XXXIII
THE GROWTH OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Now this new Roman power which arose to dominate the western world in the second and first centuries B.C. was in several respects a different thing from any of the great empires that had hitherto prevailed in the civilized world. It was not at first a monarchy, and it was not the creation of any one great conqueror. It was not indeed the first of republican empires; Athens had dominated a group of Allies and dependents in the time of Pericles, and Carthage when she entered upon her fatal struggle with Rome was mistress of Sardinia and Corsica, Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and most of Spain and Sicily. But it was the first republican empire that escaped extinction and went on to fresh developments.

The centre of this new system lay far to the west of the more ancient centres of empire, which had hitherto been the river valleys of Mesopotamia and Egypt. This westward position enabled Rome to bring in to civilization quite fresh regions and peoples. The Roman power extended to Morocco and Spain, and was presently able to thrust north-westward over what is now France and Belgium to Britain and north-eastward into Hungary and South Russia. But on the other hand it was never able to maintain itself in Central Asia or Persia because they were too far from its administrative centres. It included therefore great masses of fresh Nordic Aryan-speaking peoples, it presently incorporated nearly all the Greek people in the world, and its population was less strongly Hamitic and Semitic than that of any preceding empire.

For some centuries this Roman Empire did not fall into the grooves of precedent that had so speedily swallowed up Persian and Greek, and all that time it developed. The rulers of the Medes and Persians became entirely Babylonized in a generation or so; they took over the tiara of the king of kings and the temples and priesthoods of his gods; Alexander and his successors followed in the same easy path of assimilation; the Seleucid monarchs had much the same court and administrative methods as Nebuchadnezzar; the Ptolemies became Pharaohs and altogether Egyptian. They were assimilated just as before them the Semitic conquerors of the Sumerians had been assimilated. But the Romans ruled in their own city, and for some centuries kept to the laws of their own nature. The only people who exercised any great mental influence upon them before the second or third century A.D. were the kindred and similar Greeks. So that the Roman Empire was essentially a first attempt to rule a great dominion upon mainly Aryan lines. It was so far a new pattern in history, it was an expanded Aryan republic. The old pattern of a personal conqueror ruling over a capital city that had grown up round the temple of a harvest god did not apply to it.

The Romans had gods and temples, but like the gods of the Greeks their gods were quasi-human immortals, divine patricians. The Romans also had blood sacrifices and even made human ones in times of stress, things they may have learnt to do from their dusky Etruscan teachers; but until Rome was long past its zenith neither priest nor temple played a large part in Roman history.

The Roman Empire was a growth, an unplanned novel growth; the Roman people found themselves engaged almost unawares in a vast administrative experiment. It cannot be called a successful experiment. In the end their empire collapsed altogether. And it changed enormously in form and method from century to century. It changed more in a hundred years than Bengal or Mesopotamia or Egypt changed in a thousand. It was always changing. It never attained to any fixity.

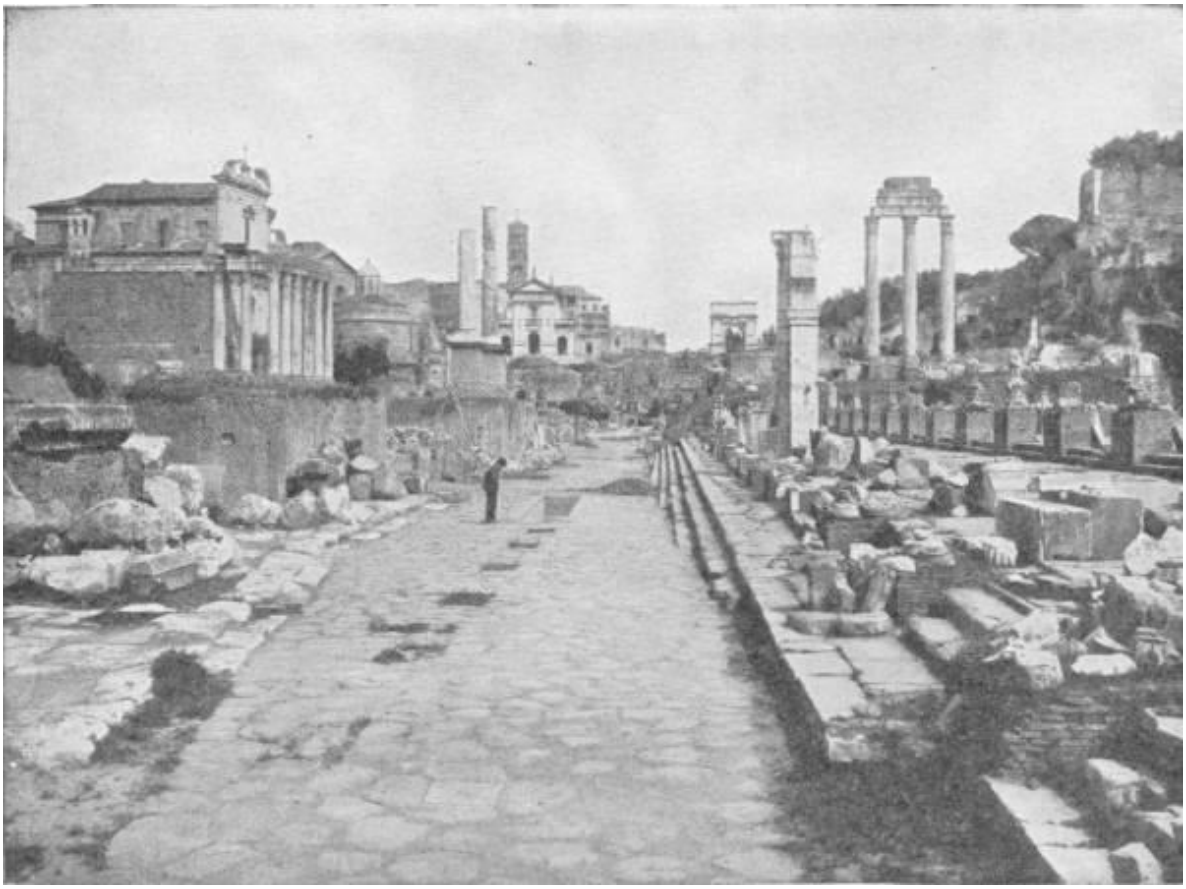
In a sense the experiment failed. In a sense the experiment remains unfinished, and Europe and America to-day are still working out the riddles of world-wide statescraft first confronted by the Roman people.

It is well for the student of history to bear in mind the very great changes not only in political but in social and moral matters that went on throughout the period of Roman dominion. There is much too strong a tendency in people's minds to think of the Roman rule as something finished and stable, firm, rounded, noble and decisive. Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*, S.P.Q.R. the elder Cato, the Scipios, Julius Cæsar, Diocletian, Constantine the Great, triumphs, orations, gladiatorial combats and Christian martyrs are all mixed up together in a picture of something high and cruel and dignified. The items of that picture have to be disentangled. They are collected at different points from a process of change profounder than that which separates the London of William the Conqueror from the London of to-day.

We may very conveniently divide the expansion of Rome into four stages. The first stage began after the sack of Rome by the Goths in 390 B.C. and went on until the end of the First Punic War (240 B.C,). We may call this stage the stage of the Assimilative Republic. It was perhaps the finest, most characteristic stage in Roman history. The age-long dissensions of patrician and plebeian were drawing to it close, the Etruscan threat had come to an end, no one was very rich yet nor very poor, and most men were public-spirited. It was a republic like the republic of the South African Boers before 1900 or like the northern states of the American union between 1800 and 1850; a free-farmers republic. At the outset of this stage Rome was a little state scarcely twenty miles square. She fought the sturdy but kindred states about her, and sought not their destruction but coalescence. Her centuries of civil dissension had trained her people in compromise and concessions. Some of the defeated cities became altogether

Roman with a voting share in the government, some became self-governing with the right to trade and marry in Rome; garrisons full of citizens were set up at strategic points and colonies of varied privileges founded among the freshly conquered people. Great roads were made. The rapid Latinization of all Italy was the inevitable consequence of such a policy. In 89 B.C. all the free inhabitants of Italy became citizens of the city of Rome. Formally the whole Roman Empire became at last an extended city. In 212 A.D. every free man in the entire extent of the empire was given citizenship; the right, if he could get there, to vote in the town meeting in Rome.

This extension of citizenship to tractable cities and to whole countries was the distinctive device of Roman expansion. It reversed the old process of conquest and assimilation altogether. By the Roman method the conquerors assimilated the conquered.



THE FORUM AT ROME AS IT IS TO-DAY

But after the First Punic War and the annexation of Sicily, though the old process of assimilation still went on, another process arose by its side. Sicily for instance was treated as a conquered prey. It was declared an “estate” of the Roman people. Its rich

soil and industrious population was exploited to make Rome rich. The patricians and the more influential among the plebeians secured the major share of that wealth. And the war also brought in a large supply of slaves. Before the First Punic War the population of the republic had been largely a population of citizen farmers. Military service was their privilege and liability. While they were on active service their farms fell into debt and a new large-scale slave agriculture grew up; when they returned they found their produce in competition with slave-grown produce from Sicily and from the new estates at home. Times had changed. The republic had altered its character. Not only was Sicily in the hands of Rome, the common man was in the hands of the rich creditor and the rich competitor. Rome had entered upon its second stage, the Republic of Adventurous Rich Men.

For two hundred years the Roman soldier farmers had struggled for freedom and a share in the government of their state; for a hundred years they had enjoyed their privileges. The First Punic War wasted them and robbed them of all they had won.

RELICS OF ROMAN RULE
Ruins of Coliseum in Tunis
Photo: Jacques Boyer

The value of their electoral privileges had also evaporated. The governing bodies of the Roman republic were two in number. The first and more important was the Senate. This was a body originally of patricians and then of prominent men of all sorts, who were summoned to it first by certain powerful officials, the consuls and censors. Like the British House of Lords it became a gathering of great landowners, prominent politicians, big business men and the like. It was much more like the British House of Lords than it was like the American Senate. For three centuries, from the Punic Wars onward, it was the centre of Roman political thought and purpose. The second body was the Popular Assembly. This was supposed to be an assembly of *all* the citizens of Rome. When Rome was a little state twenty miles square this was a possible gathering. When the citizenship of Rome had spread beyond the confines in Italy, it was an altogether impossible one. Its meetings, proclaimed by horn-blowing from the Capitol and the city walls, became more and more a gathering of political hacks and city riff-raff. In the fourth century B.C. the Popular Assembly was a considerable check upon the Senate, a competent representation of the claims and rights of the common man. By the end of the Punic Wars it was an impotent relic of a vanquished popular control. No effectual legal check remained upon the big men.

THE GREAT ROMAN ARCH AT CTESIPHON NEAR BAGDAD

Nothing of the nature of representative government was ever introduced into the Roman republic. No one thought of electing delegates to represent the will of the

citizens. This is a very important point for the student to grasp. The Popular Assembly never became the equivalent of the American House of Representatives or the British House of Commons. In theory it was all the citizens; in practice it ceased to be anything at all worth consideration.

The common citizen of the Roman Empire was therefore in a very poor case after the Second Punic War; he was impoverished, he had often lost his farm, he was ousted from profitable production by slaves, and he had no political power left to him to remedy these things. The only methods of popular expression left to a people without any form of political expression are the strike and the revolt. The story of the second and first centuries B.C., so far as internal politics go, is a story of futile revolutionary upheaval. The scale of this history will not permit us to tell of the intricate struggles of that time, of the attempts to break up estates and restore the land to the free farmer, of proposals to abolish debts in whole or in part. There was revolt and civil war. In 73 B.C., the distresses of Italy were enhanced by a great insurrection, of the slaves under Spartacus. The slaves of Italy revolted with some effect, for among them were the trained fighters of the gladiatorial shows. For two years Spartacus held out in the crater of Vesuvius, which seemed at that time to be an extinct volcano. This insurrection was defeated at last and suppressed with frantic cruelty. Six thousand captured Spartacists were crucified along the Appian Way, the great highway that runs southward out of Rome (71 B.C.).

The common man never made head against the forces that were subjugating and degrading him. But the big rich men who were overcoming him were even in his defeat preparing a new power in the Roman world over themselves and him, the power of the army.

Before the Second Punic War the army of Rome was a levy of free farmers, who, according to their quality, rode or marched afoot to battle. This was a very good force for wars close at hand, but not the sort of army that will go abroad and bear long campaigns with patience. And moreover as the slaves multiplied and the estates grew, the supply of free- spirited fighting farmers declined. It was a popular leader named Marius who introduced a new factor. North Africa after the overthrow of the Carthaginian civilization had become a semi-barbaric kingdom, the kingdom of Numidia. The Roman power fell into conflict with Jugurtha, king of this state, and experienced enormous difficulties in subduing him. Marius was made consul, in a phase of public indignation, to end this discreditable war. This he did by raising *paid troops* and drilling them hard. Jugurtha was brought in chains to Rome (106 B.C.) and Marius, when his time of office had expired, held on to his consulship illegally with his newly created legions. There was no power in Rome to restrain him.

With Marius began the third phase in the development of the Roman power, the Republic of the Military Commanders. For now began a period in which the leaders of the paid legions fought for the mastery of the Roman world. Against Marius was pitted the aristocratic Sulla who had served under him in Africa. Each in turn made a great massacre of his political opponents. Men were proscribed and executed by the thousand, and their estates were sold. After the bloody rivalry of these two and the horror of the revolt of Spartacus, came a phase in which Lucullus and Pompey the Great and Crassus and Julius Cæsar were the masters of armies and dominated affairs. It was Crassus who defeated Spartacus. Lucullus conquered Asia Minor and penetrated to Armenia, and retired with great wealth into private life. Crassus thrusting further invaded Persia and was defeated and slain by the Parthians. After a long rivalry Pompey was defeated by Julius Cæsar (48 B.C.) and murdered in Egypt, leaving Julius Cæsar sole master of the Roman world.

The figure of Julius Cæsar is one that has stirred the human imagination out of all proportion to its merit or true importance. He has become a legend and a symbol. For us he is chiefly important as marking the transition from the phase of military adventurers to the beginning of the fourth stage in Roman expansion, the Early Empire. For in spite of the profoundest economic and political convulsions, in spite of civil war and social degeneration, throughout all this time the boundaries of the Roman state crept outward and continued to creep outward to their maximum about 100 A.D. There had been something like an ebb during the doubtful phases of the Second Punic War, and again a manifest loss of vigour before the reconstruction of the army by Marius. The revolt of Spartacus marked a third phase. Julius Cæsar made his reputation as a military leader in Gaul, which is now France and Belgium. (The chief tribes inhabiting this country belonged to the same Celtic people as the Gauls who had occupied north Italy for a time, and who had afterwards raided into Asia Minor and settled down as the Galatians.) Cæsar drove back a German invasion of Gaul and added all that country to the empire, and he twice crossed the Straits of Dover into Britain (55 and 54 B.C.), where however he made no permanent conquest. Meanwhile Pompey the Great was consolidating Roman conquests that reached in the east to the Caspian Sea.

