during, 260–262
See also individual historians
Homeric age in, 181–187
civilization of, 182, 184
common man in, 184
Primitive Democracy of, compared with Mesopotamian, 185
India, religions of, influence upon, 174
intellectual curiosity of, 188–189
Italy influenced by, 319
language as expression of, 229
law under, contrasted with Roman law, 382–383
literature in, 258–263
medicine in, 250–251
oratory in, 262–263
painting of, 257
poetry of, 258–260
polis in, 190–192
problems of, relevance to today's, 188
prose of, 260–263
religion of, 232–234
common people and, 233, 234
decay of, 233
destiny in, 234
Orphic mysteries in, 234–235
polytheistic nature of, 233–234
Roman religion influenced by, 368
representative government and, 191
reverence for man in, 189
rhetoric of, influence upon
Roman culture, 379
Roman civilization, dark age of, contrast with that of, 182
influenced by, 299–300, 364, 366, 391
Roman comedy influenced by, 387
Roman culture contrasted with, 364, 366
Roman literature influenced by, 386
Roman Republic influenced by, 326
sculpture of, 252, 255–257, 256–257
Roman, contrasted with, 377–378
influenced by, 377
secularism of, 232
Sparta, 195–200
See also as main entry
thought of, 228–251
atomism in, 232
bibliography of, 263–264
Chinese thought contrasted with, 228
Egyptian influence upon, 228
Hebrew thought contrasted with, 188, 189, 228
Hinduism, contrasted with, 228
monism in, 229–231
order in, 229
Oriental origins of, 228
originality of, 228
Roman philosophy influenced by, 376
worldly nature of, 228
See also under specific philosophies and systems of thought
unifying factors in, 211
See also Greece and specific main entries
Greeks, 180
as Hellenes, 180
Italy invaded by, 304
origins of, 180–181
Romans contrasted with, 320
Gregory I, the Great, Pope, 406ff., 437–438
Grimaldi man, 17
Gudea (gʊˈdɛə), 90, 90
Gupta empire, 147
Guti, 78, 92

H

Habiru (hɑˈbɪrəʊ), 116–117
See also Hebrews
Hades, 235
Hadrian, 205, 349ff.
Hagia Sophia (hɑˈɡiə səˈfoʊə, hɑɡˈiə), 414
Haitham, Al- (see Hazen, Al-)

INDEX 455
Hammurabi (ḥārām rāʾ bi, hāmʾ ʿō-) 84, 92-95, 94, 121
Hammurabi Code, 93-95 bibliography of, 107 capital punishment under, 94 composite character of, 93-94 Hebrews influenced by, 95 land tenure under, 95 lex talionis, 94 marriage under, 95 origin of, 93 as religious law, 95 Roman law contrasted with, 382 social distinctions under, 94-95 women under, 95 Han dynasty, 153-154 Hanging Gardens, 100 Hammabul, 323-323, 346 Harappa civilization, 141, 141, 143 Harsha, 147, 159, 163 Harun-al-Rashid (ḥā rāʾonʾ āl rāʾshēd, —rāshʾ ʿid), 106 Hathor, 39 Hebrews, 115-128 anthropomorphism of, 120 Aramaeans, relations with, 113 art of, 129 and Assyrians, 96 conquest of, 108, 119 Babylonian religion contrasted with monotheism of, 121 bibliography of, 137-138 calendar of, 84 Canaan conquered by, 115 Chaldeans, conquest of, 99, 119, 127 Christianity, heritage of, 119 civilization of, 32 conquest of Canaanite peoples, 117 division into two kingdoms of, 118 early government of, 117 Egypt as ally of, 119 Egyptian civilization contrasted with, 34-35 Far Eastern rulers compared with those of, 164 God, conception of, among, 122-124 relations with man, conception of, among, 123-125 government of, 128 Greece, conquest of, 119 Greek thought contrasted with, 228 Hammurabi Code, influence upon, 95 as historical pioneers, 115 history of, 115-116 accuracy of, 16 as expression of relationship to God, 15 familiarity of, 115 influence upon Christianity of, 116 view of, 115 contrasted with Mesopotamian, 115 influence upon historians, 116 Jesus, transmission of Hebrew heritage, 119 law of, 122 Roman law contrasted with, 382 literature of, 127-128 Mesopotamia, culture diffusion to, 76 influence upon, 108 monotheism of, 120-123 as advance upon Mesopotamian religion, 121 as aspect of morality, 121 contrasted with polytheism, 121 as universal concept, 122-123 Nebuchadnezzar, conquest of, 99 northern kingdom of, 118 Old Testament of, 66 Persia, conquest of, 119 Pharaohs, as allies of, 119 as eunuchers of, 116 religion of, 120-126 as applied to other nations, 122-123 compared with Akhnaton's, 68a influence, upon Christianity of, 392-393 upon Islam of, 127 upon Protestant reformers of, 127 influenced, by Mithraism, 392 by Zoroastrianism, 392 religious influence of, 109 reward and punishment, conception of, among, 124 Romans, conquest of, 119, 392 science of, 128 sin, idea of, among, 53, 120 as slaves in Egypt, 116 Sumerians, attitude toward gods contrasted with, 85, 89-90 thought of, contrasted with that of Greek civilization, 188, 189 in relation to experience, 119-120 See also Jews Hector, 182, 186 Ḥecuba (ḥēkʾ yōʾ ba), 238a Hedonism, 285, 371 Heidelberg man, 14 Helen of Troy, 128, 182 Heliaea, 204, 206-207 Helios, 239 Hellas (see Greece) Hellenes, 180 See also Greeks Hellenic civilization (see Greek civilization and Hellenistic Age) Hellenic culture (see Greek civilization and Hellenistic Age) Hellenic League, 274 Hellenistic Age, 265-300 architecture during, 291-292, 291, 292 art in, 291-297 Asia during, 282-283 astronomy in, 289-290 Babylonian astronomy, influence upon, 289 bibliography of, 300 Chaldean astronomy, influence upon, 289 chronological chart of, 269 coinage during, 278 classes in, 278 commerce during, 277-278 cosmopolitanism of, 283 culture of, 283-299 fusion with Oriental, 277 See also under specific main entries Egypt, during, 281-282 geography during, 290 Greece during, 278-281 Greek language, spread of, during, 277 Greeks during, 391-392 individualism of, 284 influence of, 391-392 Jews influenced by, 392-393 kingdoms of, 279 literature in, 297-299 See also under specific main entries Macedonia, predominance of, during, 278 mathematics in, 290 medicine in, 290-291 money economy of, 278 mosaics in, 297 mystery religions in, 288, 392 New Comedy in, 298
INDEX