THE COLUMN OF TRAJAN AT ROME
Representing his conquests at Dacia and elsewhere

At this time, the middle of the first century B.C., the Roman Senate was still the nominal centre of the Roman government, appointing consuls and other officials, granting powers and the like; and a number of politicians, among whom Cicero was an outstanding figure, were struggling to preserve the great traditions of republican Rome and to maintain respect for its laws. But the spirit of citizenship had gone from Italy with the wasting away of the free farmers; it was a land now of slaves and impoverished men with neither the understanding nor the desire for freedom. There was nothing whatever behind these republican leaders in the Senate, while behind the great adventurers they feared and desired to control were the legions. Over the heads of the Senate Crassus and Pompey and Cæsar divided the rule of the Empire between them (The First Triumvirate). When presently Crassus was killed at distant Carrhæ by the Parthians, Pompey and Cæsar fell out. Pompey took up the republican side, and laws were passed to bring Cæsar to trial for his breaches of law and his disobedience to the decrees of the Senate.

It was illegal for a general to bring his troops out of the boundary of his command, and the boundary between Cæsar's command and Italy was the Rubicon. In 49 B.C. he crossed the Rubicon, saying "The die is cast" and marched upon Pompey and Rome.

It had been the custom in Rome in the past, in periods of military extremity, to elect a "dictator" with practically unlimited powers to rule through the crisis. After his overthrow of Pompey, Cæsar was made dictator first for ten years and then (in 45 B.C.) for life. In effect he was made monarch of the empire for life. There was talk of a king, a word abhorrent to Rome since the expulsion of the Etruscans five centuries before. Cæsar refused to be king, but adopted throne and sceptre. After his defeat of Pompey, Cæsar had gone on into Egypt and had made love to Cleopatra, the last of the Ptolemies, the goddess queen of Egypt. She seems to have turned his head very completely. He had brought back to Rome the Egyptian idea of a god-king. His statue was set up in a temple with an inscription "To the Unconquerable God." The expiring republicanism of Rome flared up in a last protest, and Cæsar was stabbed to death in the Senate at the foot of the statue of his murdered rival, Pompey the Great.

Thirteen years more of this conflict of ambitious personalities followed. There was a second Triumvirate of Lepidus, Mark Antony and Octavian Cæsar, the latter the nephew of Julius Cæsar. Octavian like his uncle took the poorer, hardier western provinces where the best legions were recruited. In 31 B.C., he defeated Mark Antony, his only serious rival, at the naval battle of Actium, and made himself sole master of the Roman world. But Octavian was a man of different quality altogether from Julius Cæsar. He had no foolish craving to be God or King. He had no queen-lover that he wished to dazzle. He restored freedom to the Senate and people of Rome. He declined to be dictator. The grateful Senate in return gave him the reality instead of the forms of power. He was to be called not King indeed, but "Princeps" and "Augustus." He became Augustus Cæsar, the first of the Roman emperors (27 B.C. to 14 A.D.).

He was followed by Tiberius Cæsar (14 to 37 A.D.) and he by others, Caligula, Claudius, Nero and so on up to Trajan (98 A.D.), Hadrian (117 A.D.), Antonius Pius (138 A.D.) and Marcus Aurelius (161- 180 A.D.). All these emperors were emperors of the legions. The soldiers made them, and some the soldiers destroyed. Gradually the Senate fades out of Roman-history, and the emperor and his administrative officials replace it. The boundaries of the empire crept forward now to their utmost limits. Most of Britain was added to the empire, Transylvania was brought in as a new province, Dacia; Trajan crossed the Euphrates. Hadrian had an idea that reminds us at once of what had happened at the other end of the old world. Like Shi-Hwang-ti he built walls against the northern barbarians; one across Britain and a palisade between the Rhine and the Danube. He abandoned some of the acquisitions of Trajan.

The expansion of the Roman Empire was at an end.

XXXIV
BETWEEN ROME AND CHINA

The second and first centuries B.C. mark a new phase in the history of mankind. Mesopotamia and the eastern Mediterranean are no longer the centre of interest. Both Mesopotamia and Egypt were still fertile, populous and fairly prosperous, but they were no longer the dominant regions of the world. Power had drifted to the west and to the east. Two great empires now dominated the world, this new Roman Empire and the renascent Empire of China. Rome extended its power to the Euphrates, but it was never able to get beyond that boundary. It was too remote. Beyond the Euphrates the former Persian and Indian dominions of the Seleucids fell under a number of new masters. China, now under the Han dynasty, which had replaced the Ts'in dynasty at the death of Shi-Hwang-ti, had extended its power across Tibet and over the high mountain passes of the Pamirs into western Turkestan. But there, too, it reached its extremes. Beyond was too far.

China at this time was the greatest, best organized and most civilized political system in the world. It was superior in area and population to the Roman Empire at its zenith. It was possible then for these two vast systems to flourish in the same world at the same time in almost complete ignorance of each other. The means of communication both by sea and land was not yet sufficiently developed and organized for them to come to a direct clash.

Yet they reacted upon each other in a very remarkable way, and their influence upon the fate of the regions that lay between them, upon central Asia and India, was profound. A certain amount of trade trickled through, by camel caravans across Persia, for example, and by coasting ships by way of India and the Red Sea. In 66 B.C. Roman troops under Pompey followed in the footsteps of Alexander the Great, and marched up the eastern shores of the Caspian Sea. In 102 A.D. a Chinese expeditionary force under Pan Chau reached the Caspian, and sent emissaries to report upon the power of Rome. But many centuries were still to pass before definite knowledge and direct intercourse were to link the great parallel worlds of Europe and Eastern Asia.

To the north of both these great empires were barbaric wildernesses. What is now Germany was largely forest lands; the forests extended far into Russia and made a home for the gigantic aurochs, a bull of almost elephantine size. Then to the north of the great mountain masses of Asia stretched a band of deserts, steppes and then forests and frozen lands. In the eastward lap of the elevated part of Asia was the great

triangle of Manchuria. Large parts of these regions, stretching between South Russia and Turkestan into Manchuria, were and are regions of exceptional climatic insecurity. Their rainfall has varied greatly in the course of a few centuries They are lands treacherous to man. For years they will carry pasture and sustain cultivation, and then will come an age of decline in humidity and a cycle of killing droughts.

A CHINESE COVERED JAR OF GREEN-GLAZED EARTHENWARE
Han Dynasty (contemporary with the late Roman republic and early Empire)
(In the Victoria and Albert Museum)

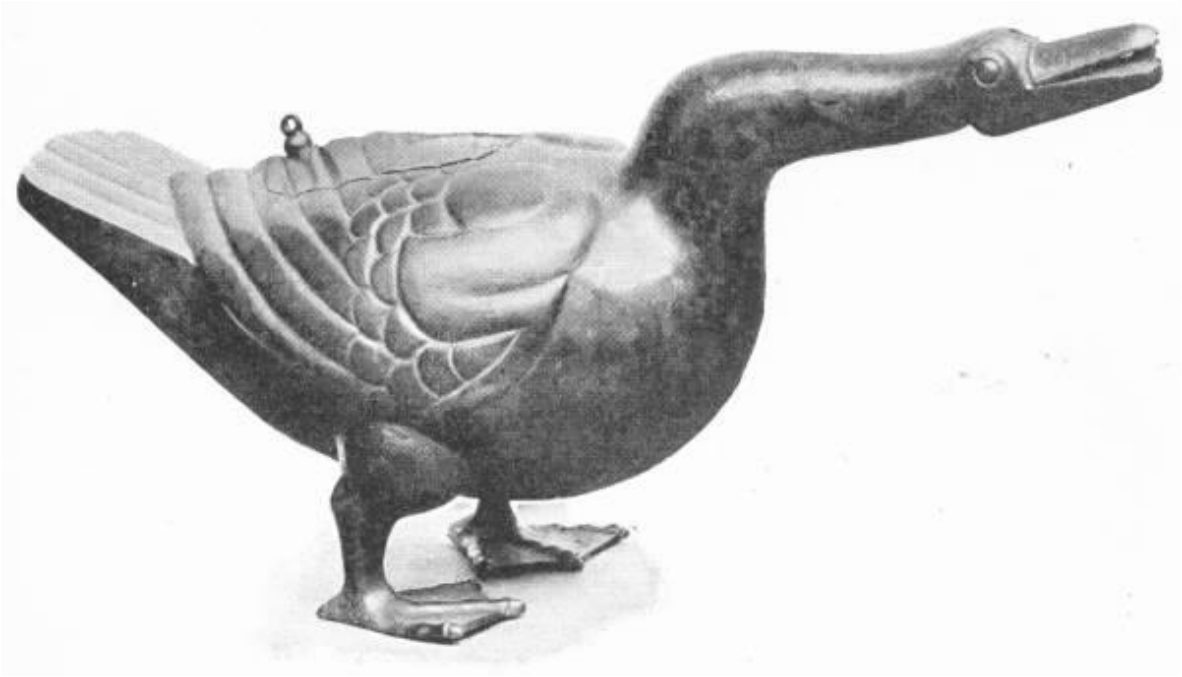
The western part of this barbaric north from the German forests to South Russia and Turkestan and from Gothland to the Alps was the region of origin of the Nordic peoples and of the Aryan speech. The eastern steppes and deserts of Mongolia was the region of origin of the Hunnish or Mongolian or Tartar or Turkish peoples—for all these several peoples were akin in language, race, and way of life. And as the Nordic peoples seem to have been continually overflowing their own borders and pressing south upon the developing civilizations of Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean coast, so the Hunnish tribes sent their surplus as wanderers, raiders and conquerors into the settled regions of China. Periods of plenty in the north would mean an increase in population there; a shortage of grass, a spell of cattle disease, would drive the hungry warlike tribesmen south.

For a time there were simultaneously two fairly effective Empires in the world capable of holding back the barbarians and even forcing forward the frontiers of the imperial peace. The thrust of the Han empire from north China into Mongolia was strong and continuous. The Chinese population welled up over the barrier of the Great Wall. Behind the imperial frontier guards came the Chinese farmer with horse and plough,

ploughing up the grass lands and enclosing the winter pasture. The Hunnish peoples raided and murdered the settlers, but the Chinese punitive expeditions were too much for them. The nomads were faced with the choice of settling down to the plough and becoming Chinese tax-payers or shifting in search of fresh summer pastures. Some took the former course and were absorbed. Some drifted north-eastward and eastward over the mountain passes down into western Turkestan.

VASE OF BRONZE FORM, UNGLAZED STONEWARE
Han Dynasty (B.C. 206 - A.D. 220)
(In the Victoria and Albert Museum)

This westward drive of the Mongolian horsemen was going on from 200 B.C. onward. It was producing a westward pressure upon the Aryan tribes, and these again were pressing upon the Roman frontiers ready to break through directly there was any weakness apparent. The Parthians, who were apparently a Scythian people with some Mongolian admixture, came down to the Euphrates by the first century B.C. They fought against Pompey the Great in his eastern raid. They defeated and killed Crassus. They replaced the Seleucid monarchy in Persia by a dynasty of Parthian kings, the Arsacid dynasty.



CHINESE VESSEL IN BRONZE, IN FORM OF A GOOSE
Dating from before the time of Shi-Hwang-ti. Such a piece of work indicates a high level of comfort and humour
(In the Victoria and Albert Museum)

But for a time the line of least resistance for hungry nomads lay neither to the west nor the east but through central Asia and then south-eastward through the Khyber Pass into India. It was India which received the Mongolian drive in these centuries of Roman and Chinese strength. A series of raiding conquerors poured down through the Punjab into the great plains to loot and destroy. The empire of Asoka was broken up, and for a time the history of India passes into darkness. A certain Kushan dynasty founded by the "Indo- Scythians"—one of the raiding peoples—ruled for a time over North India and maintained a certain order. These invasions went on for several centuries. For a large part of the fifth century A.D. India was afflicted by the Ephthalites or White Huns, who levied tribute on the small Indian princes and held India in terror. Every summer these Ephthalites pastured in western Turkestan, every autumn they came down through the passes to terrorize India.

In the second century A.D. a great misfortune came upon the Roman and Chinese empires that probably weakened the resistance of both to barbarian pressure. This was a pestilence of unexampled virulence. It raged for eleven years in China and disorganized the social framework profoundly. The Han dynasty fell, and a new age of division and confusion began from which China did not fairly recover until the seventh century A.D. with the coming of the great Tang dynasty.

The infection spread through Asia to Europe. It raged throughout the Roman Empire from 164 to 180 A.D. It evidently weakened the Roman imperial fabric very seriously. We begin to hear of depopulation in the Roman provinces after this, and there was a marked deterioration in the vigour and efficiency of government. At any rate we presently find the frontier no longer invulnerable, but giving way first in this place and then in that. A new Nordic people, the Goths, coming originally from Gothland in Sweden, had migrated across Russia to the Volga region and the shores of the Black Sea and taken to the sea and piracy. By the end of the second century they may have begun to feel the westward thrust of the Huns. In 247 they crossed the Danube in a great land raid, and defeated and killed the Emperor Decius in a battle in what is now Serbia. In 236 another Germanic people, the Franks, had broken bounds upon the lower Rhine, and the Alemanni had poured into Alsace. The legions in Gaul beat back their invaders, but the Goths in the Balkan peninsula raided again and again. The province of Dacia vanished from Roman history.

A chill had come to the pride and confidence of Rome. In 270-275 Rome, which had been an open and secure city for three centuries, was fortified by the Emperor Aurelian.

XXXV
THE COMMON MAN'S LIFE UNDER THE EARLY ROMAN EMPIRE

Before we tell of how this Roman empire which was built up in the two centuries B.C., and which flourished in peace and security from the days of Augustus Cæsar onward for two centuries, fell into disorder and was broken up, it may be as well to devote some attention to the life of the ordinary people throughout this great realm. Our history has come down now to within 2000 years of our own time; and the life of the civilized people, both under the Peace of Rome and the Peace of the Han dynasty, was beginning to resemble more and more clearly the life of their civilized successors to-day.

In the western world coined money was now in common use; outside the priestly world there were many people of independent means who were neither officials of the government nor priests; people travelled about more freely than they had ever done before, and there were high roads and inns for them. Compared with the past, with the time before 500 B.C., life had become much more loose. Before that date civilized men had been bound to a district or country, had been bound to a tradition and lived within a very limited horizon; only the nomads traded and travelled.

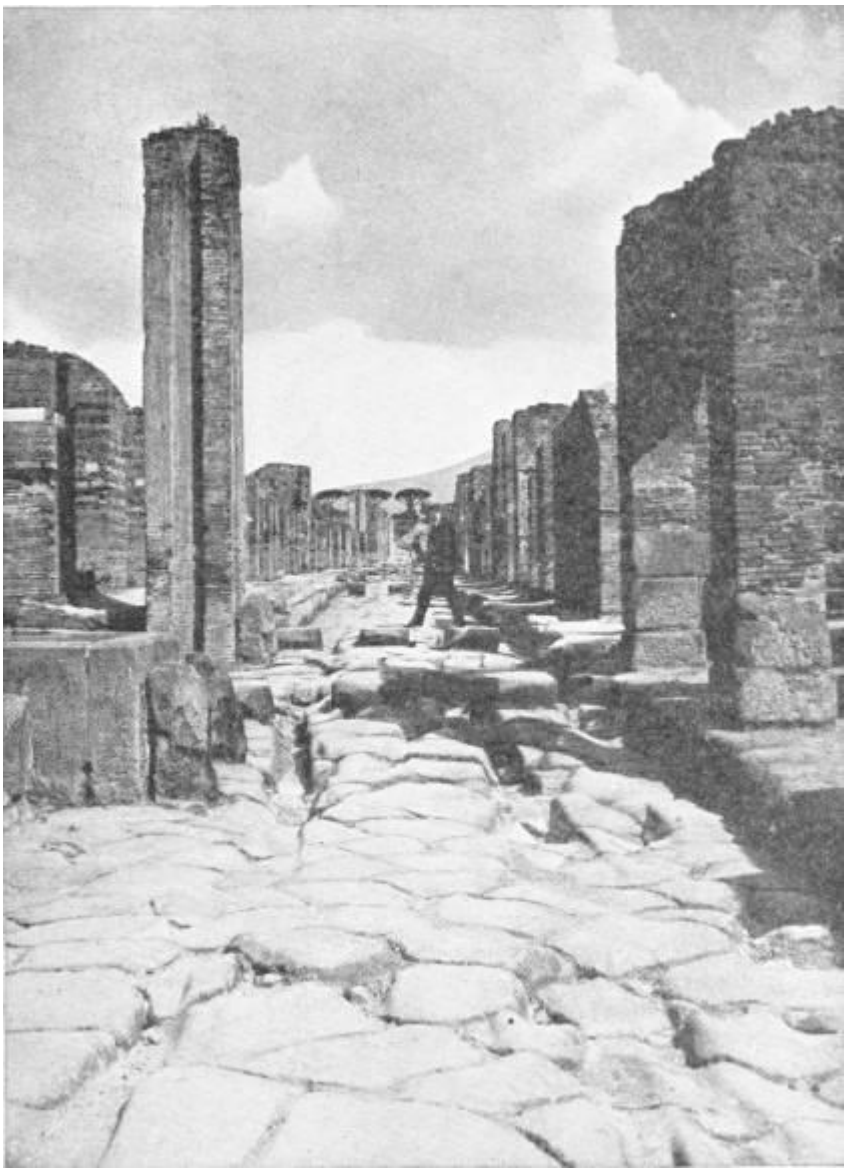
But neither the Roman Peace nor the Peace of the Han dynasty meant a uniform civilization over the large areas they controlled. There were very great local differences

and great contrasts and inequalities of culture between one district and another, just as there are to-day under the British Peace in India. The Roman garrisons and colonies were dotted here and there over this great space, worshipping Roman gods and speaking the Latin language; but where there had been towns and cities before the coming of the Romans, they went on, subordinated indeed but managing their own affairs, and, for a time at least, worshipping their own gods in their own fashion. Over Greece, Asia Minor, Egypt and the Hellenized East generally, the Latin language never prevailed. Greek ruled there invincibly. Saul of Tarsus, who became the apostle Paul, was a Jew and a Roman citizen; but he spoke and wrote Greek and not Hebrew. Even at the court of the Parthian dynasty, which had overthrown the Greek Seleucids in Persia, and was quite outside the Roman imperial boundaries, Greek was the fashionable language. In some parts of Spain and in North Africa, the Carthaginian language also held on for a long time in spite of the destruction of Carthage. Such a town as Seville, which had been a prosperous city long before the Roman name had been heard of, kept its Semitic goddess and preserved its Semitic speech for generations, in spite of a colony of Roman veterans at Italica a few miles away. Septimius Severus, who was emperor from 193 to 211 A.D., spoke Carthaginian as his mother speech. He learnt Latin later as a foreign tongue; and it is recorded that his sister never learnt Latin and conducted her Roman household in the Punic language.

In such countries as Gaul and Britain and in provinces like Dacia (now roughly Roumania) and Pannonia (Hungary south of the Danube), where there were no pre-existing great cities and temples and cultures, the Roman empire did however "Latinize." It civilized these countries for the first time. It created cities and towns where Latin was from the first the dominant speech, and where Roman gods were served and Roman customs and fashions followed. The Roumanian, Italian, French and Spanish languages, all variations and modifications of Latin, remain to remind us of this extension of Latin speech and customs. North-west Africa also became at last largely Latin-speaking. Egypt, Greece and the rest of the empire to the east were never Latinized. They remained Egyptian and Greek in culture and spirit. And even in Rome, among educated men, Greek was learnt as the language of a gentleman and Greek literature and learning were very, properly preferred to Latin.

In this miscellaneous empire the ways of doing work and business were naturally also very miscellaneous. The chief industry of the settled world was still largely agriculture. We have told how in Italy the sturdy free farmers who were the backbone of the early Roman republic were replaced by estates worked by slave labour after the Punic wars.

The Greek world had had very various methods of cultivation, from the Arcadian plan, wherein every free citizen toiled with his own hands, to Sparta, wherein it was a dishonour to work and where agricultural work was done by a special slave class, the Helots. But that was ancient history now, and over most of the Hellenized world the estate system and slave-gangs had spread. The agricultural slaves were captives who spoke many different languages so that they could not understand each other, or they were born slaves; they had no solidarity to resist oppression, no tradition of rights, no knowledge, for they could not read nor write. Although they came to form a majority of the country population they never made a successful insurrection. The insurrection of Spartacus in the first century B.C. was an insurrection of the special slaves who were trained for the gladiatorial combats. The agricultural workers in Italy in the latter days of the Republic and the early Empire suffered frightful indignities; they would be chained at night to prevent escape or have half the head shaved to make it difficult. They had no wives of their own; they could be outraged, mutilated and killed by their masters. A master could sell his slave to fight beasts in the arena. If a slave slew his master, all the slaves in his household and not merely the murderer were crucified. In some parts of Greece, in Athens notably, the lot of the slave was never quite so frightful as this, but it was still detestable. To such a population the barbarian invaders who presently broke through the defensive line of the legions, came not as enemies but as liberators.



POMPEII
“Note the ruts in roadway worn by chariot wheels.”

The slave system had spread to most industries and to every sort of work that could be done by gangs. Mines and metallurgical operations, the rowing of galleys, road-making and big building operations were all largely slave occupations. And almost all domestic service was performed by slaves. There were poor free-men and there were freed-men in the cities and upon the country side, working for themselves or even working for wages. They were artizans, supervisors and so forth, workers of a new money- paid class working in competition with slave workers; but we do not know what proportion they made of the general population. It probably varied widely in different places and at different periods. And there were also many modifications of

slavery, from the slavery that was chained at night and driven with whips to the farm or quarry, to the slave whose master found it advantageous to leave him to cultivate his patch or work his craft and own his wife like a free-man, provided he paid in a satisfactory quittance to his owner.

There were armed slaves. At the opening of the period of the Punic wars, in 264 B.C., the Etruscan sport of setting slaves to fight for their lives was revived in Rome. It grew rapidly fashionable; and soon every great Roman rich man kept a retinue of gladiators, who sometimes fought in the arena but whose real business it was to act as his bodyguard of bullies. And also there were learned slaves. The conquests of the later Republic were among the highly civilized cities of Greece, North Africa and Asia Minor; and they brought in many highly educated captives. The tutor of a young Roman of good family was usually a slave. A rich man would have a Greek slave as librarian, and slave secretaries and learned men. He would keep his poet as he would keep a performing dog. In this atmosphere of slavery the traditions of modern literary criticism were evolved. The slaves still boast and quarrel in our reviews. There were enterprising people who bought intelligent boy slaves and had them educated for sale. Slaves were trained as book copyists, as jewellers, and for endless skilled callings.

THE COLISEUM, ROME
Photo: Underwood & Underwood

INTERIOR OF THE COLISEUM AT IT APPEARS TO-DAY

But there were very considerable changes in the position of a slave during the four hundred years between the opening days of conquest under the republic of rich men and the days of disintegration that followed the great pestilence. In the second century B.C. war-captives were abundant, manners gross and brutal; the slave had no rights and there was scarcely an outrage the reader can imagine that was not practised upon slaves in those days. But already in the first century A.D. there was a perceptible improvement in the attitude of the Roman civilization towards slavery. Captives were not so abundant for one thing, and slaves were dearer. And slave-owners began to realize that the profit and comfort they got from their slaves increased with the self-respect of these unfortunates. But also the moral tone of the community was rising, and a sense of justice was becoming effective. The higher mentality of Greece was qualifying the old Roman harshness. Restrictions upon cruelty were made, a master might no longer sell his slave to fight beasts, a slave was given property rights in what was called his *peculium*, slaves were paid wages as an encouragement and stimulus, a form of slave marriage was recognized. Very many forms of agriculture do not lend themselves to gang working, or require gang workers only at certain seasons. In regions where such conditions prevailed the slave

presently became a serf, paying his owner part of his produce or working for him at certain seasons.

When we begin to realize how essentially this great Latin and Greek-speaking Roman Empire of the first two centuries A.D. was a slave state and how small was the minority who had any pride or freedom in their lives, we lay our hands on the clues to its decay and collapse. There was little of what we should call family life, few homes of temperate living and active thought and study; schools and colleges were few and far between. The free will and the free mind were nowhere to be found. The great roads, the ruins of splendid buildings, the tradition of law and power it left for the astonishment of succeeding generations must not conceal from us that all its outer splendour was built upon thwarted wills, stifled intelligence, and crippled and perverted desires. And even the minority who lorded it over that wide realm of subjugation and of restraint and forced labour were uneasy and unhappy in their souls; art and literature, science and philosophy, which are the fruits of free and happy minds, waned in that atmosphere. There was much copying and imitation, an abundance of artistic artificers, much slavish pedantry among the servile men of learning, but the whole Roman empire in four centuries produced nothing to set beside the bold and noble intellectual activities of the comparatively little city of Athens during its one century of greatness. Athens decayed under the Roman sceptre. The science of Alexandria decayed. The spirit of man, it seemed, was decaying in those days.

XXXVI
RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENTS UNDER THE ROMAN EMPIRE

The soul of man under that Latin and Greek empire of the first two centuries of the Christian era was a worried and frustrated soul. Compulsion and cruelty reigned; there were pride and display but little honour; little serenity or steadfast happiness. The unfortunate were despised and wretched; the fortunate were insecure and feverishly eager for gratifications. In a great number of cities life centred on the red excitement of the arena, where men and beasts fought and were tormented and slain. Amphitheatres are the most characteristic of Roman ruins. Life went on in that key. The uneasiness of men’s hearts manifested itself in profound religious unrest.

From the days when the Aryan hordes first broke in upon the ancient civilizations, it was inevitable that the old gods of the temples and priesthoods should suffer great adaptations or disappear. In the course of hundreds of generations the agricultural peoples of the brunette civilizations had shaped their lives and thoughts to the temple-centred life. Observances and the fear of disturbed routines, sacrifices and

mysteries, dominated their minds. Their gods seem monstrous and illogical to our modern minds because we belong to an Aryanized world, but to these older peoples these deities had the immediate conviction and vividness of things seen in an intense dream. The conquest of one city state by another in Sumeria or early Egypt meant a change or a renaming of gods or goddesses, but left the shape and spirit of the worship intact. There was no change in its general character. The figures in the dream changed, but the dream went on and it was the same sort of dream. And the early Semitic conquerors were sufficiently akin in spirit to the Sumerians to take over the religion of the Mesopotamian civilization they subjugated without any profound alteration. Egypt was never indeed subjugated to the extent of a religious revolution. Under the Ptolemies and under the Cæsars, her temples and altars and priesthoods remained essentially Egyptian.

So long as conquests went on between people of similar social and religious habits it was possible to get over the clash between the god of this temple and region and the god of that by a process of grouping or assimilation. If the two gods were alike in character they were identified. It was really the same god under another name, said the priests and the people. This fusion of gods is called theocrasia; and the age of the great conquests of the thousand years B.C. was an age of theocrasia. Over wide areas the local gods were displaced by, or rather they were swallowed up in, a general god. So that when at last Hebrew prophets in Babylon proclaimed one God of Righteousness in all the earth men's minds were fully prepared for that idea.

But often the gods were too dissimilar for such an assimilation, and then they were grouped together in some plausible relationship. A female god - and the Ægean world before the coming of the Greek was much addicted to Mother Gods—would be married to a male god, and an animal god or a star god would be humanized and the animal or astronomical aspect, the serpent or the sun or the star, made into an ornament or a symbol. Or the god of a defeated people would become a malignant antagonist to the brighter gods. The history of theology is full of such adaptations, compromises and rationalizations of once local gods.

As Egypt developed from city states into one united kingdom there was much of this theocrasia. The chief god so to speak was Osiris, a sacrificial harvest god of whom Pharaoh was supposed to be the earthly incarnation. Osiris was represented as repeatedly dying and rising again; he was not only the seed and the harvest but also by a natural extension of thought the means of human immortality. Among his symbols was the wide-winged scarabeus beetle which buries its eggs to rise again, and also the effulgent sun which sets to rise. Later on he was to be identified with Apis, the sacred bull. Associated with him was the goddess Isis. Isis was also Hathor, a cow-

goddess, and the crescent moon and the Star of the sea. Osiris dies and she bears a child, Horus, who is also a hawk-god and the dawn, and who grows to become Osiris again. The effigies of Isis represent her as bearing the infant Horus in her arms and standing on the crescent moon. These are not logical relationships, but they were devised by the human mind before the development of hard and systematic thinking and they have a dream-like coherence. Beneath this triple group there are other and darker Egyptian gods, bad gods, the dog-headed Anubis, black night and the like, devourers, tempters, enemies of god and man.

MITHRAS SACRIFICING A BULL, ROMAN
(In the British Museum)

Every religious system does in the course of time fit itself to the shape of the human soul, and there can be no doubt that out of these illogical and even uncouth symbols, Egyptian people were able to fashion for themselves ways of genuine devotion and consolation. The desire for immortality was very strong in the Egyptian mind, and the religious life of Egypt turned on that desire. The Egyptian religion was an immortality religion as no other religion had ever been. As Egypt went down under foreign

conquerors and the Egyptian gods ceased to have any satisfactory political significance, this craving for a life of compensations here-after, intensified.