painting in, 297
pastoral poetry in, 298–299
Persia during, 282
philosophy during, 284–288
See also under specific main entries
polis during, 283
political federations during, 250–251
religions of, 392
influence upon Christianity, 391–392
Roman civilization influenced by, 299–300
science in, 288–291
sculpture in, 292–297, 292–297
slavery during, 278
See also under specific main entries
Hellespont, 220, 486
Helots (hēlōt̂es, hēlōt̂es), 185, 197
Hephaistos (hē fās'tōs), temple of, 254
Hera (hēr'a), 238
Heraclides (hēr'a klēdēs), 289
Heraclopolis (hēr'a klē oíp'o līs), 51
Heracles (hēr'a klēdz), 238, 232
Heracles (hēr'a klēdēs), 230–231
Hermes, 235, 258–257
Herod (hēr'ød) the Great, 344, 392, 396
Herodotus (hē rōdōt'as), 31ff., 100, 237, 260–261
credibility of, 261
criticism of, 261
and Homer, 182
Persian Wars, history by, 212, 260
as universal historian, 260–261
Herophilus (hē rōf'ī lōs), 290
Herulian (see Odoacer)
Hesiod, 230, 258
Hezekiah, 123, 124
Hieratic writing, 70
Hieroglyphics, 70–71
Hillel, 393
Hinayana Buddhism, 148, 172, 173
Hindu Kush, 276
Hindusim, 139, 140, 146ff.
Buddhism superseded by, 148
Greek thought contrasted with, 228
Hindus, 120ff.
polytheism of, 120
Hipparchus (hī párr'ka's), 289–290
Hippia (hīp'ī lēs), 205–212
Hippocrates (hī pōk'ra tē'z), 250–251, 290, 491
Hippocratic oath, 251
Hippolytus (hī pōl'y tās), 225, 238
Hiram, 113
Histories, 381
Historiography (see under particular civilizations)
History, 38f.
historical imagination, value of, in, 9
objectivity, necessity of, in, 9
philosophy of, 34–35
tasks of, 3
theories of, 8–9
History of Animals, 247
History of Goths, 458
History of the Peloponnesian War, 261
History of Rome, 380
Hither Gaul, 303
Hittites, 59, 92, 96, 108ff.
achievements of, 112
archaeological discoveries of, 109
architecture of, 112
art of, 112
Assyrians conquered by, 109
Babylon conquered by, 109
bibliography of, 137
Canaan conquered by, 115
decline of, 109, 112
early history of, 109
Egypt, competition with, 109
empire of, 109
government of, 112
historiography of, 109
Hyksos influenced by, 112
as intermediaries between Mesopotamia and Western Asia, 112
iron, use of, among, 112
language of, 109
Lydians influenced by, 112
obscurity of, 109
in Old Testament, 109
Troy influenced by, 112
writing of, 109
Holocene Age, 19
Holy Roman Empire, 448ff.
See also under specific main entries
Holy Spirit, 395, 398
Holy Trinity (see Trinity)
Holy Wisdom Church, 414
Homer, 184–187
as author, 185
duty, concept of, in, 186
historical personality of, 185
influence of, 185
religion of, 185–186
as social historian, 184
Vergil compared with, 385
Homeric Age (see under Greek civilization)
Homo sapiens, 16–17
Honorius, Emperor, 404, 432–433
Hoplite, 191
Horse, 228, 358, 371, 386, 388
Horemhab (hōr'ēm hāb'), 66
Hortensius, 313
Horus, 39–40, 44
Horus Falcon, 49
Hsiuang Nu (shyōông nō'), 156
See also Huns
Hu, 40
Humanists, 367
Huns, 156, 362, 427–429
empire of, 431
Roman Empire invaded by, 432–433
Hwang Ho (hwang' hō'; Chin. hō') (see Yellow River)
Hybris, 53ff., 236, 237, 240
Hydaspes (hī dās' pēz), 144, 148, 275
battle of, 276
Hyksos, 57–58, 112