ISIS AND HORUS

After the Greek conquest, the new city of Alexandria became the centre of Egyptian religious life, and indeed of the religious life of the whole Hellenic world. A great temple, the Serapeum, was set up by Ptolemy I at which a sort of trinity of gods was worshipped. These were Serapis (who was Osiris-Apis rechristened), Isis and Horus. These were not regarded as separate gods but as three aspects of one god, and Serapis was identified with the Greek Zeus, the Roman Jupiter and the Persian sun-god. This worship spread wherever the Hellenic influence extended, even into North India and Western China. The idea of immortality, an immortality of compensations and consolation, was eagerly received by a world in which the common life was hopelessly wretched. Serapis was called “the saviour of souls.” “After death,” said the hymns of that time, “we are still in the care of his providence.” Isis attracted many devotees. Her images stood in her temples, as Queen of Heaven, bearing the infant Horus in her arms. Candles were burnt before her, votive offerings were made to her, shaven priests consecrated to celibacy waited on her altar.

The rise of the Roman empire opened the western European world to this growing cult. The temples of Serapis-Isis, the chanting of the priests and the hope of immortal life, followed the Roman standards to Scotland and Holland. But there were many rivals to the Serapis-Isis religion. Prominent among these was Mithraism. This was a religion of Persian origin, and it centred upon some now forgotten mysteries about Mithras sacrificing a sacred and benevolent bull. Here we seem to have something more primordial than the complicated and sophisticated Serapis-Isis beliefs. We are carried back directly to the blood sacrifices of the heliolithic stage in human culture. The bull upon the Mithraic monuments always bleeds copiously from a wound in its side, and

from this blood springs new life. The votary to Mithraism actually bathed in the blood of the sacrificial bull. At his initiation he went beneath a scaffolding upon which a bull was killed so that the blood could actually run down on him.

Both these religions, and the same is true of many other of the numerous parallel cults that sought the allegiance of the slaves and citizens under the earlier Roman emperors, are personal religions. They aim at personal salvation and personal immortality. The older religions were not personal like that; they were social. The older fashion of divinity was god or goddess of the city first or of the state, and only secondarily of the individual. The sacrifices were a public and not a private function. They concerned collective practical needs in this world in which we live. But the Greeks first and now the Romans had pushed religion out of politics. Guided by the Egyptian tradition religion had retreated to the other world.

BUST OF THE EMPEROR COMMODUS, A.D. 180-192
Represented as the God Mithras, Roman, Circa A.D. 190
(In the British Museum)

These new private immortality religions took all the heart and emotion out of the old state religions, but they did not actually replace them. A typical city under the earlier Roman emperors would have a number of temples to all sorts of gods. There might be a temple to Jupiter of the Capitol, the great god of Rome, and there would probably be one to the reigning Cæsar. For the Cæsars had learnt from the Pharaohs the possibility of being gods. In such temples a cold and stately political worship went on; one would go and make an offering and burn a pinch of incense to show one's loyalty. But it would be to the temple of Isis, the dear Queen of Heaven, one would go with the burthen of one's private troubles for advice and relief. There might be local and eccentric gods. Seville, for example, long affected the worship of the old Carthaginian Venus. In a cave or an underground temple there would certainly be an altar to

Mithras, attended by legionaries and slaves. And probably also there would be a synagogue where the Jews gathered to read their Bible and uphold their faith in the unseen God of all the Earth.

Sometimes there would be trouble with the Jews about the political side of the state religion. They held that their God was a jealous God intolerant of idolatry, and they would refuse to take part in the public sacrifices to Cæsar. They would not even salute the Roman standards for fear of idolatry.

In the East long before the time of Buddha there had been ascetics, men and women who gave up most of the delights of life, who repudiated marriage and property and sought spiritual powers and an escape from the stresses and mortifications of the world in abstinence, pain and solitude. Buddha himself set his face against ascetic extravagances, but many of his disciples followed a monkish life of great severity. Obscure Greek cults practised similar disciplines even to the extent of self-mutilation. Asceticism appeared in the Jewish communities of Judea and Alexandria also in the first century B.C. Communities of men abandoned the world and gave themselves to austerities and mystical contemplation. Such was the sect of the Essenes. Throughout the first and second centuries A.D. there was an almost world-wide resort to such repudiations of life, a universal search for "salvation" from the distresses of the time. The old sense of an established order, the old confidence in priest and temple and law and custom, had gone. Amidst the prevailing slavery, cruelty, fear, anxiety, waste, display and hectic self-indulgence, went this epidemic of self- disgust and mental insecurity, this agonized search for peace even at the price of renunciation and voluntary suffering. This it was that filled the Serapeum with weeping penitents and brought the converts into the gloom and gore of the Mithraic cave.

XXXVII
THE TEACHING OF JESUS

It was while Augustus Cæsar, the first of the Emperors, was reigning in Rome that Jesus who is the Christ of Christianity was born in Judea. In his name a religion was to arise which was destined to become the official religion of the entire Roman Empire.

Now it is on the whole more convenient to keep history and theology apart. A large proportion of the Christian world believes that Jesus was an incarnation of that God of all the Earth whom the Jews first recognized. The historian, if he is to remain historian, can neither accept nor deny that interpretation. Materially Jesus appeared in the likeness of a man, and it is as a man that the historian must deal with him.

He appeared in Judea in the reign of Tiberius Cæsar. He was a prophet. He preached after the fashion of the preceding Jewish prophets. He was a man of about thirty, and we are in the profoundest ignorance of his manner of life before his preaching began.

Our only direct sources of information about the life and teaching of Jesus are the four Gospels. All four agree in giving us a picture of a very definite personality. One is obliged to say, “Here was a man. This could not have been invented.”

But just as the personality of Gautama Buddha has been distorted and obscured by the stiff squatting figure, the gilded idol of later Buddhism, so one feels that the lean and strenuous personality of Jesus is much wronged by the unreality and conventionality that a mistaken reverence has imposed upon his figure in modern Christian art. Jesus was a penniless teacher, who wandered about the dusty sun-bit country of Judea, living upon casual gifts of food; yet he is always represented clean, combed and sleek, in spotless raiment, erect and with something motionless about him as though he was gliding through the air. This alone has made him unreal and incredible to many people who cannot distinguish the core of the story from the ornamental and unwise additions of the unintelligently devout.

We are left, if we do strip this record of these difficult accessories, with the figure of a being, very human, very earnest and passionate, capable of swift anger, and teaching a new and simple and profound doctrine—namely, the universal loving Fatherhood of God and the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven. He was clearly a person—to use a common phrase—of intense personal magnetism. He attracted followers and filled them with love and courage. Weak and ailing people were heartened and healed by his presence. Yet he was probably of a delicate physique, because of the swiftness with which he died under the pains of crucifixion. There is a tradition that he fainted when, according to the custom, he was made to bear his cross to the place of execution. He went about the country for three years spreading his doctrine and then he came to Jerusalem and was accused of trying to set up a strange kingdom in Judea; he was tried upon this charge, and crucified together with two thieves. Long before these two were dead his sufferings were over.

The doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven, which was the main teaching of Jesus, is certainly one of the most revolutionary doctrines that ever stirred and changed human thought. It is small wonder if the world of that time failed to grasp its full significance, and recoiled in dismay from even a half apprehension of its tremendous challenges to the established habits and institutions of mankind. For the doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven, as Jesus seems to have preached it, was no less than a bold and uncompromising demand for a complete change and cleansing of the life of our

struggling race, an utter cleansing, without and within. To the gospels the reader must go for all that is preserved of this tremendous teaching; here we are only concerned with the jar of its impact upon established ideas.

The Jews were persuaded that God, the one God of the whole world, was a righteous god, but they also thought of him as a trading god who had made a bargain with their Father Abraham about them, a very good bargain indeed for them, to bring them at last to predominance in the earth. With dismay and anger they heard Jesus sweeping away their dear securities. God, he taught, was no bargainer; there were no chosen people and no favourites in the Kingdom of Heaven. God was the loving father of all life, as incapable of showing favour as the universal sun. And all men were brothers—sinners alike and beloved sons alike—of this divine father. In the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus cast scorn upon that natural tendency we all obey, to glorify our own people and to minimize the righteousness of other creeds and other races. In the parable of the labourers he thrust aside the obstinate claim of the Jews to have a special claim upon God. All whom God takes into the kingdom, he taught, God serves alike; there is no distinction in his treatment, because there is no measure to his bounty. From all moreover, as the parable of the buried talent witnesses, and as the incident of the widow's mite enforces, he demands the utmost. There are no privileges, no rebates and no excuses in the Kingdom of Heaven.

EARLY IDEAL PORTRAIT, IN GILDED GLASS, OF JESUS CHRIST IN WHICH THE TRADITIONAL BEARD IS NOT SHOWN

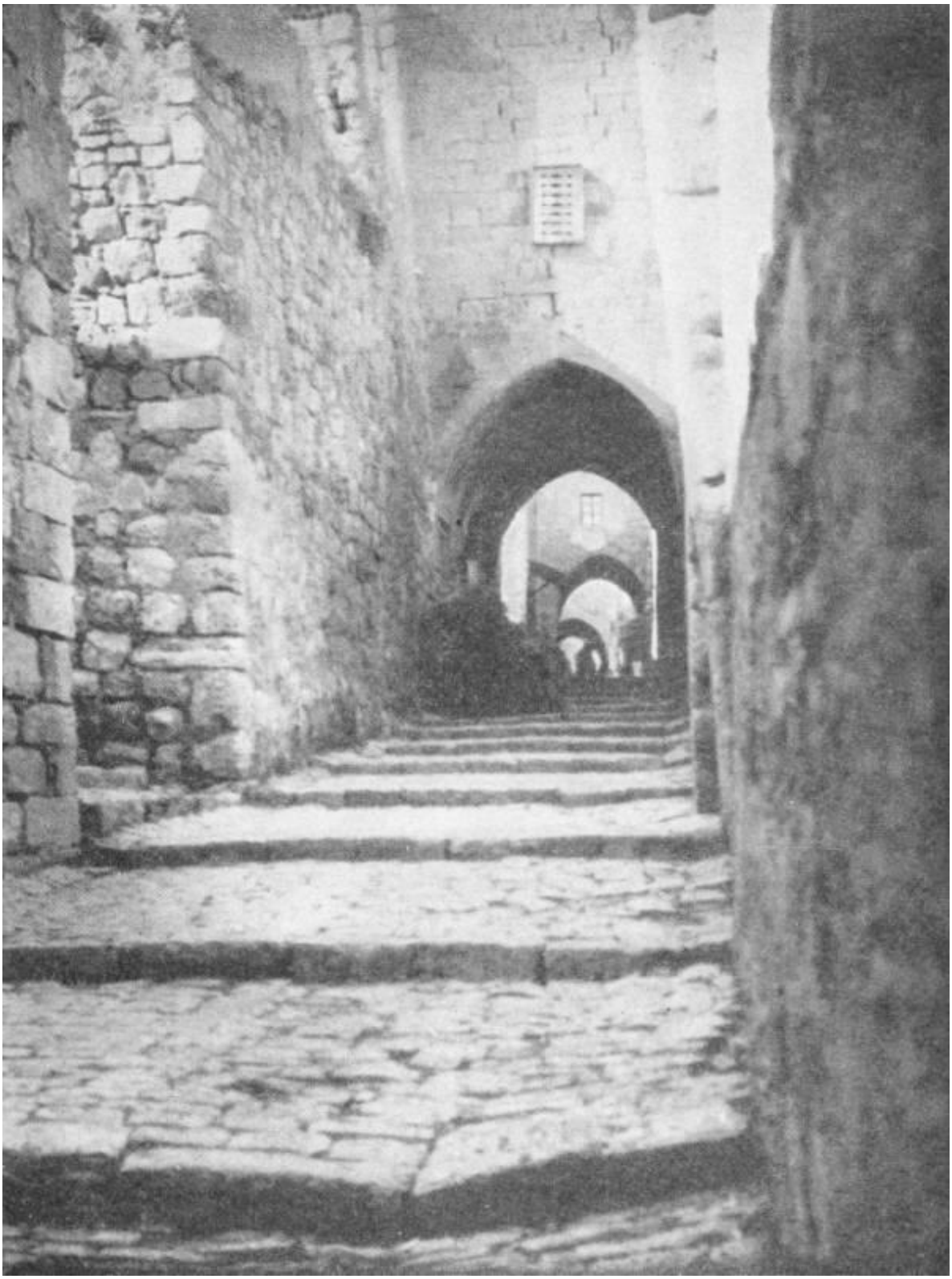
But it is not only the intense tribal patriotism of the Jews that Jesus outraged. They were a people of intense family loyalty, and he would have swept away all the narrow and restrictive family affections in the great flood of the love of God. The whole kingdom of Heaven was to be the family of his followers. We are told that, “While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hands towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.? [1]

THE ROAD FROM NAZARETH TO TIBERIAS
Photo: Fannaway

And not only did Jesus strike at patriotism and the bonds of family loyalty in the name of God's universal fatherhood and brotherhood of all mankind, but it is clear that his teaching condemned all the gradations of the economic system, all private wealth, and personal advantages. All men belonged to the kingdom; all their possessions belonged to the kingdom; the righteous life for all men, the only righteous life, was the service of God's will with all that we had, with all that we were. Again and again he denounced private riches and the reservation of any private life.

DAVID'S TOWER AND WALL OF JERUSALEM
Photo: Fannaway

"And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said to him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these things have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great possessions.



A STREET IN JERUSALEM
Along such a thoroughfare Christ carried his cross to the place of execution
Photo: Fannaway

“And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answered again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the Kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.” [2]

Moreover, in his tremendous prophecy of this kingdom which was to make all men one together in God, Jesus had small patience for the bargaining righteousness of formal religion. Another large part of his recorded utterances is aimed against the meticulous observance of the rules of the pious career. “Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them, Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written,

“This people honoureth me with their lips,

“But their heart is far from me.

“Howbeit in vain do they worship me,

“Teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

“For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.” [3]

It was not merely a moral and a social revolution that Jesus proclaimed; it is clear from a score of indications that his teaching had a political bent of the plainest sort. It is true that he said his kingdom was not of this world, that it was in the hearts of men and not upon a throne; but it is equally clear that wherever and in what measure his kingdom was set up in the hearts of men, the outer world would be in that measure revolutionized and made new.

Whatever else the deafness and blindness of his hearers may have missed in his utterances, it is plain they did not miss his resolve to revolutionize the world. The whole tenor of the opposition to him and the circumstances of his trial and execution show clearly that to his contemporaries he seemed to propose plainly, and did propose plainly, to change and fuse and enlarge all human life.

In view of what he plainly said, is it any wonder that all who were rich and prosperous felt a horror of strange things, a swimming of their world at his teaching? He was dragging out all the little private reservations they had made from social service into the light of a universal religious life. He was like some terrible moral huntsman digging mankind out of the snug burrows in which they had lived hitherto. In the white blaze of this kingdom of his there was to be no property, no privilege, no pride and precedence; no motive indeed and no reward but love. Is it any wonder that men were dazzled and blinded and cried out against him? Even his disciples cried out when he would not spare them the light. Is it any wonder that the priests realized that between this man and themselves there was no choice but that he or priestcraft should perish? Is it any wonder that the Roman soldiers, confronted and amazed by something soaring over their comprehension and threatening all their disciplines, should take refuge in wild laughter, and crown him with thorns and robe him in purple and make a mock Cæsar of him? For to take him seriously was to enter upon a strange and alarming life, to abandon habits, to control instincts and impulses, to essay an incredible happiness. . . .

[1] Matt. xii, 46-50.

[2] Mark x, 17-25.

[3] Mark vii, 1-9.

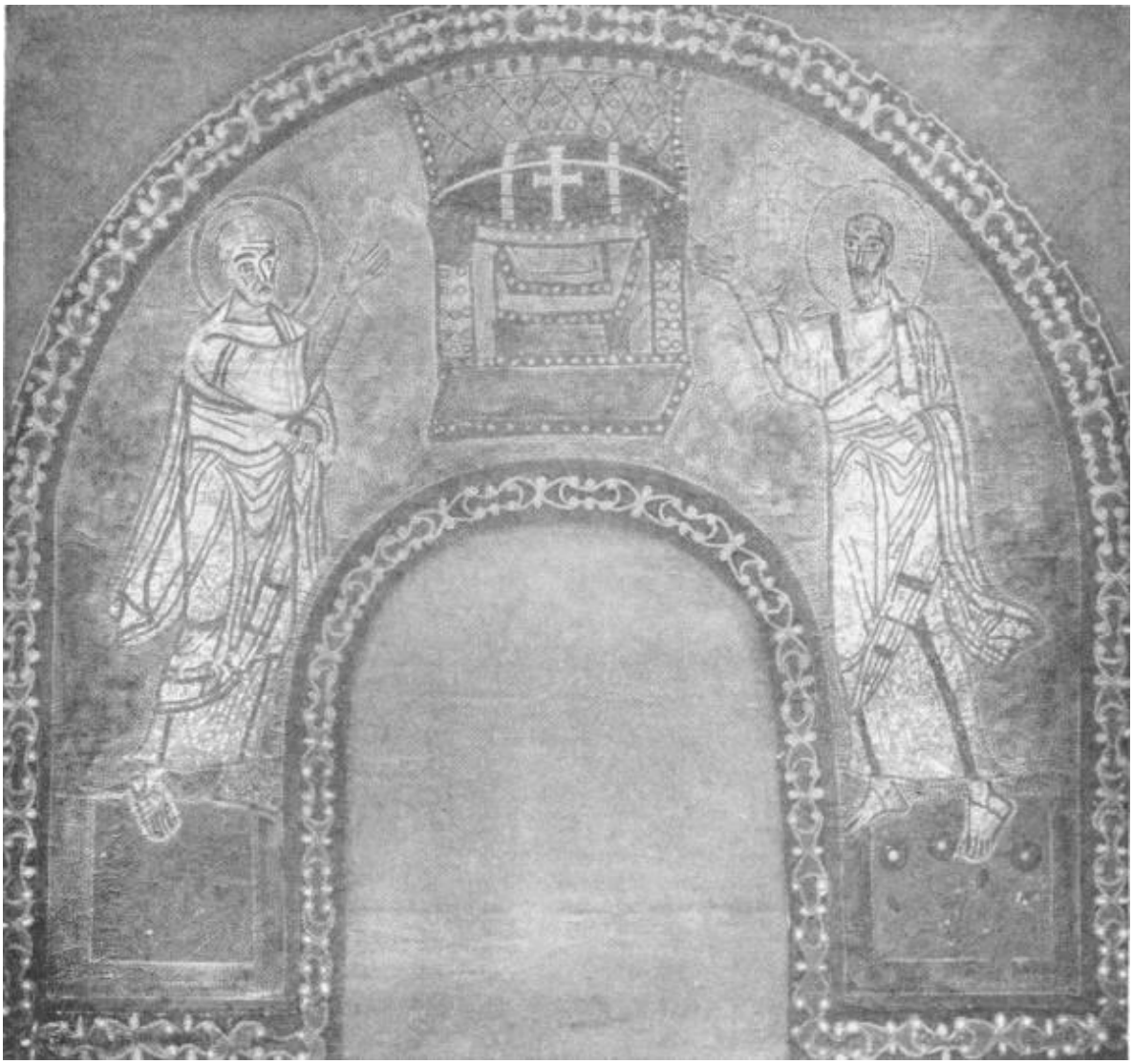
XXXVIII
THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINAL CHRISTIANITY

In the four gospels we find the personality and teachings of Jesus but very little of the dogmas of the Christian church. It is in the epistles, a series of writings by the immediate followers of Jesus, that the broad lines of Christian belief are laid down.

Chief among the makers of Christian doctrine was St. Paul. He had never seen Jesus nor heard him preach. Paul's name was originally Saul, and he was conspicuous at first as an active persecutor of the little band of disciples after the crucifixion. Then he was suddenly converted to Christianity, and he changed his name to Paul. He was a man of great intellectual vigour and deeply and passionately interested in the religious movements of the time. He was well versed in Judaism and in the Mithraism and Alexandrian religion of the day. He carried over many of their ideas and terms of expression into Christianity. He did very little to enlarge or develop the original teaching of Jesus, the teaching of the Kingdom of Heaven. But he taught that Jesus was not only the promised Christ, the promised leader of the Jews, but also that his

death was a sacrifice, like the deaths of the ancient sacrificial victims of the primordial civilizations, for the redemption of mankind.

When religions flourish side by side they tend to pick up each other's ceremonial and other outward peculiarities. Buddhism, for example, in China has now almost the same sort of temples and priests and uses as Taoism, which follows in the teachings of Lao Tse. Yet the original teachings of Buddhism and Taoism were almost flatly opposed. And it reflects no doubt or discredit upon the essentials of Christian teaching that it took over not merely such formal things as the shaven priest, the votive offering, the altars, candles, chanting and images of the Alexandrian and Mithraic faiths, but adopted even their devotional phrases and their theological ideas. All these religions were flourishing side by side with many less prominent cults. Each was seeking adherents, and there must have been a constant going and coming of converts between them. Sometimes one or other would be in favour with the government. But Christianity was regarded with more suspicion than its rivals because, like the Jews, its adherents would not perform acts of worship to the God Cæsar. This made it a seditious religion, quite apart from the revolutionary spirit of the teachings of Jesus himself.



MOSAIC OF SS. PETER AND PAUL POINTING TO A THRONE, ON GOLD BACKGROUND
From the Ninth Century original, in the Church of Sta. Prassede, Rome
(In the Victoria and Albert Museum)

St. Paul familiarized his disciples with the idea that Jesus, like Osiris, was a god who died to rise again and give men immortality. And presently the spreading Christian community was greatly torn by complicated theological disputes about the relationship of this God Jesus to God the Father of Mankind. The Arians taught that Jesus was divine, but distant from and inferior to the Father. The Sabellians taught that Jesus was merely an aspect of the Father, and that God was Jesus and Father at the same time just as a man may be a father and an artificer at the same time; and the Trinitarians taught a more subtle doctrine that God was both one and three, Father,

Son and Holy Spirit. For a time it seemed that Arianism would prevail over its rivals, and then after disputes, violence and wars, the Trinitarian formula became the accepted formula of all Christendom. It may be found in its completest expression in the Athanasian Creed.

We offer no comment on these controversies here. They do not sway history as the personal teaching of Jesus sways history. The personal teaching of Jesus does seem to mark a new phase in the moral and spiritual life of our race. Its insistence upon the universal Fatherhood of God and the implicit brotherhood of all men, its insistence upon the sacredness of every human personality as a living temple of God, was to have the profoundest effect upon all the subsequent social and political life of mankind. With Christianity, with the spreading teachings of Jesus, a new respect appears in the world for man as man. It may be true, as hostile critics of Christianity have urged, that St.. Paul preached obedience to slaves, but it is equally true that the whole spirit of the teachings of Jesus preserved in the gospels was against the subjugation of man by man. And still more distinctly was Christianity opposed to such outrages upon human dignity as the gladiatorial combats in the arena.

THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST
(Sixth Century Ivory Panel in the British Museum)

Throughout the first two centuries after Christ, the Christian religion spread throughout the Roman Empire, weaving together an ever-growing multitude of converts into a new community of ideas and will. The attitude of the emperors varied between hostility and toleration. There were attempts to suppress this new faith in both the second and third centuries; and finally in 303 and the following years a great persecution under the Emperor Diocletian. The considerable accumulations of Church property were seized, all bibles and religious writings were confiscated and destroyed, Christians were put out of the protection of the law and many executed. The destruction of the books is particularly notable. It shows how the power of the

written word in holding together the new faith was appreciated by the authorities. These “book religions,” Christianity and Judaism, were religions that educated. Their continued existence depended very largely on people being able to read and understand their doctrinal ideas. The older religions had made no such appeal to the personal intelligence. In the ages of barbaric confusion that were now at hand in western Europe it was the Christian church that was mainly instrumental in preserving the tradition of learning.

The persecution of Diocletian failed completely to suppress the growing Christian community. In many provinces it was ineffective because the bulk of the population and many of the officials were Christian. In 317 an edict of toleration was issued by the associated Emperor Galerius, and in 324 Constantine the Great, a friend and on his deathbed a baptized convert to Christianity, became sole ruler of the Roman world. He abandoned all divine pretensions and put Christian symbols on the shields and banners of his troops.

In a few years Christianity was securely established as the official religion of the empire. The competing religions disappeared or were absorbed with extraordinary celerity, and in 300 Theodosius the Great caused the great statue of Jupiter Serapis at Alexandria to be destroyed. From the outset of the fifth century onward the only priests or temples in the Roman Empire were Christian priests and temples.

XXXIX
THE BARBARIANS BREAK THE EMPIRE INTO EAST AND WEST

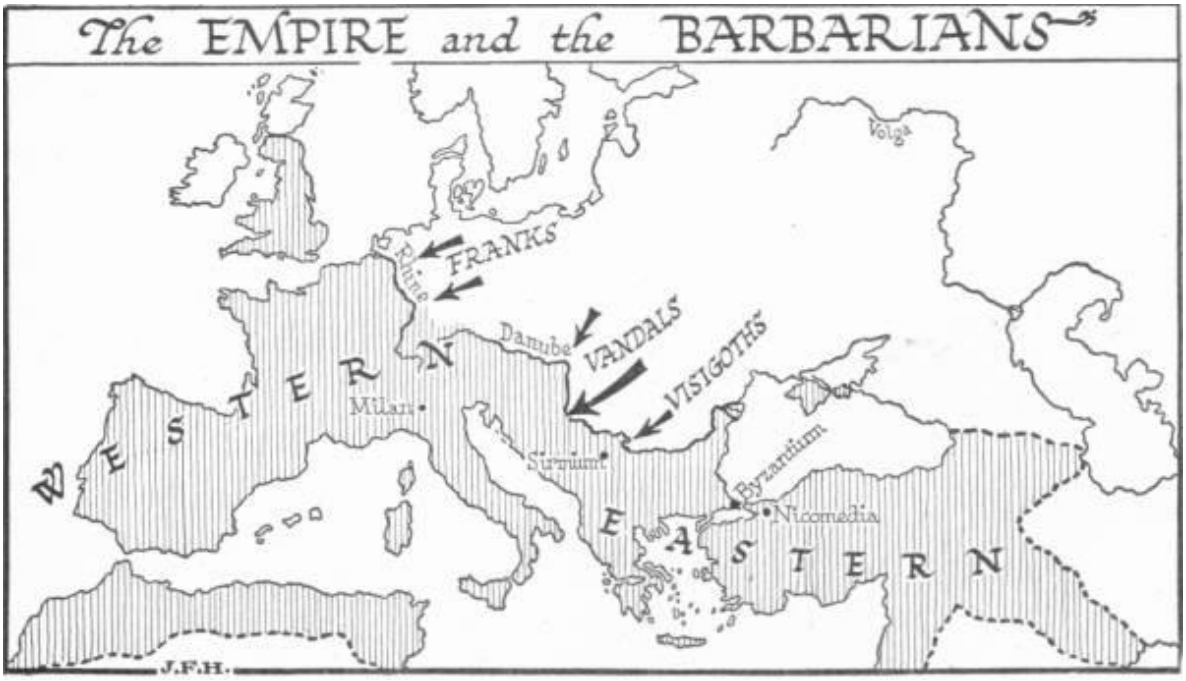
Throughout the third century the Roman Empire, decaying socially and disintegrating morally, faced the barbarians. The emperors of this period were fighting military autocrats, and the capital of the empire shifted with the necessities of their military policy. Now the imperial headquarters would be at Milan in north Italy, now in what is now Serbia at Sirmium or Nish, now in Nicomedia in Asia Minor. Rome halfway down Italy was too far from the centre of interest to be a convenient imperial seat. It was a declining city. Over most of the empire peace still prevailed and men went about without arms. The armies continued to be the sole repositories of power; the emperors, dependent on their legions, became more and more autocratic to the rest of the empire and their state more and more like that of the Persian and other oriental monarchs. Diocletian assumed a royal diadem and oriental robes.

All along the imperial frontier, which ran roughly along the Rhine and Danube, enemies were now pressing. The Franks and other German tribes had come up to the Rhine. In north Hungary were the Vandals; in what was once Dacia and is now Roumania, the Visigoths or West Goths. Behind these in south Russia were the East

Goths or Ostrogoths, and beyond these again in the Volga region the Alans. But now Mongolian peoples were forcing their way towards Europe. The Huns were already exacting tribute from the Alans and Ostrogoths and pushing them to the west.

In Asia the Roman frontiers were crumpling back under the push of a renascent Persia. This new Persia, the Persia of the Sassenid kings, was to be a vigorous and on the whole a successful rival of the Roman Empire in Asia for the next three centuries.

A glance at the map of Europe will show the reader the peculiar weakness of the empire. The river Danube comes down to within a couple of hundred miles of the Adriatic Sea in the region of what is now Bosnia and Serbia. It makes a square re-entrant angle there. The Romans never kept their sea communications in good order, and this two hundred mile strip of land was their line of communication between the western Latin-speaking part of the empire and the eastern Greek-speaking portion. Against this square angle of the Danube the barbarian pressure was greatest. When they broke through there it was inevitable that the empire should fall into two parts.