I

Ictinus (iktī'nōs), 255
Ides of March, 339
Idumaea (id' yōō mē' a, I dyōō-'), 392
Ilad, 128, 182, 184–186, 305
social life as depicted in, 184–185
Ilyria, 130, 323, 351
Immaculate Conception, 406
Immortals, 103
India, 140–150
Alexander the Great, conquest of, 144, 159, 276
animals in religions of, 171
Aryans, invasion of, 143
Asoka, empire of, 144–146
bibliography of, 176
Brahmin, caste of, 160–161
Britain, conquest of, 140
influence upon, 159
caste system of, 160–161
economic basis of, 160–161
gradations in, 160
origins of, 144
social consequences of, 161–162
China, contacts with, 140
similarities with, 158–159
Christianity influenced by religions of, 147
colonization by, 147
India (Cont.)
cow in religions of, 171
Darius the Great, conquest of, 144
family in, 162-163
as basic social unit in, 159-160
geophysical characteristics of, 140
gods of, 169
Greek civilization influenced by religions of, 174
Gupta empire of, 147
illusionism in, 170
individual and community in, 160
isolation of, 139-140
Kushan empire of, 147
land ownership in, 162
languages of, 140
map of early, 141
Muslim Empire in, 148, 149
Muslim invasion of, 148
Muslims, reciprocal influences of, 159
nonviolence in, 170-171
Persia, conquest of, 144
pre-Aryan civilization of, 143
history of, 141-143
script of, 141, 143
reincarnation, concept of, in, 170
religion of, 168-175
influence of, upon, 173-174
ruler, role of, in, 163-164
Stoicism influenced by religion of, 174
temple of, 175
Vedic age of, 143-144
village as basic political unit in, 159-160
Western civilization, contrasted with, 159
influenced by religion of, 174-175
reciprocal influences of, 159
Indian Mutiny, 150
Indo-Europeans, 304
Indus, 31, 78, 141
Industrial Revolution, 3, 24, 284, 357
Innocent III, Pope, 369
Io (Ió), 235
Ionian League, 211
Ionian philosophers, 229-230
See also under Greek civilization and specific main entries
Ionian science, 113
Ionians, 130, 137, 181, 181, 193
revolt against Persians by, 212
Iphigenia (Ipf' a'j n' a'), 236
Iphigenias in Aulis, 238n.
Ipuwer (I p wikipedia ar), 52-53
Iran, 80
Iraq, 75
Ireland, 410
Irish monasteries, 410-411
Iron Age, 19, 25-26
Isaac, 118
Isaiah, 119, 127, 399
Isacondle, 144
See also Alexander the Great
Isis, 39, 369, 392
Islam, 140
Hebrew religion, influence upon, 120, 127
Persian religion, influence upon, 103
Isocrates (I sók rot'ez'), 180, 262, 272, 379
Israel, 115-118
See also Hebrews
Israelites (see Hebrews)
Issus, battle of, 274, 275
Italy, 331
Italians, 331-332
Italic people, 304
Italy, 304ff., 325
Bronze Age in, 304
Celts, invasion of, 304
Etruscans, invasion of, 304-305
expansion of, 302
federation of, 319
France contrasted with, 303
Gauls, invasion of, 304
geophysical characteristics of, 303
Greece contrasted with, 303
Greek civilization, influence upon, 319
invasion of, 304-305
language of, 304
Lombards, invasion of, 436-437
map of, front end paper (left)
Neanderthal man in, 304
Neolithic Age in, 304
prehistory of, 304
revival of, 435
Rome dominant over, 319
Theodoric, ruler of, 434-435
unification of, 318
Ithaca, 182
Java man (see Pithecanthropus erectus)
Jebus (see Jerusalem)
Jeholada (jí hoit'a da), 128
Jenghiz Khan (jên'giz kán', jeng'), 157
Jeremiah, 122, 125, 127
Jeroboam (jër' a bo' am), 118
Jeroboam II, 124
Jerome, Saint, 406-407, 409
Jerusalem, 118, 125, 372
as capital of Jews, 392-393
Jesus, 344, 386, 393-398, 397
apostles of, 396
Aramaic spoken by, 113
death of, 396
disciples of, 396
Hebrews, transmission of heritage to, 119
life of, 395-397
as Messiah, 397
nature of, 405
resurrection of, 397-398
sources for life of, 393-394
and Zoroastrianism, 105
Jewish Council (see Sanhedrin)
Jews, 392-393
Christianity, opposition from, 399
Hellenistic Age, influence upon, 392-393
Jerusalem, capital of, 392-393
See also Hebrews
Job, 91, 126, 127
John the Baptist, 393-394, 396, 398
Jonah, 123, 123
Joseph, 34, 50, 116
Joseph of Bethleham, 395
Joshua, 116
Josiah, 124, 126
Judaea, 393
Judas, 96, 117, 118, 118
Nebuchadnezzar, conquest of, 99
Judaism, 105
Zoroastrianism, influence upon, 105
Judas Iscariot, 396, 398
Jugurtha, 329-330
Julia, 348, 349, 387
Julian the Apostate, 402
Julian family, 349, 360
Julius Caesar (see Caesar)
Junio, 368
Jupiter, 358, 368
Juris prudentes, 384-385
Jus civilis, 383-384
Jus gentium, 383-384
Jus naturale, 384
Justice (see under Society)
Justinian, 434ff.
Justinian Code, 384
Mathematics (see under particular civilizations)
Matthew, 393, 394
Maurya (mou'ri) dynasty, 147
Maximian (māk sim'ī an), 419, 420, 423
Maximus, 328
Maya, 146, 170, 228
Medea (mē'dē'a), 225, 238, 299
Medes (mē'dēz), 78, 98, 99, 102
Medicine (see under particular civilizations)
Meditations, 361, 370, 371
Mediterranean, 193
Megaliths, 22–23, 22, 23
Megara (mēg'ə ra), 194, 200, 217
Megiddo (ma gl'd'ō), 58, 59
Mellians, 237
Memphis, 38, 38, 51
Memphite Theology, 50–51
Mena (see Menes)
Menander (mē nān'dar), 260, 298
Mencius (mān 'shē), 152, 163–164
Menelaus (mē'nā la' sh), 182, 239
Menes (mē'nēz), 35–39
name described, 36n.
unification of Egypt by, 35n., 38
Menhirs (mēn'hīrz), 22
Meno, 243
Mentu-hotep (mēntu hō'tēp),
54
Merovëingian (mēr vēn'jī an)
kingdom, 439–440
Church, relations with, 440
map of, 440
Roman influences upon, 439
Mesolithic Age, 19
Mesopotamia, 75–107, 99
architecture of, 79–84
art of, 79–84
bibliography of, 106–107
Canaan, influenced by, 115
Christianity influenced by, 106
chronological chart of, 77
"cradle of civilization" in, 29
creation, conception of, 85–87
definition of, 75
Egypt, civilization of, contrasted with, 34–36, 78
culture diffusion to, 36
religions contrasted, 85–86
geographical definition of, 75
geophysical characteristics of, 76
gods of, 85–87
government of, 85
Hebrews influenced by, 106
influence of, contrasted with
Aegean influence, 137
summary, 106
king, role of, in, 87, 90–91
man, his role in religion of, 87
master-slave relationship, in religion of, 85
in social life of, 85
omens, importance of, in, 88
pessimistic view of life in, 76
91–92
priesthood in, 87–88
Primitive Democracy of, 85
contrasted with that of
Homerian Age, 185
religion of, 85–90
contrasted with Hebrew monotheism, 121
view of life in, 76
Western civilization influenced by, 106
writing in, 70–71
See also Assyria, Babylonia
Messenia (mē'sē nē'ā), 197, 197
Sparta, invasion of, 196
Messenian Wars, 196, 197
Messiah, 125, 392, 393, 396, 397, 399
Messina (mē sē'na), 318, 321
Metamorphoses of Apuleius, 233, 386, 389
Metaphysics, 247.
Metellus (mē tēl' sh), 329
Metics, 192, 210
Metropolitan, 403
Micah (mē'kāh), 122, 395
Micaiah (mē kā' sh, mē kā' tā),
128
Middle Comedy, 260
Middle Kingdom (see under Egypt)
Middle Stoa, 257
Middle Stone Age (see Mesolithic Age)
Milan, Rome contrasted with, 304
Miletus (mīlē tās), 193, 194, 212
Military Assembly, 312
Miliades (mī lī' dēz'), 212
Milvian Bridge, 402
Minerva, 368
Ming dynasty, 158
Minouan (mē nō' shan) civilization, 228
Greek art, influence upon, by, 228
See also Crete
Minoans, 181
Minos, 36n., 129, 131
Minotaur, 132
Mitanni, 96, 97
Mithra, 105, 396, 392, 395
Mithraism, 105, 396, 392
Christianity, similarities with, 396
Hebrew religion influenced by, 392
Manichaeism influenced by, 369
Roman religion influenced by, 369
Mithridates (mīth' rá dā' tēz), vi, 332
Moab (mō'āb), 117, 118
Moguls, 140, 148, 150
Mohammed (see Mahomet)
Mohenjo-Daro, 141, 141, 142, 143
Moiran, 234
Moksha (mō'ksha), 170
Molière (mō' lēr'), 387
Monarchy, 6
See also under particular civilizations
Mohgols, 157–158
Monism, 230
Monists, Greek, 229–231
Monotheism, 39, 120–124
Christian, 120
Hebrew, 120–124
Islamic, 120
morality as an aspect of, 121
See also under Hebrews and particular civilizations
Monte Cassino, 409, 409–410
Montesquieu (mōn' tē kē'; Fr. mōnt tē kē'). 175n.
Moses, 116, 117, 127, 393, 399
monotheism compared with
Akhnaton's, 66n.
Mountain party, 204, 205
Mummy, 56
Municipia, 315
Muslims, 139, 140, 573ff.
calendar of, 84
India invaded by, 148
Mycale (mīkō' lē), 213, 214
Myceena (mī sē' nē), 128, 130, 131
Myceenaean civilization, 129, 136–137
art of, 136–137
Greek art influenced by, 228
See also Crete
Mystery religions (see under Greek civilization)
Mysticism (see under Plato)
N
Nahum (nā' ham), 96
Napoleon, 358, 385
Narses (nār'sēz), 436
Natural economy, 4
Natural History, 372
Natural Law, 257, 370
Naukratis (nō' krō tīs), 193, 194
Nazareth, 396
Neanderthal man, 15, 15
Italian finds of, 304
Near East civilizations, 113–115
See also under specific main entries
Nebuchadnezzar
(nēb’ yōō kād nēz’ ar’), 99
Nefertiti (nēf’ ar tē’ tī), 66
Negative Confession, 54
Negotiators, 326
Nemesia (nēm’ sī sā), 236, 237, 284
Neomalthusian (see Homo sapiens)
Neolithic Age, 16, 19–24, 304
Neolithic Revolution, 4, 6, 19–24, 104
domestication of animals in, 20
food growing, beginning of, during, 19–20
lake dwellers during, 21, 21
pottery, invention of, during, 22
significance of, 24
Neo-platonism, 407
Nero, 349, 359–362, 381ff.
Nerva (nēr’ va), 349, 360
New Babylon (see Babylon)
New Comedy, 260, 387
New Kingdom (see under Egypt)
New Stone Age (see Neolithic Age)
New Testament, 277, 395, 404
Nicene (nī sē’ a), Council of, 402, 405–406
Nicomachean Ethics, 249
Nietzsche (nē’ tsha), Friedrich, 298
Nike (nī’ kē, nī’ kā) of Samothrace, 292, 295
Nile, 31ff., 38
importance of, 32
Pharaoh’s powers over, 40
Nile Valley, 32
Nineveh (nin’ a va’), 96, 97, 97n., 98, 123
Nirvana, 146, 172, 173
Noua, 231, 244, 246, 249
Nubians, 38, 39, 54
Numbers, 120
Numina, 367
Nut, 40

O
Ocean洲s, 235
Octavia, 344
Octavian, 342–359
Antony, rivalry with, 344–345
as Augustus, 345
rise of, 342–345
triumvirate, membership in, of, 343
See also Augustus Caesar.
Octavianus, Gaius (see Octavian)
Odoacer (ō do’ ā’ sar’), 433, 434
Odysseus (ō dis’ us, ō dis’ ī as’), 182, 186–187, 237, 366
Odyssey, 91, 182ff., 385
Ramayana contrasted with, 174n.
social life as depicted in, 184–185
Oedipus (ō dē’ pas, ō da’), 234, 237, 246
Oedipus trilogy, 237
Oedipus at Colonus, 237
Oedipus Rex, 237
Old Comedy, 259, 260, 298
Old Kingdom (see under Egypt)
Old Oligarch, 193
Old Persian script, 80
Old Stone Age (see Paleolithic Age)
Old Testament, 66, 119
bibliography of, 138
Protestant reformers influenced by, 127
reward and punishment, conception of, in, 124
Oligarchy, 6
See also under Greek civilization
Olorus (ō lō’ rōs), 261
Olympic games, 211
Olympic orations, 268
Olynthus (ō lǐn’ thas), 266, 266, 267
Philip of Macedon, conquest of, 268
Omri (ō mē’ rī), 116
On Truth, 240
Optimates, 327–329
"Oracle bones," 152
Orchomenus (ōr kōm’ ə nas’), 137
Orestes, 236
Orestes (ō rēs’ tēz’), 236, 239
Orient, 277
culture of, fusion with Greek, 277
See also Far East
Orpheus (ōr’ fī as’ -Ī as’), 235
Orphic mysteries, 211, 234, 235
Osiris (ō sī’ rīs’), 39–40ff., 369
Ostia (ō sī’ tī a’; It. ő sī’ stā’), 303, 354
Ostracism, 207, 208
Ostrogoths (see Goths)
Ouranos (ōr’ ō nās’), 233
Ovid (ōv’ ĭd’), 233, 386, 389
Ovinian Law, 312
“Owl,” Athenian, 222
Padua University, 248
Pai/dagogy, 225, 226
Painting (see under particular civilizations)
Pakistan, 140
Palatine Hill, 304
Paleoanthropian man, 15–16
Paleolithic Age, 6–7, 12, 16, 18
Palestine, 95, 96, 115, 393
See also Hebrews
Palestinian man, 15n.
Pan, 299
Panathenian (pa nē’ shān as’), 287, 370
Pantheon, 364, 365
Papa, 403n.
Papacy, Rome ruled by, 437–438
Papinian, 384
Paris, 182
Parmenides (pär mē’ nēz’ tēz’), 231
Parrhesia (pār rē’ shē a’), 191
Parthenon, 178, 189, 233, 255, 292, 364
Parthia, 339–340, 351, 361
Parthians, 106, 336
Parts of Animals, 247
See also under Roman civilization
Patrick, Saint, 410
Paul, 122, 126, 174, 354, 370, 401–403
as founder of Christian theology, 400, 404
See also Saul of Tarsus
Pausanias (pō sā’ nē sā’), 256
Pax Romana, 283, 352, 355, 401
Peking, 157, 157
Peking man, 14, 151
Pelagius (pē lā’ jēs’), 405
Pella, 266, 269
Peloponnesian League, 200–201, 205, 214
Peloponnesian War, 199ff., 216–218, 240ff.
Athens, defeat in, 218
Sparta victorious in, 218
Thucydides as historian of, 217, 261
Peloponnesus, 193, 217
Peneile (pē nē’ tēz’), 367–368
Penelope, 182, 187
Pentatench, 127
Pentheus (pēnt’ thēs’), 238
Pepi, 51
Pergamum (pēr’ gā mām’), 279, 282, 283, 292, 323
Pericles (pēr’ kīlēz’), 191, 200,
207–211ff., 216
anti-Sparta policy of, 216
art, aid to, of, 255
Athens as creation of, 252
Pericles (Cant.)
funeral speech of, 210-211
imperialism of, 216
political system of, 207-211
women, opinion of, by, 224
Persi (pér′i sī), 195-197
Persephone, 233, 235
Persia, 102-105
Alexander the Great, conquest of, 274, 276
alphabet of, 103
army of, 103
art of, 104
Babylon conquered by, 102
bible of, 106-107
Chaldeans conquered by, 102
Egypt conquered by, 69
god of, 102-103
empire of, 102-103
empire of, 102-103
Greco, defeat of, 212-214
Hebrews conquered by, 119
during Hellenistic Age, 282
India conquered by, 144
Islam, conversion to, of, 482
language of, 103
Lydians conquered by, 113
map of, 101
Medes, conquest by, 102
Phoenicians conquered by, 114
religion of, 103-105, 369
Roman government officials contrasted, 103
Zeus-Acetas of, 104
Zoroastrianism of, 103-105
See also as main entry
Persian Gulf, 75, 78, 275
Persian Wars, 212-214, 213, 252, 260
Herodotus, historian of, 212, 260-261
See also under Greece
Persians, 78, 99, 236, 388
Ionians, revolt against, 212
Peter, Saint, 394ff.
Petrine succession, 404, 406, 411, 437
Petronius (pē tō′nī as), 385, 389
Phaeacians (fē ʾ a ʾ cha), 187
Phaestus (fēs′ tas, fēs′ tas), 130, 131
Phaestus disk, 129, 134
Pharaohs, 38-48
as absolute monarchs, 43
divine powers of, 40
divinities, 40
festival for, 40
as Great House, 38
Hebrews under, 118
as allies of, 119
high priest under, 43
infallibility of, 41
physical prowess of, 41
powers of, 40-41, 43
prestige of, 44
Ptolemy, 281-282
pyramids of, 44-48
ruins of (see under Egypt) as religious heads, 43
succession of, 43-44
See also under Egypt
Pharisees, 393ff.
Pharos, 292
Pharsalia, battle of, 338
Phidias (fīd′ə s), 255-256, 294, 425
Philip II of Macedon, 188, 191, 266-271, 323
Amphictyonic League and, 270
Aristotle's father physician to, 246
Chalcidian League conquered by, 288
Demosthenes, foe of, 267
Phocion, 342
Greece conquered by, 265, 267
as Greek by adoption, 268
Greek civilization admired by, 267
Macedonia unified by, 267
murder of, 270
Olynthus conquered by, 268
Persia, campaign against, by, 270
polis conquered by, 267-268
power politics of, 267
Thebes conquered by, 270
youth of, 267
Philippi campaign of, 343, 344
Philippic, 268, 342
Philistines, 115, 117, 118, 137
Philosophy (see under particular civilizations)
Phocis (fō′ sīs), 211, 268, 271
Phoenicians, 108, 113-115
achievements of, 114-115
Alexander the Great, conquest of, 114
alphabet and, 71
Assyrians, conquest of, 113
bibliography of, 137
Chaldeans, conquest of, 114
cities of, 113
colleys of, 113-114
decline of, 114
dye of, 114
Persians, conquest of, 114
Semitic alphabet invented by, 114-115
trading of, 113
Pictographs, 70
Picts, 441
"Piltown man," 14-15, 15
Pindar (pīn′ dar), 235, 258
Piraeus (pī rē′ as), 212, 213, 222
Pisistratus (pī sī′str as, pī sī′str as), 203-205, 251
Pithecanthropus erectus, 12
skull of, 15
specimens of, 14
Plain party, 204
Plataea (plā tē′ a), 212, 214
Plato, 122, 186, 243-246, 249-250, 304
a priori reasoning of, 245
the absolute sought by, 240
Academy founded by, 243
Aristotle contrasted with, 247
atomic view rejected by, 232
Dialogues of, 234, 244
early life of, 243
eccles of, 233
good, search for, by, 244
Greek thought expressed by, 239
in Hellenistic Age, 284
idealistism of, 244-245
India, influence upon, 174
justice, concept of, in, 245
letters of, 388
longevity of, 180
Oriental mysticism, influence upon, 243
Orphic mysteries, influence upon, 235, 243
Parmenides, influence upon, 231
psychology and, 246
Republic of, 188-189
Roman civilization influenced by, 302
Socrates, as predecessor of, 244
teacher of, 241
Sophists, appreciated by, 240
criticized by, 262
state, ideal of, 245
Plautus (plō′ tas), 387
Pleiades, 306, 310ff.
See also under Rome
Pleiostocene (pōl′ sō sīn′) Age, 18
Pliny (pī′ nī) the Elder, 372, 623
Pliny the Younger, 388-389, 402
Plotinus (pōl′ tī nas), 407n.
India, influence upon, 174
See also under Neoplatonism
Pluralism, 231-232
Plutarch (pōl′ tōr′ tīrk), 69n., 195ff.,
235, 272n., 289, 392
Po Valley, 303-304, 316
Poetics, 247
Poetry (see under particular civilizations)
Poseis (see polis)
INDEX 463