A more vigorous empire might have thrust forward and reconquered Dacia, but the Roman Empire lacked any such vigour. Constantine the Great was certainly a monarch of great devotion and intelligence. He beat back a raid of the Goths from just these vital Balkan regions, but he had no force to carry the frontier across the Danube. He was too pre-occupied with the internal weaknesses of the empire. He brought the solidarity and moral force of Christianity to revive the spirit of the declining empire, and he decided to create a new permanent capital at Byzantium upon the Hellespont.

This new-made Byzantium, which was re-christened Constantinople in his honour, was still building when he died. Towards the end of his reign occurred a remarkable transaction. The Vandals, being pressed by the Goths, asked to be received into the Roman Empire. They were assigned lands in Pannonia, which is now that part of Hungary west of the Danube, and their fighting men became nominally legionaries. But these new legionaries remained under their own chiefs. Rome failed to digest them.

Constantine died working to reorganize his great realm, and soon the frontiers were ruptured again and the Visigoths came almost to Constantinople. They defeated the Emperor Valens at Adrianople and made a settlement in what is now Bulgaria, similar to the settlement of the Vandals in Pannonia. Nominally they were subjects of the emperor, practically they were conquerors.

CONSTANTINE'S PILLAR, CONSTANTINOPLE
Photo: Sebah & Foaillier

From 379 to 395 A.D. reigned the Emperor Theodosius the Great, and while he reigned the empire was still formally intact. Over the armies of Italy and Pannonia presided Stilicho, a Vandal, over the armies in the Balkan peninsula, Alaric, a Goth. When Theodosius died at the close of the fourth century he left two sons. Alaric supported one of these, Arcadius, in Constantinople, and Stilicho the other, Honorius, in Italy. In

other words Alaric and Stilicho fought for the empire with the princes as puppets. In the course of their struggle Alaric marched into Italy and after a short siege took Rome (410 A.D.).

The opening half of the fifth century saw the whole of the Roman Empire in Europe the prey of robber armies of barbarians. It is difficult to visualize the state of affairs in the world at that time. Over France, Spain, Italy and the Balkan peninsula, the great cities that had flourished under the early empire still stood, impoverished, partly depopulated and falling into decay. Life in them must have been shallow, mean and full of uncertainty. Local officials asserted their authority and went on with their work with such conscience as they had, no doubt in the name of a now remote and inaccessible emperor. The churches went on, but usually with illiterate priests. There was little reading and much superstition and fear. But everywhere except where looters had destroyed them, books and pictures and statuary and such-like works of art were still to be found.

The life of the countryside had also degenerated. Everywhere this Roman world was much more weedy and untidy than it had been. In some regions war and pestilence had brought the land down to the level of a waste. Roads and forests were infested with robbers. Into such regions the barbarians marched, with little or no opposition, and set up their chiefs as rulers, often with Roman official titles. If they were half civilized barbarians they would give the conquered districts tolerable terms, they would take possession of the towns, associate and intermarry, and acquire (with an accent) the Latin speech; but the Jutes, the Angles and Saxons who submerged the Roman province of Britain were agriculturalists and had no use for towns, they seem to have swept south Britain clear of the Romanized population and they replaced the language by their own Teutonic dialects, which became at last English.

BASE OF THE "OBELISK OF THEODOSIUS," CONSTANTINOPLE
The obelisk of Thothmes, taken from Egypt to Constantinople by Theodosius and placed upon the pedestal her shown; an interesting example of early Byzantine art. The complete obelisk is seen on page 239.
Photo: Sebah & Foaillier

It is impossible in the space at our disposal to trace the movements of all the various German and Slavonic tribes as they went to and fro in the disorganized empire in search of plunder and a pleasant home. But let the Vandals serve as an example. They came into history in east Germany. They settled as we have told in Pannonia. Thence they moved somewhen about 425 A.D. through the intervening provinces to Spain. There they found Visigoths from South Russia and other German tribes setting up dukes and kings. From Spain the Vandals under Genseric sailed for North Africa (429), captured Carthage (439), and built a fleet. They secured the mastery of the sea and captured and pillaged Rome (455), which had recovered very imperfectly from her capture and looting by Alaric half a century earlier. Then the Vandals made themselves masters of Sicily, Corsica, Sardinia and most of the other islands of the western Mediterranean. They made, in fact, a sea empire very similar in its extent to the sea empire of Carthage seven hundred odd years before. They were at the climax of their power about 477. They were a mere handful of conquerors holding all this country. In the next century almost all their territory had been reconquered for the empire of Constantinople during a transitory blaze of energy under Justinian I.

The story of the Vandals is but one sample of a host of similar adventures. But now there was coming into the European world the least kindred and most redoubtable of all these devastators, the Mongolian Huns or Tartars, a yellow people active and able, such as the western world had never before encountered.

XL
THE HUNS AND THE END OF THE WESTERN EMPIRE

This appearance of a conquering Mongolian people in Europe may be taken to mark a new stage in human history. Until the last century or so before the Christian era, the Mongol and the Nordic peoples had not been in close touch. Far away in the frozen lands beyond the northern forests the Lapps, a Mongolian people, had drifted westward as far as Lapland, but they played no part in the main current of history. For thousands of years the western world carried on the dramatic interplay of the Aryan, Semitic and fundamental brunette peoples with very little interference (except for an Ethiopian invasion of Egypt or so) either from the black peoples to the south or from the Mongolian world in the far East.

It is probable that there were two chief causes for the new westward drift of the nomadic Mongolians. One was the consolidation of the great empire of China, its extension northward and the increase of its population during the prosperous period of the Han dynasty. The other was some process of climatic change; a lesser rainfall that abolished swamps and forests perhaps, or a greater rainfall that extended grazing

over desert steppes, or even perhaps both these processes going on in different regions but which anyhow facilitated a westward migration. A third contributary cause was the economic wretchedness, internal decay and falling population of the Roman Empire. The rich men of the later Roman Republic, and then the tax-gatherers of the military emperors had utterly consumed its vitality. So we have the factors of thrust, means and opportunity. There was pressure from the east, rot in the west and an open road.

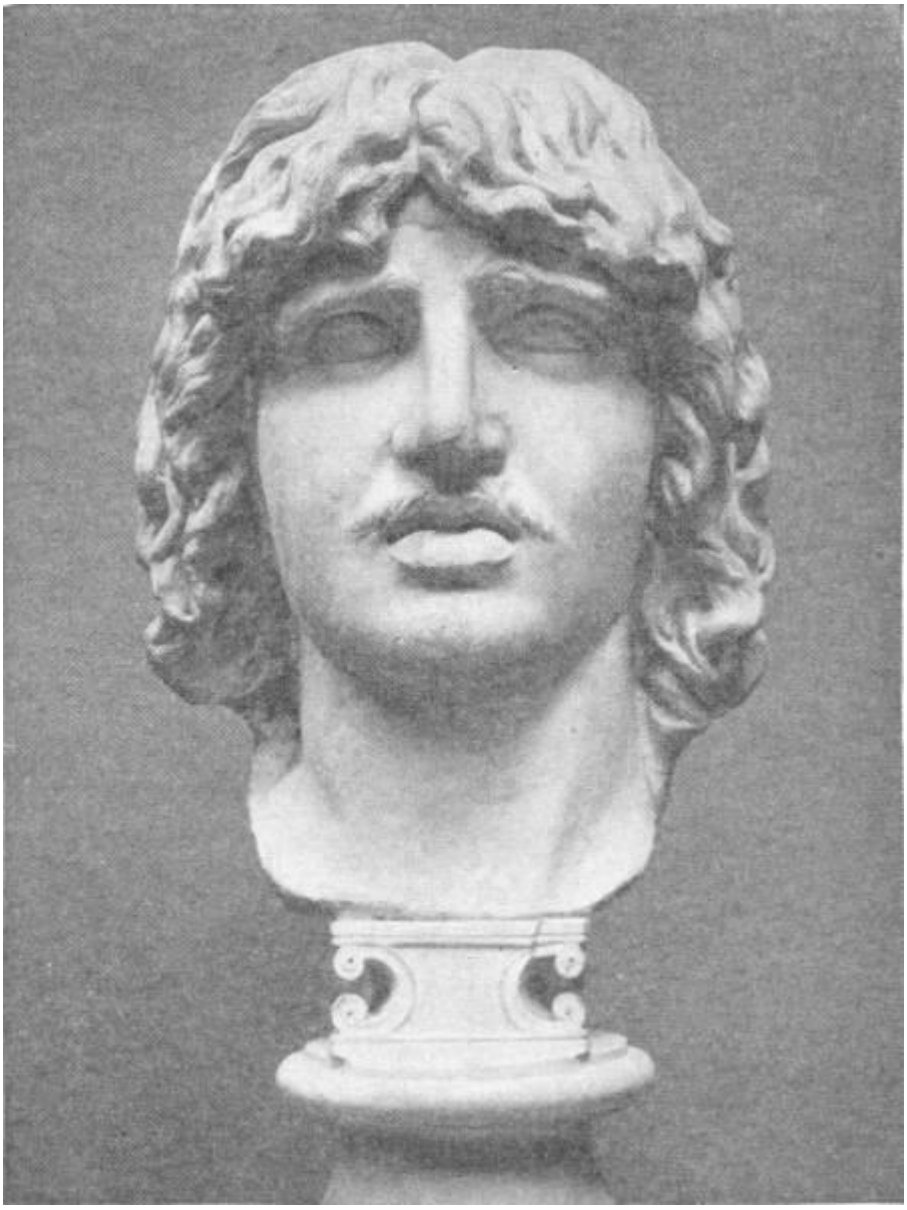
The Hun had reached the eastern boundaries of European Russia by the first century A.D., but it was not until the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. that these horsemen rose to predominance upon the steppes. The fifth century was the Hun's century. The first Huns to come into Italy were mercenary bands in the pay of Stilicho the Vandal, the master of Honorius. Presently they were in possession of Pannonia, the empty nest of the Vandals.

By the second quarter of the fifth century a great war chief had arisen among the Huns, Attila. We have only vague and tantalizing glimpses of his power. He ruled not only over the Huns but over a conglomerate of tributary Germanic tribes; his empire extended from the Rhine cross the plains into Central Asia. He exchanged ambassadors with China. His head camp was in the plain of Hungary east of the Danube. There he was visited by an envoy from Constantinople, Priscus, who has left us an account of his state. The way of living of these Mongols was very like the way of living of the primitive Aryans they had replaced. The common folk were in huts and tents; the chiefs lived in great stockaded timber halls. There were feasts and drinking and singing by the bards. The Homeric heroes and even the Macedonian companions of Alexander would probably have felt more at home in the camp-capital of Attila than they would have done in the cultivated and decadent court of Theodosius II, the son of Arcadius, who was then reigning in Constantinople.

For a time it seemed as though the nomads under the leadership of the Huns and Attila would play the same part towards the Græco-Roman civilization of the Mediterranean countries that the barbaric Greeks had played long ago to the Ægean civilization. It looked like history repeating itself upon a larger stage. But the Huns were much more wedded to the nomadic life than the early Greeks, who were rather migratory cattle farmers than true nomads. The Huns raided and plundered but did not settle.

For some years Attila bullied Theodosius as he chose. His armies devastated and looted right down to the walls of Constantinople, Gibbon says that he totally destroyed no less than seventy cities in the Balkan peninsula, and Theodosius bought

him off by payments of tribute and tried to get rid of him for good by sending secret agents to assassinate him. In 451 Attila turned his attention to the remains of the Latin- speaking half of the empire and invaded Gaul. Nearly every town in northern Gaul was sacked. Franks, Visigoths and the imperial forces united against him and he was defeated at Troyes in a vast dispersed battle in which a multitude of men, variously estimated as between 150,000 and 300,000, were killed. This checked him in Gaul, but it did not exhaust his enormous military resources. Next year he came into Italy by way of Venetia, burnt Aquileia and Padua and looted Milan.



HEAD OF BARBARIAN CHIEF
(In the British Museum)

Numbers of fugitives from these north Italian towns and particularly from Padua fled to islands in the lagoons at the head of the Adriatic and laid there the foundations of the city state of Venice, which was to become one of the greatest or the trading centres in the middle ages.

In 453 Attila died suddenly after a great feast to celebrate his marriage to a young woman, and at his death this plunder confederation of his fell to pieces. The actual Huns disappear from history, mixed into the surrounding more numerous Aryan-speaking populations. But these great Hun raids practically consummated the end of the Latin Roman Empire. After his death ten different emperors ruled in Rome in twenty years, set up by Vandal and other mercenary troops. The Vandals from Carthage took and sacked Rome in 455. Finally in 476 Odoacer, the chief of the barbarian troops, suppressed a Pannonian who was figuring as emperor under the impressive name of Romulus Augustulus, and informed the Court of Constantinople that there was no longer an emperor in the west. So ingloriously the Latin Roman Empire came to an end. In 493 Theodoric the Goth became King of Rome.

All over western and central Europe now barbarian chiefs were reigning as kings, dukes and the like, practically independent but for the most part professing some sort of shadowy allegiance to the emperor. There were hundreds and perhaps thousands of such practically independent brigand rulers. In Gaul, Spain and Italy and in Dacia the Latin speech still prevailed in locally distorted forms, but in Britain and east of the Rhine languages of the German group (or in Bohemia a Slavonic language, Czech) were the common speech. The superior clergy and a small remnant of other educated men read and wrote Latin. Everywhere life was insecure and property was held by the strong arm. Castles multiplied and roads fell into decay. The dawn of the sixth century was an age of division and of intellectual darkness throughout the western world. Had it not been for the monks and Christian missionaries Latin learning might have perished altogether.

Why had the Roman Empire grown and why had it so completely decayed? It grew because at first the idea of citizenship held it together. Throughout the days of the expanding republic, and even into the days of the early empire there remained a great number of men conscious of Roman citizenship, feeling it a privilege and an obligation to be a Roman citizen, confident of their rights under the Roman law and willing to make sacrifices in the name of Rome. The prestige of Rome as of something just and great and law- upholding spread far beyond the Roman boundaries. But even as early as the Punic wars the sense of citizenship was being undermined by the growth of wealth and slavery. Citizenship spread indeed but not the idea of citizenship.

The Roman Empire was after all a very primitive organization; it did not educate, did not explain itself to its increasing multitudes of citizens, did not invite their co-operation in its decisions. There was no network of schools to ensure a common understanding, no distribution of news to sustain collective activity. The adventurers who struggled for power from the days of Marius and Sulla onward had no idea of creating and calling in public opinion upon the imperial affairs. The spirit of citizenship died of starvation and no one observed it die. All empires, all states, all organizations of human society are, in the ultimate, things of understanding and will. There remained no will for the Roman Empire in the World and so it came to an end.