Polemarch, 202
Polis, 190-192
clan basis of, 192
dangers in a, 191
decline of, 265
definition of, 190
duties of individual to, 190
federation, attempts at, in, 265-
266
governments of, 192
Macedonia, conquest of, 265-270
origin of, 192
political and social nature of, 190
requirements for, 190
slavery in, 192-193
as transitional political unit, 191-
192
See also under Greek civilization
Politics, 247, 249, 272
Polybius (pa li' büs), 195, 299,
313, 380
Livy contrasted with, 381
Polygnotus (pol'ı-gno'tı), 257
Polyphemus (pol'ı-fé'mıs), 187
Polytheism, 39, 120, 121
Polyzena (pa liz' en'a), 238
Pomerelia (pom'er ella), 470
Pompeii (pom pé' e), 297, 355,
372
Pompeius Sextus, 342, 344
Pompey, 334-336, 342, 374, 379,
392
Crassus, rivalry with, 334-338
Pont du Gard (pón' tu gár'), 373
Pontifex Maximus, 308, 348, 368
Pontiffs, 312, 368
Pontius Pilate, 397
Pontus, 332
"Poor Men of Lyons," 410
See also Waldensians
Pope, 403ff.
Rome ruled by, 432-433
See also Papacy, Church, and
specific main entries
Populares, 329-330, 332
Poseidon (pōz'ı-don), 187
Potestas (pō tē's tās), 309
Praetor (prē' tar), 307, 312, 314,
322
Praetor peregrinus, 383
Praetor urbans, 383
Praetorian Guard, 353
Praxiteles (prák's tī léz'), 256
Prehistoric man (see Prehistory)
Prehistory, 11-26
achievements of, 11
age of, length of, 11
bibliography of, 26
chronological chart of, 13
data of, 11

restoration during Middle Kings-
don of, 54
spells in, 47-48, 48n.
See also under Egypt
Pyrhic victories, 319
Pyrrho (pir'ō), 288
Pyrrhus (pir' ōs), 319
Pythagoras (pī thag'ı rās), 231

Q
Quaestors (kwē's tarz, kwē's tarz),
310, 333, 346
Quintilian (kwīn til'ī yan, -ī an),
380
Quo Vadis, 389

R
Rajputs (ra jī pūts), 148, 148
Ramayana (ra mā'yā na), 143
Odissey contrasted with, 147n.
Rameses (rā'mēs' a sē'), 40, 68,
68, 69
Rameses m, 68, 130
Ramessids (rā'mēs' a sīdz), 47
Ravena, 404, 431, 432, 437
Rawlinson, Sir Henry, 80
Re, 40, 53, 58
Rebus principle, 70-71, 80
Religion (see under particular civi-
lizations)
Religious clergy, 409
Rembrandt, 166
Reformation, 372, 380
Republican, 174, 244, 245
Res publica, 301n.
Rhine, 424
Rhodes, 323
Rhodesian man, 15n.
River valley civilizations, 31-32
maritime civilizations contrasted
with, 108
Roman Assembly, 308-309
powers of, 308
summary of, 309
Roman civilization, 301-390, 415-
445
Aristotle, influence upon, 302
Athens, life in, contrasted with,
222-223
Etruscans, influence upon, 305
government forms under, 301
Greek civilization, dark age of,
compared with that of, 182
influence upon, 299-300, 364,
366, 391
Hellenistic Age, influence upon,
299-300.
Roman civilization (Cont.)
historical periods of, 301
history, inevitability of, in, 301–302
Memling, kingdom influenced by, 439
Persia, government officials contrasted, 103
Plato, influence upon, 302
Stoicism, influence upon, 287
Syrians, influence upon, 302
Twelve Tables in, 94
See also Roman Empire, Roman culture, Roman Republic, and specific main entries

Roman culture, 364–390
architecture, 373–374, 375, 377
basilica, 374
eruscan influence upon, 373–374
Greek influence upon, 374
art, 373–378
bibliography of, 389–390
dissemination of, 366
gods in, 367
Greek culture contrasted with, 364, 366
historiography, 380–382
See also under particular historians
mathematics, 372
medicine, 372
original elements in, 366
language, 366–367
law, 382–385
See also Roman law
literature, 385–389
comedy, 387
didactic poetry, 386–387
epics, 387
epic poetry, 385–386
epigram, 388
Euripides, influence upon, 387
fiction, 389
Greek influence upon, 386, 387
letter writing, 388–389
lyric poetry, 386
pastoral poetry, 386
satire, 387–388
See also under specific main entries
philosophy, 371–372
eclecticism, 371–372
Epicurism, 371
Greek thought, influence upon, 370
Stoicism, 370–371
See also under specific main entries
practicability of, 366
religion, 367–369
animism in, 367–368
eyear period, 367–368
Egyptian influence upon, 369
Etruscan influence upon, 368
gods in, 367–368
Greek influence upon, 368
Mithraism, influence upon, 369
Oriental influence upon, 369
Persian religion, influence upon, 369
rhetoric, 378–380
artificiality of, 379
Cicero as practitioner of, 379–380
Greek influence upon, 379
science, 372–373
sculpture, 376, 377–378
Etruscan influence upon, 377
Greek influence upon, 377
Greek sculpture contrasted with, 377–378
realism of, 377–378
Western civilization influenced by, 364
See also under specific main entries
Roman Empire, 341–363, 415–445
absolutism, growth of, under, 361–362, 419–420
achievements of, 362
administrative problems in early, 346
agriculture, in early, 355
in later, 420–422
architecture in, 354
army, domination of, 415–417
art of, 352, 352
Augustus as ruler of, 345–359
See also under specific main entry after Augustus, 359–362
barbarian invasions of, 429–437
barbarians, relations with, 427–429
"barrack emperors" in, 417
bibliography of, 362–363, 444–445
boundaries of early, 351, 352
Burgundians, invasion of, 430
Byzantine civilization as successor to, 446
Caesar, internecine struggles after murder of, in, 341–345
triumvirate after his murder in, 343–344
Catholic Church influenced by, 362
Celts, invasion of, 430
timelapse chart of, 343, 418–419
colonial influence upon, 421
Constantine's rule of, 423–425
See also under specific main entry of, 341, 419–423
Diocletian, reform of, 417, 419–423
See also under specific main entry of division of, 421, 425
Eastern part of, 435, 438
economic conditions in early, 354–356
economic problems in early, 346
emperor worship during, 358
emperors in last stages of, 432
end of, 442–444
evaluation of, 444
Franks, invasion of, 430
Gaul, relations with, 417
Germans, invasion of, 427
Goths, invasion of, 429–430
relations with, 427–429
Huns, invasion of, 432
idea of, 362
invasion by barbarians of, 429–437
law under, 384
legions under, 362
map of, 351, 431
military problems in early, 346
political problems in early, 346
provinces under early, 361
Rome in last days of, 432–434
Senate under, 359, 362
slavery under, 356
social problems in early, 346
state worship under, 358
Stoics under, 359
successor states to, 434–442
See also under specific main entry of totalitarianism in, 422–423
unification, temporary, of, 417
Vandals, invasion of, 430
Roman law, 382–385
under Augustus, 384
bibliography of, 390
Christianity, influence upon, 385
citizenship rights under, 383
Corpus Juris Civilis of, 384–385
edictum in, 383
Egyptian law contrasted with, 382
under Empire, 384
equity, concept of, under, 384
foreigners' rights under, 383
formulae in, 383
Greek law contrasted with, 382–383

INDEX 465

Hammurabi Code contrasted with, 382
Hebrew law contrasted with, 382
influence of, 385
jus cicile of, 383, 384
jus gentium of, 383, 384
jus naturale in, 384
jus prudentes under, 384–385
Justinian Code of, 384
leges in, 383
Napoleon influenced by, 385
praelegius peregrinus under, 383
praelegius urbanus under, 383
rights of citizenship under, 383
of foreigners under, 383
Stoicism, influence upon, 386, 390, 394
Theodosian Code of, 384
Twelve Tables of, 382
Roman Republic, 301–340
army under late, 329–331
bibliography of, 340
Carthage, Punic Wars with, 321–322
razed by, 324
chronological chart of, 311
classes in, 302
conquered territories, policy towards, of, 324
definition of, 301
destruction of, 329–338
equestrian order in, 326
expansion of, 325
effects upon, 326–327
government of early, 306–314
Gracchan revolution during, 327–329
Greece conquered by, 323–324
Greek civilization, influence upon, 326
Hebrews conquered by, 119, 312
imperialism of, 302–303
Italians, citizenship gained in, 332
grievances against, 331
revolt of, against, 331
landlordism under later, 326–327
last period of, 334–336
latifundia under, 327
Macedonia, defeated by, 323
as province of, 324
oligarchy in, 302
peasantry under late, 326–327
proletariat, growth of, in late, 327
provincial system of, 322
Senate, under, 314, 330
Sulla's reforms of, 333–334
Tribal Assembly under early, 308–313
Romance languages, 367
Romans, 302ff.
Alexander the Great contrasted with, 302
Athenians contrasted with, 302
Greeks contrasted with, 302
Hebrews conquered by, 119, 312
Rome, 315ff., 318
advantages of, 315–316
Alaric, sacking of, 433
Attila, invasion of, 433
Carthage, defeated by, 321–322
treaty with, 319
chronological chart of, 310
as city-state, 303
class struggles in, 309–310, 312
colonies of, 315
conquered cities, relations with, 315
defensive alliances of, 320
Etruscans, domination over, 305–306
expansion of, 315–320
effects upon, 326–327
fall of, 432, 434
Gauls, invasion of, 317
general physical characteristics of, 303–304
Goths, sacking of, 433
government in early, 307
Greece conquered by, 281
Huns, invasion of, 433
Italy dominated by, 319
king's powers in early, 307
kings overthrown in, 306
Latin League, relations with, 306
law code of, 310
Macedonia conquered by, 281
Milan contrasted with, 304
Palatine Hill of, 304
Papacy, ruler of, 432–433, 437–438
patricians in, 306, 310, 312
plebeians in, 306, 310, 312
Primitive Democracy of, 307
roads of, 316, 317
Sicily conquered by, 321
Spain as province of, 322
Vandals, sacking of, 433
Romulus (room'-yo'l's), 305, 358
Rosetta Stone, 37
Rousseau (roo'-so'), 175n.
Roxane, 276
Rubicon, 337, 368
Rule of Saint Basil, 409
Rutilius, 331
Sacraments, 400, 405
Sacred Hill, 307
Sadducees (sä'dük'-ēz'), 393, 399
Sakkara (säk'-ā ra'), 45
Salamis (säl'-ē mēs), 213, 214, 425
Sallust, 380
Salvation, 400
Samaria, 96, 118
Samnite Wars, 313, 316–319
Sammites, 316–317, 318, 319, 319
Samos, 223
Samothrace, 392
Samuel, 117
Sangu, 85
Sanhedrin (sän'-hē drēn, sän'-ē'), 393
Sankara school, 146n.
Sanskrit, 140
Sappho (säf'-ō), 258, 298
Sardinia, 321, 323
Sardis, 101, 102, 103, 113, 212
Sargon, 92, 113
Sarmatians, 424, 427, 428
Sassanid Persians, 106
Satan, 369, 392
Satrap (sāt'rāp), 102–103
Satyricon, 385, 389
Saul, king of the Hebrews, 117
Saul of Tarsus, 393, 398–399
conversion of, 398
missionary activities of, 398–399
See also Paul
Savoy, 430
Saxons, 427, 441, 442
Schleimann, Heinrich (shēm'-män, hin'-rick), 128
Science (see under particular civilizations)
Scipio Aemilianus (sīp'-i o'mē'll-eān'-ēm), 370, 387
Scipio Africanus (āf'-ri kā'-ōn), 322
Scots, 441
Scotus, John Erigena (see Erigena)
Sculpture (see under particular civilizations)
Scythians, 98
Season of Coming Forth, 44
Second Intermediate Period (see under Egypt)
Secular clergy, 409
Sed festival, 40
Sejanus (sē'jā'nās), 359
Seleucia (sē'lō'-sha), 279, 323
Seleucid empire, 282
Seleucids, 278
Seleucus of Babylon (sē'lō-shūs), 119, 276, 289
Seneca, 366, 370, 380, 387
Sennacherib (sā nāk' ar šī), 91, 96
Septimus Severus (see Severus)
Sertorius (sar tōr' i as), 332
Set, 39
Seven Hills, 304, 305
Severus, Septimus (sēp tim' i as sā vīr' as), 415-416, 422
 Sextus Pompeius, 342, 344
Shah Jehan (shā ja hān'), 149
Shamash (shā' māsh), 93, 121
Shang dynasty, 151-152
Shang Ti, 166
Shakespeare, William, 387
Shekels, 84
"Shepherd-Kings," 57n.
Shih Huang Ti (shē' hwāng' tē'), 153
Shore party, 204, 205
Shu, 40
Si River, 150
Sia, 40
Siam, 146
Sibyl of Cumae (kū' mē), 368
Sibylline Books, 368
Sicyon, 319, 325
Rome, conquest of, 321
Sidon (si'don), 113, 114
Sienkiewicz, Henryk (he'nē rīk shēn kyē' vich), 399
Silver Age, 366, 388
Simeon Stylites (sī'mōn stil' li tēz), 408
Sin, Christian concept of, 53
Egyptian concept of, 53
Hebrew concept of, 53
Sinai (si'nē), -ni'1), 115, 116
Sinai desert, 38
Sinanthropi (see Peking men)
Singhalese, 147
Sita, 174n.
Siva, 143, 169
Skepticism, 284ff., 372
Skeptics, 392
Slavs, 427
Smith, Edwin, Surgical Papyrus, 51, 71-72
Socialism, 6
Societies, 3-8
clan as political unit in, 5
culture of, 6
diffusion of, 7
uniqueness of, 7
differences among, 3
economic requirements of, 3-4
economically advanced, 4
family as political unit in, 5
government of, 4
evolution of, 5
forms of, 6