But though the Latin-speaking Roman Empire died in the fifth century, something else had been born within it that was to avail itself enormously of its prestige and tradition, and that was the Latin-speaking half of the Catholic Church. This lived while the empire died because it appealed to the minds and wills of men, because it had books and a great system of teachers and missionaries to hold it together, things stronger than any law or legions. Throughout the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. while the empire was decaying, Christianity was spreading to a universal dominion in Europe. It conquered its conquerors, the barbarians. When Attila seemed disposed to march on Rome, the patriarch of Rome intercepted him and did what no armies could do, turning him back by sheer moral force.

The Patriarch or Pope of Rome claimed to be the head of the entire Christian church. Now that there were no more emperors, he began to annex imperial titles and claims. He took the title of *pontifex maximus*, head sacrificial priest of the Roman dominion, the most ancient of all the titles that the emperors had enjoyed.

XLI
THE BYZANTINE AND SASSANID EMPIRES

The Greek-speaking eastern half of the Roman Empire showed much more political tenacity than the western half. It weathered the disasters of the fifth century A.D., which saw a complete and final breaking up of the original Latin Roman power. Attila bullied the Emperor Theodosius II and sacked and raided almost to the walls of Constantinople, but that city remained intact. The Nubians came down the Nile and looted Upper Egypt, but Lower Egypt and Alexandria were left still fairly prosperous. Most of Asia Minor was held against the Sassanid Persians.

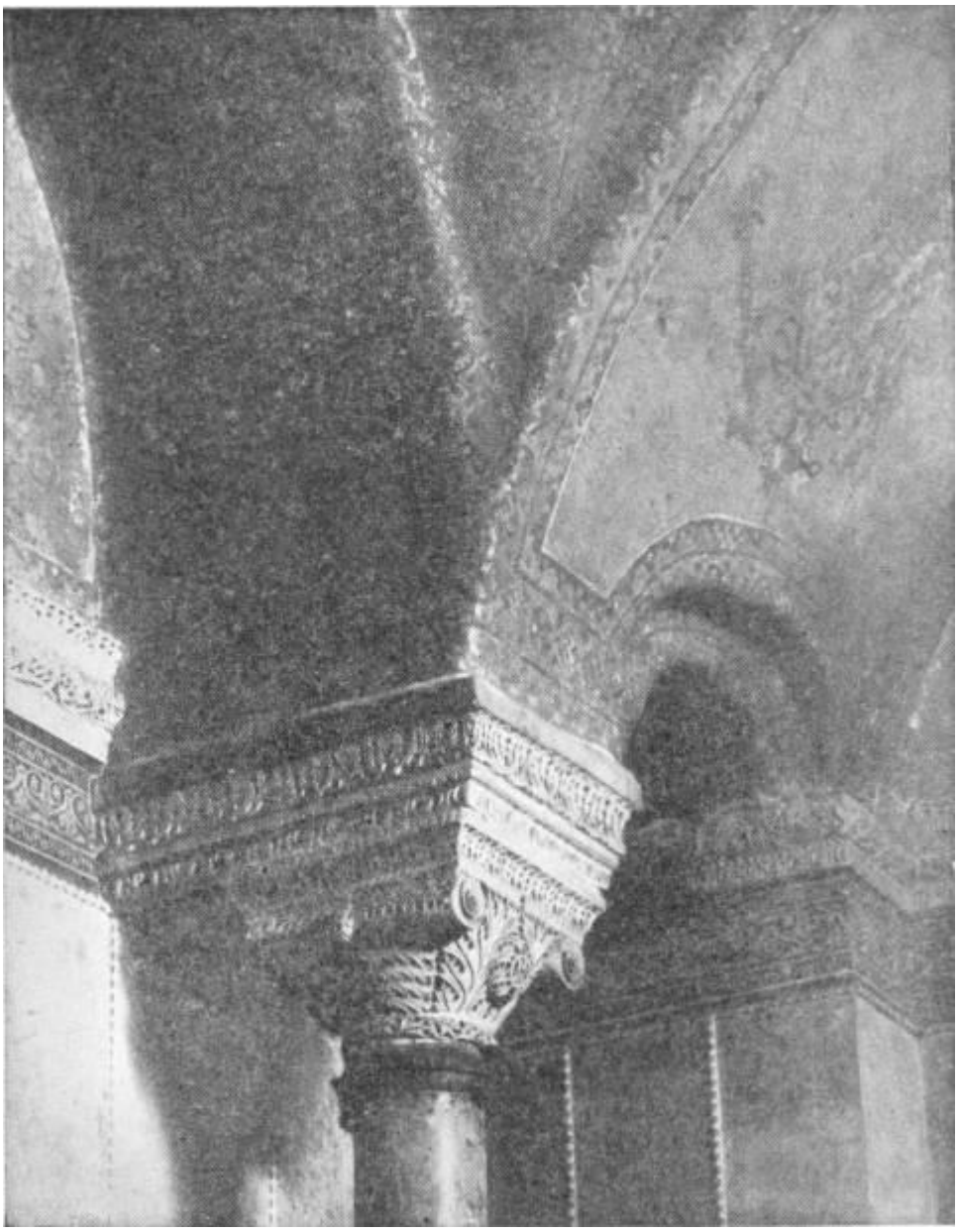
The sixth century, which was an age of complete darkness for the West, saw indeed a considerable revival of the Greek power. Justinian I (527-565) was a ruler of very great ambition and energy, and he was married to the Empress Theodora, a woman of quite equal capacity who had begun life as an actress. Justinian reconquered North Africa

from the Vandals and most of Italy from the Goths. He even regained the south of Spain. He did not limit his energies to naval and military enterprises. He founded a university, built the great church of Sta. Sophia in Constantinople and codified the Roman law. But in order to destroy a rival to his university foundation he closed the schools of philosophy in Athens, which had been going on in unbroken continuity from the days of Plato, that is to say for nearly a thousand years.

From the third century onwards the Persian Empire had been the steadfast rival of the Byzantine. The two empires kept Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt in a state of perpetual unrest and waste. In the first century A.D., these lands were still at a high level of civilization, wealthy and with an abundant population, but the continual coming and going of armies, massacres, looting and war taxation wore them down steadily until only shattered and ruinous cities remained upon a countryside of scattered peasants. In this melancholy process of impoverishment and disorder lower Egypt fared perhaps less badly than the rest of the world. Alexandria, like Constantinople, continued a dwindling trade between the east and the west.

THE CHURCH (NOW A MOSQUE) OF S. SOPHIA, CONSTANTINOPLE
The obelisk of Theodosius in in the foreground statue on left
Photo: Sebah & Foaillier

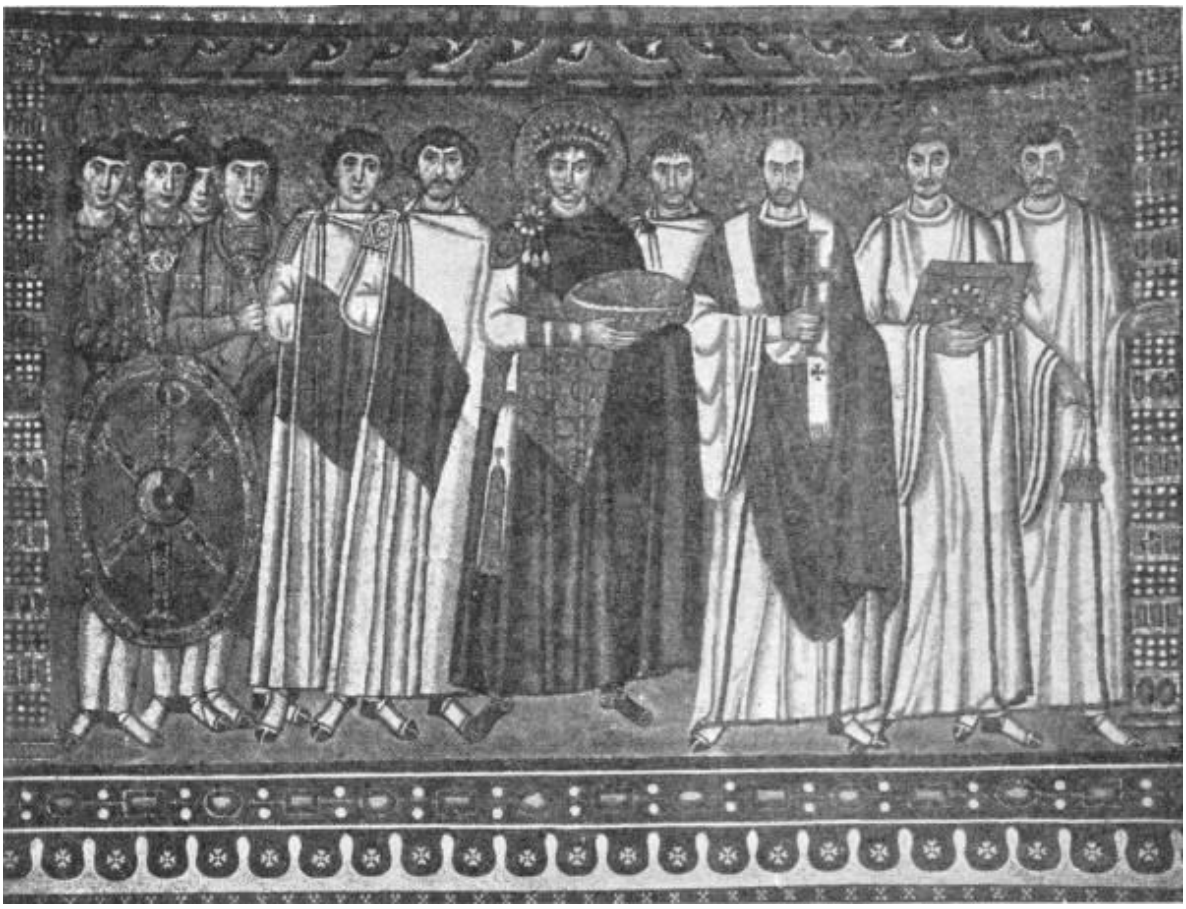
Science and political philosophy seemed dead now in both these warring and decaying empires. The last philosophers of Athens, until their suppression, preserved the texts of the great literature of the past with an infinite reverence and want of understanding. But there remained no class of men in the world, no free gentlemen with bold and independent habits of thought, to carry on the tradition of frank statement and enquiry embodied in these writings. The social and political chaos accounts largely for the disappearance of this class, but there was also another reason why the human intelligence was sterile and feverish during this age. In both Persia and Byzantium it was all age of intolerance. Both empires were religious empires in a new way, in a way that greatly hampered the free activities of the human mind.



THE MAGNIFICENT ROOF-WORK IN S. SOPHIA
Photo: Sebah & Foaillier

Of course the oldest empires in the world were religious empires, centring upon the worship of a god or of a god-king. Alexander was treated as a divinity and the Cæsars were gods in so much as they had altars and temples devoted to them and the offering of incense was made a test of loyalty to the Roman state. But these older religions were essentially religions of act and fact. They did not invade the mind. If a man offered his sacrifice and bowed to the god, he was left not only to think but to say practically whatever he liked about the affair. But the new sort of religions that had come into the world, and particularly Christianity, turned inward. These new faiths

demanded not simply conformity but understanding belief. Naturally fierce controversy ensued upon the exact meaning of the things believed. These new religions were creed religions. The world was confronted with a new word, Orthodoxy, and with a stern resolve to keep not only acts but speech and private thought within the limits of a set teaching. For to hold a wrong opinion, much more to convey it to other people, was no longer regarded as an intellectual defect but a moral fault that might condemn a soul to everlasting destruction.



THE RAVENNA PANEL, DEPICTING JUSTINIAN AND HIS COURT
Photo: Alinari

THE ROCK HEWN TEMPLE AT PETRA

Photo: Underwood & Underwood

Both Ardashir I who founded the Sassanid dynasty in the third century A.D., and Constantine the Great who reconstructed the Roman Empire in the fourth, turned to religious organizations for help, because in these organizations they saw a new means of using and controlling the wills of men. And already before the end of the fourth century both empires were persecuting free talk and religious innovation. In Persia Ardashir found the ancient Persian religion of Zoroaster (or Zarathushtra) with its priests and temples and a sacred fire that burnt upon its altars, ready for his purpose as a state religion. Before the end of the third century Zoroastrianism was persecuting Christianity, and in 277 A.D. Mani, the founder of a new faith, the Manichæans, was crucified and his body flayed. Constantinople, on its side, was busy hunting out Christian heresies. Manichæan ideas infected Christianity and had to be fought with the fiercest methods; in return ideas from Christianity affected the purity of the Zoroastrian doctrine. All ideas became suspect. Science, which demands before all things the free action of an untroubled mind, suffered a complete eclipse throughout this phase of intolerance.

War, the bitterest theology, and the usual vices of mankind constituted Byzantine life of those days. It was picturesque, it was romantic; it had little sweetness or light. When Byzantium and Persia were not fighting the barbarians from the north, they wasted Asia Minor and Syria in dreary and destructive hostilities. Even in close alliance these two empires would have found it a hard task to turn back the barbarians and recover their prosperity. The Turks or Tartars first come into history as the allies first of one power and then of another. In the sixth century the two chief antagonists were Justinian and Chosroes I; in the opening of the seventh the Emperor Heraclius was pitted against Chosroes II (580).

At first and until after Heraclius had become Emperor (610) Chosroes II carried all before him. He took Antioch, Damascus and Jerusalem and his armies reached Chalcedon, which is in Asia Minor over against Constantinople. In 619 he conquered Egypt. Then Heraclius pressed a counter attack home and routed a Persian army at Nineveh (627), although at that time there were still Persian troops at Chalcedon. In 628 Chosroes II was deposed and murdered by his son, Kavadh, and an inconclusive peace was made between the two exhausted empires.

Byzantium and Persia had fought their last war. But few people as yet dreamt of the storm that was even then gathering in the deserts to put an end for ever to this aimless, chronic struggle.

While Heraclius was restoring order in Syria a message reached him. It had been brought in to the imperial outpost at Bostra south of Damascus; it was in Arabic, an

obscure Semitic desert language, and it was read to the Emperor, if it reached him at all, by an interpreter. It was from someone who called himself “Muhammad the Prophet of God.” It called upon the Emperor to acknowledge the One True God and to serve him. What the Emperor said is not recorded.

A similar message came to Kavadh at Ctesiphon. He was annoyed, tore up the letter, and bade the messenger begone.

This Muhammad, it appeared, was a Bedouin leader whose headquarters were in the mean little desert town of Medina. He was preaching a new religion of faith in the One True God.