justice in, 5
laws of, 5
powers of, 4
heritage of, 10
political requirements of, 4-5
premachine, 3
progress of, 9
rise and fall of, 8-9
state of nature in, 4
tribe as political unit in, 5

Socrates (sōk' ra tēz'), 122, 186, 225n., 241ff., 242
the absolute, sought by, 240
Aquinas compared with, 241
as citizen, 242
conscience as moral sanction in, 239
daimonion of, 242, 243
death of, 243
and Delphic Oracle, 241, 242
dialectic of, 241
ethics of, 233, 242
the good, inquiry into, by, 241
humility of, 241, 242
method of, 241
originality of, 244n.
Plato as follower of, 244
as polis member, 191
pupils of, 243
Sophists criticized by, 242
trial of, 243

Sol Invictus (see Unconquered Sun)

Solomon, 113, 117
Solon, 180, 195, 202ff., 237, 258, 382
economic reforms of, 202-203
evil, voluntary, of, 204
political reforms of, 203-205
Son of Heaven, 150
Song of Deborah, 117
Song of Songs, 127
Sophists, 225n., 233, 239-241, 261
Aristophanes critical of, 262
as debaters, 239
destructive influence of, 240
as orators, 262
Plato critical of, 262
relativism of, 240
rhetoric taught by, 379
as secularists, 239
Socrates critical of, 242
as teachers, 239
Sophocles (sōf' ə klēz'), 180, 237-238
dramas of, 189, 224-225, 233, 237-238
Greek thought expressed by, 229
women in, 224-225

Sophrosyne (sō frō' zi nē), 187, 195, 234ff., 272
Spain, 129, 442
Goths, conquest of, 442
Muslims, invasion of, 442
Rome, annexation of, 332
tin, source of, in, 25
Sparta, 128, 187-188, 195-201, 197
Alexander the Great, revolt against, by, 274
army of, 195-199
art of, 196
Athens, contrasted with, 195
defeated by, 130, 218
choral lyrics, home of, in, 259
as closed state, 188
colonization by, 194, 196
constitution of, 199
Dorians settled in, 195
during Hellenistic Age, 281
helots in, 195-198
kings of, 199
Lycian system in, 198
Messenia, defeated by, 197
invaded by, 196
Olynthus conquered by, 266
Peloponnesian League led by, 200
Peloponnesian War won by, 218
people of, 195
Pericles' policy against, 216
simplicity of, contrasted with Athenian life, 223
slavery in, 195
social system of, 198-199
as static civilization, 195
supremacy won by, 218
Thebes, defeat of, 266-267
Thermopylae defended by, 213-214

See also under Greek civilization

Spartiates, 192
See also Sparta
Spells (see under Pyramids)
Spengler, Oswald, 9, 373
Statesman, 246
Stephen, Saint, 398
Stilicho (sti' lō ko'), 433
Stoa, 286
Stoicism, 285, 286-287
asceticism of, 287
Christianity influenced by, 286
Cicero, interpreter of, 371
criticism of, 287
Cynics compared with, 286
Divine Reason in, 287, 370
duty in, 287
equality in, 370
Indian religions, influence upon, 174
Natural Law in, 287, 370
Roman civilization influenced by, 287, 370-371
Roman law influenced by, 286, 370, 384
self-sufficiency of, 287
Zeno, founder of, 286
Stoics, 286-287
under Roman Empire, 359
Stonehenge, 23, 23
Sudra caste, 160
Suetonius (swētōn′iəs), 339, 381
Sulla, 330, 332-334, 339
constitution of, 348
death of, 334
dictatorship of, 333
Marius, rivalry with, 330-332
reforms of, 333-334
Sulpicius, 332
Sumer (see Sumerians)
Sumerians, 78, 78-92
architecture of, 8, 80-84
art of, 80-84, 83
astronomics of, 88
astronomy of, 88
bibliography of, 107
calendar of, 84
city-gods of, 88
city-states of, 78, 78
commerce of, 84
conquests of, 92
council of gods under, 79
creation, conception of, among, 86
cuneiform writing of, 79, 79, 80
dreams, their role in religion of, 88
dreams of, 79-79
early civilization of, 78
early democracy of, 78-79
early government of, 78-79
family head as government among, 79
gods, attitude toward, of, 89-90
personal of, 89
Hebrew attitude toward gods contrasted with, 85
jewelry of, 83
land ownership among, 88-89
language of, 80
replaced by Akkadian, 92
master-slave relationship, in religion of, 85
in social life of, 85
mathematics of, 84
origins of, 78
priesthood of, 87-88
Primitive Democracy of, 79
religion of, 85-90
temple communities of, 85, 87-89
trade of, 84
writing, 7, 70, 79-80
Sun-god (see Ahum-Mazda and Re)
Sung (soŏng′) dynasty, 156
Susa (sōs′ə-sə), 101, 102, 103, 276
Suttee, 148
Synedrin (see Sanhedrin)
Synesius, 239
Synetkia (sin′kə kər′kə), 201
Syracuse, 193, 194, 217, 237, 251
Syria, 118
Roman civilization influenced by, 302

T
Tacitus, 359, 378ff.
Germans described by, 425
Tale of the Eloquent Peasant, 53
Tamil Land, 140
T’ang dynasty, 156
Tao, 66
Tao (see Taoism)
Taoism, 168
Tarentum (ta rən′təm), 194, 196, 318, 319
Tārāk (tā rē kāk), 442
Tarsus, 344
Tartars (see Mongols)
Techne, 251
Tefnut, 40
Tel-el-Amarna (te′l el′ əmə rən′), 38, 62
Telemacon (ta lêmə kəs), 184
Temple communities, 85, 87-89
Ten Tyrants, 218
Tepe Gawra (tē pē′ ĭ gō′rə), 81
Terence, 387
Terramarre culture, 304
Tertullian (tər tə l′ lən′, tə tō l′ yon′), 405
Teutones (tō tō nēz′, tō tō tanz′), 427
Thales (tha lēz′), 189, 229-230, 232
Thebans, 198
Thebes (Egypt), 54ff.
Thebes (Greece), 212-213, 213, 218, 258, 268
Alexander the Great, conquest of, 270
Athens accused by, 270
Philip of Macedon, conquest of, 270
Sparta defeated by, 266-267
Themis (thē′ mēz′), 234
Themistocles (tha mīs′ tə klēz′), 212, 214, 216, 223
Theocritus (thē′ ǒ kə rə təs), 299, 386
Theodoric, 425, 434-436
Theodosian Code, 384
Theodosius I, 402, 409
Theognis (thē ə gə nīs), 258
Theogony, 258
Theophrastus (thē′ ə frəs′ təs), 246
Thermopylae (thər mōp′ə lē′), 213, 213-214, 268
Thersites (thōr sī tēs′), 184
Theseum, 254
Theseus (thē′sōs, thē′ sə s), 201, 237
Theseus, 218, 251
Thetis (thē′təs′), 223
Thirty Tyrants, 218, 243
Thomas Aquinas (see Aquinas)
Thrace, 212-213, 213
Thrasymachus (thra sī mə kəs), 240
Thucydides (thōk′ sē dēz′), 210, 216, 237ff., 298-299, 319
criticism of, 261
generalizations of, 261
history of, 188
Livy contrasted with, 381
Peloponnesian War, history of, by, 217, 261
Sallust influenced by, 380
Thutmose (thōt′mōz′) iv, 42, 58, 59, 61, 115
Thutmose iv, 62
Tiamat (tīam′ət), 86-87
Tiber, 303, 318
Tiberius (tī brīr′əs), 349ff.
Tibet (tī bōt′), 146, 155
Tigris (tī grīs), 31, 75ff., 93
Nile contrasted with, 34
Timaeus (thī mi′ə s), 244
Titus, 119, 378
Tonah, 127
Tower of Babel, 236
Toynbee, Arnold, 9, 35, 185n.
Egypt interpreted by, 73
Sparta interpreted by, 195
Trade (see under particular civilization)
Transalpine Gaul, 336
Transubstantiation, 400
Trehenian, 384
Tribal Assembly, 308, 310, 313
327, 332
Tribe (see under Societies)
Tribunica potestas, 348
Trimalchio (trē mīl′kə lō), 389
Trinity, 402, 405-407
INDEX

Trithists, 405
Triumvirate, 336
Trojan War, 184, 257
Trojans, 182, 184, 349ff., 402, 417
Troy, 128, 130, 131, 180–187, 305
Hittites, influence upon, 112
Tutankhamon (tōt ankā’ man), 66
Twelve Tables, 94, 312, 382
Two Lands (see under Egypt)
Tyche (ti’ki), 22, 288
Tyrian purple, 114
Tyrtaeus (tůr tē’ as), 197

U
Ulilas (ūl’ fi las), 429
Unconquered Sun, 369
Uni, 50
Untouchables, 160, 161
Upanishads (ū pān’ a shādz’, pān’ a shādz’), 144
Upper Egypt (see under Egypt)
Upper Paleolithic Age, 16–17
Upper Stone Age (see Upper Paleolithic Age)
Ur, 78, 78, 81, 82, 84ff.
Uruk, 78, 78, 92
Utnapishtim (ūt’ nā pīsh’ tim), 91

V
Vaisya (vā’sya) caste, 160
Valens (vā’ lēnz), 429, 430
Valentinian (vāl’ ən tīn’ i an) III, 403, 433
Valerio-Horian laws, 309, 310
Valerius (vā lir’ i as), 402
Vandal kingdom, 431, 442
Vandals, 404, 427ff.
Gaul invaded by, 430
Roman Empire invaded by, 430
Rome sacked by, 433
Varille, Alexander, 68a.
Vedas (vā’ daz, vē’ daz), 143
Vergil, 299, 357ff.
Homer compared with, 385
Vespasian (vēs’ pā’ zhē ən, -zhan), 360
Vesuvius, 372
Veto, 307
Villanovans, 304
Vindhyas (vīnd’ yās), 140, 144, 144
Vishnu, 169, 169
Visigothic kingdom (see Spain)
Visigoths (see Goths)
Voltaire, 164n., 175n.

W
Wang Mang (wāng māng), 156
Wasp, 260
Weidenreich, Franz, 14
Welsh, 442
Western civilization, 75, 137
Aegean civilization as link between Egypt and, 137
China, contrasted with, 159
reciprocal influences of, 159
Chinese rulers compared to those of, 164
cradle of, 75
Far East, relations with, 139
Far Eastern rulers compared with those of, 164
India, contrasted with, 159
reciprocal influences of, 159
Indian religion, influence upon, 174–175
Mesopotamia, influence upon, 106
progress of, in, 30
Roman culture, influence upon, 364
Wheel, 22
Whitby, Synod of, 411, 441
Wisdom of Sirach, 127
Wise Men of the East, 105
Women (see under particular civilizations)
Woolley, Sir Leonard, 78, 84
Work and Days, 258
Würm glaciation, 16

X
Xenophon (zēn’ o φαν), 195, 224
Xerxes (zērk’ sēz), 103, 212ff., 236, 276

Y
Yahweh (yā’ wē), 116ff., 392, 399
Yangtze (yāng’ sē’), Chin. yāng’ tsê’ River, 150
Year of the Four Emperors, 381
Yellow River, 150
Yoga (yō’ gō), 171
Yogi (yō’ gē), 171

Z
Zama, battle of, 322, 323
Zarathustra (see Zoroaster)
Zend-Avesta (zēnd’ o vēs’ tā), 104
Zenon (zēn’ nō), 286, 287
Zeno, Emperor, 434
Zenobia, 417
Zeugittae, 223
Zeus (zōs), 186, 187, 235ff.
altar of, 291, 292
temple of, 205
Zeus-Amon, 274
Zeuxis (zōs’ sēs), 257
Ziggurat (zig’ oō rāt’), 20, 81, 276
Zolleevein (tsōl’ fēr in’), 215n.
Zoroaster (zō’ rō sē’ tār), 20, 104
Zoroastrianism, 103–105, 369, 382
bibliography of, 107
Christianity influenced by, 105
dualism of, 105
as ethical religion, 105
future life, belief in, 105
Hebrew religion influenced by, 105, 392
influence upon other religions of, 105
origins of, 103–104
priesthood of, 105
Zoser, 45, 46