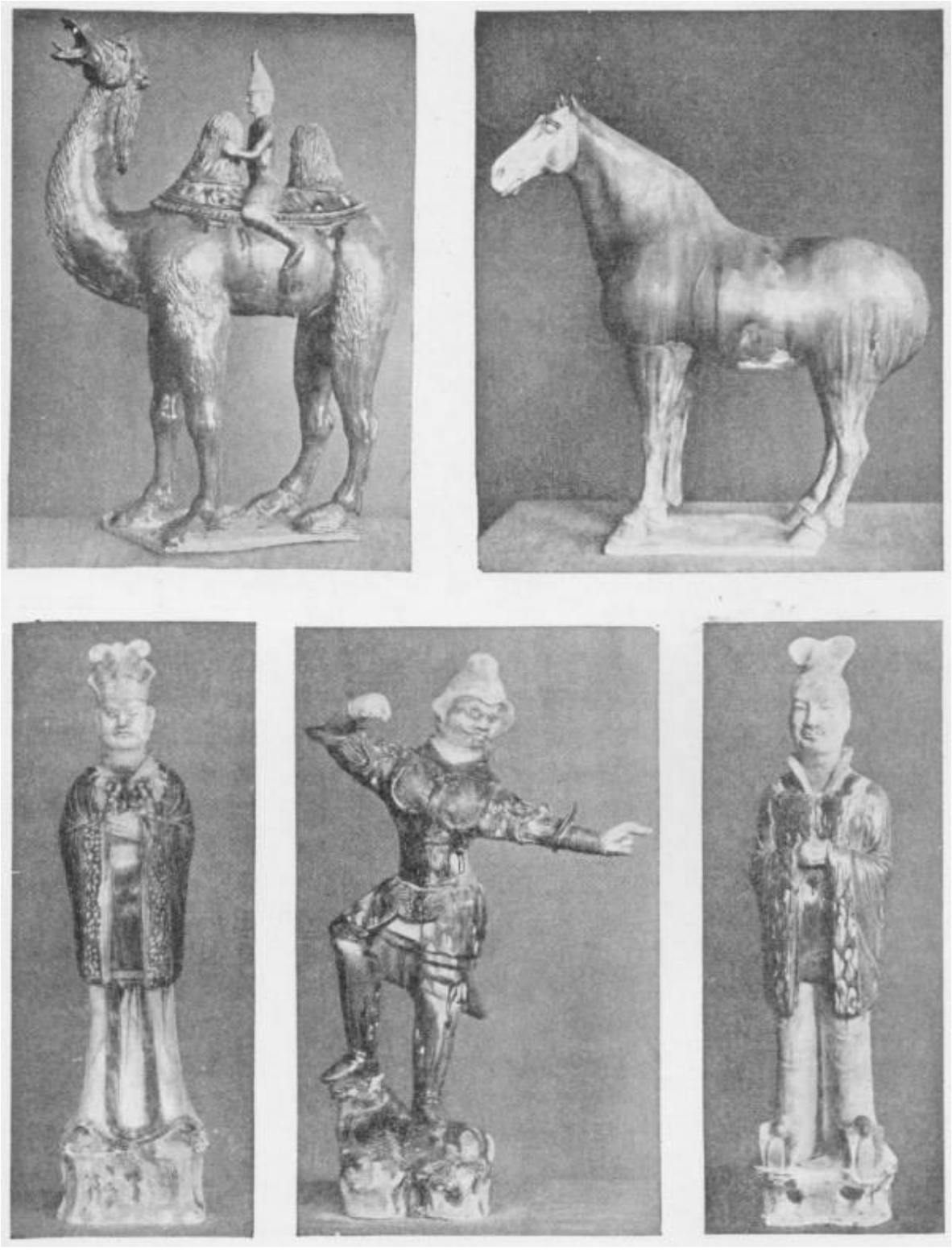
“Even so, O Lord!” he said; “rend thou his Kingdom from Kavadh.”

XLII
THE DYNASTIES OF SUY AND TANG IN CHINA

Throughout the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth centuries, there was a steady drift of Mongolian peoples westward. The Huns of Attila were merely precursors of this advance, which led at last to the establishment of Mongolian peoples in Finland, Esthonia, Hungary and Bulgaria, where their descendants, speaking languages akin to Turkish, survive to this day. The Mongolian nomads were, in fact, playing a role towards the Aryanized civilizations of Europe and Persia and India that the Aryans had played to the Ægean and Semitic civilizations ten or fifteen centuries before.

In Central Asia the Turkish peoples had taken root in what is now Western Turkestan, and Persia already employed many Turkish officials and Turkish mercenaries. The Parthians had gone out of history, absorbed into the general population of Persia. There were no more Aryan nomads in the history of Central Asia; Mongolian people had replaced them. The Turks became masters of Asia from China to the Caspian.

The same great pestilence at the end of the second century A.D. that had shattered the Roman Empire had overthrown the Han dynasty in China. Then came a period of division and of Hunnish conquests from which China arose refreshed, more rapidly and more completely than Europe was destined to do. Before the end of the sixth century China was reunited under the Suy dynasty, and this by the time of Heraclius gave place to the Tang dynasty, whose reign marks another great period of prosperity for China.



CHINESE EARTHENWARE ART OF THE TANG DYNASTY, 616-906
Specimens in glazed earthenware, in brown, green and buff, discovered in tombs

in China
(In the Victoria and Albert Museum)

Throughout the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries China was the most secure and civilized country in the world. The Han dynasty had extended her boundaries in the north; the Suy and Tang dynasties now spread her civilization to the south, and China began to assume the proportions she has to-day. In Central Asia indeed she reached much further, extending at last, through tributary Turkish tribes, to Persia and the Caspian Sea.

The new China that had arisen was a very different land from the old China of the Hans. A new and more vigorous literary school appeared, there was a great poetic revival; Buddhism had revolutionized philosophical and religious thought. There were great advances in artistic work, in technical skill and in all the amenities of life. Tea was first used, paper manufactured and wood-block printing began. Millions of people indeed were leading orderly, graceful and kindly lives in China during these centuries when the attenuated populations of Europe and Western Asia were living either in hovels, small walled cities or grim robber fortresses. While the mind of the west was black with theological obsessions, the mind of China was open and tolerant and enquiring.

One of the earliest monarchs of the Tang dynasty was Tai- tsung, who began to reign in 627, the year of the victory of Heraclius at Nineveh. He received an embassy from Heraclius, who was probably seeking an ally in the rear of Persia. From Persia itself came a party of Christian missionaries (635). They were allowed to explain their creed to Tai-tsung and he examined a Chinese translation of their Scriptures. He pronounced this strange religion acceptable, and gave permission for the foundation of a church and monastery.

To this monarch also (in 628) came messengers from Muhammad. They came to Canton on a trading ship. They had sailed the whole way from Arabia along the Indian coasts. Unlike Heraclius and Kavadh, Tai-Tsung gave these envoys a courteous hearing. He expressed his interest in their theological ideas and assisted them to build a mosque in Canton, a mosque which survives, it is said, to this day, the oldest mosque in the world.

XLIII
MUHAMMAD AND ISLAM

A prophetic amateur of history surveying the world in the opening of the seventh century might have concluded very reasonably that it was only a question of a few

centuries before the whole of Europe and Asia fell under Mongolian domination. There were no signs of order or union in Western Europe, and the Byzantine and Persian Empires were manifestly bent upon a mutual destruction. India also was divided and wasted. On the other hand China was a steadily expanding empire which probably at that time exceeded all Europe in population, and the Turkish people who were growing to power in Central Asia were disposed to work in accord with China. And such a prophecy would not have been an altogether vain one. A time was to come in the thirteenth century when a Mongolian overlord would rule from the Danube to the Pacific, and Turkish dynasties were destined to reign over the entire Byzantine and Persian Empires, over Egypt and most of India.

Where our prophet would have been most likely to have erred would have been in under-estimating the recuperative power of the Latin end of Europe and in ignoring the latent forces of the Arabian desert. Arabia would have seemed what it had been for times immemorial, the refuge of small and bickering nomadic tribes. No Semitic people had founded an empire now for more than a thousand years.

Then suddenly the Bedouin flared out for a brief century of splendour. They spread their rule and language from Spain to the boundaries of China. They gave the world a new culture. They created a religion that is still to this day one of the most vital forces in the world.

The man who fired this Arab flame appears first in history as the young husband of the widow of a rich merchant of the town of Mecca, named Muhammad. Until he was forty he did very little to distinguish himself in the world. He seems to have taken considerable interest in religious discussion. Mecca was a pagan city at that time worshipping in particular a black stone, the Kaaba, of great repute throughout all Arabia and a centre of pilgrimages; but there were great numbers of Jews in the country—indeed all the southern portion of Arabia professed the Jewish faith—and there were Christian churches in Syria.

About forty Muhammad began to develop prophetic characteristics like those of the Hebrew prophets twelve hundred years before him. He talked first to his wife of the One True God, and of the rewards and punishments of virtue and wickedness. There can be no doubt that his thoughts were very strongly influenced by Jewish and Christian ideas. He gathered about him a small circle of believers and presently began to preach in the town against the prevalent idolatry. This made him extremely unpopular with his fellow townsmen because the pilgrimages to the Kaaba were the chief source of such prosperity as Mecca enjoyed. He became bolder and more definite in his teaching, declaring himself to be the last chosen prophet of God

entrusted with a mission to perfect religion. Abraham, he declared, and Jesus Christ were his forerunners. He had been chosen to complete and perfect the revelation of God's will.

He produced verses which he said had been communicated to him by an angel, and he had a strange vision in which he was taken up through the Heavens to God and instructed in his mission.

AT PRAYER IN THE DESERT
Photo: Lehnert & Landrock

As his teaching increased in force the hostility of his fellow townsmen increased also. At last a plot was made to kill him; but he escaped with his faithful friend and disciple, Abu Bekr, to the friendly town of Medina which adopted his doctrine. Hostilities followed between Mecca and Medina which ended at last in a treaty. Mecca was to adopt the worship of the One True God and accept Muhammad as his prophet, *but the adherents of the new faith were still to make the pilgrimage to Mecca* just as they had done when they were pagans. So Muhammad established the One True God in Mecca without injuring its pilgrim traffic. In 629 Muhammad returned to Mecca as its master, a year after he had sent out these envoys of his to Heraclius, Tai-tsung, Kavadh and all the rulers of the earth.

LOOKING ACROSS THE SEA OF SAND
Photo: Lehnert & Landrock

Then for four years more until his death in 632, Muhammad spread his power over the rest of Arabia. He married a number of wives in his declining years, and his life on the whole was by modern standards unedifying. He seems to have been a man compounded of very considerable vanity, greed, cunning, self-deception and quite sincere religious passion. He dictated a book of injunctions and expositions, the Koran, which he declared was communicated to him from God. Regarded as literature or philosophy the Koran is certainly unworthy of its alleged Divine authorship.

Yet when the manifest defects of Muhammad's life and writings have been allowed for, there remains in Islam, this faith he imposed upon the Arabs, much power and inspiration. One is its uncompromising monotheism; its simple enthusiastic faith in the rule and fatherhood of God and its freedom from theological complications.

Another is its complete detachment from the sacrificial priest and the temple. It is an entirely prophetic religion, proof against any possibility of relapse towards blood sacrifices. In the Koran the limited and ceremonial nature of the pilgrimage to Mecca is stated beyond the possibility of dispute, and every precaution was taken by Muhammad to prevent the deification of himself after his death. And a third element of strength lay in the insistence of Islam upon the perfect brotherhood and equality before God of all believers, whatever their colour, origin or status.

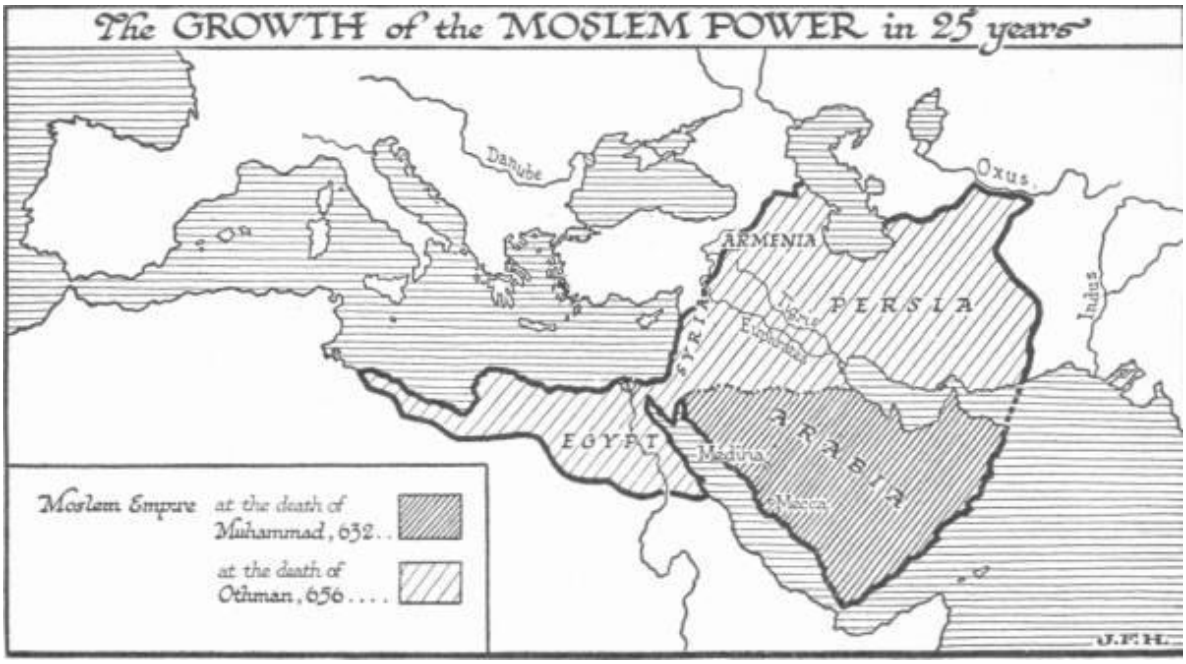
These are the things that made Islam a power in human affairs. It has been said that the true founder of the Empire of Islam was not so much Muhammad as his friend and helper, Abu Bekr. If Muhammad, with his shifty character, was the mind and imagination of primitive Islam, Abu Bekr was its conscience and its will. Whenever Muhammad wavered Abu Bekr sustained him. And when Muhammad died, Abu Bekr became Caliph (= successor), and with that faith that moves mountains, he set himself simply and sanely to organize the subjugation of the whole world to Allah—with little armies of 3,000 or 4,000 Arabs—according to those letters the prophet had written from Medina in 628 to all the monarchs of the world.

XLIV
THE GREAT DAYS OF THE ARABS

There follows the most amazing story of conquest in the whole history of our race. The Byzantine army was smashed at the battle of the Yarmuk (a tributary of the Jordan) in 634; and the Emperor Heraclius, his energy sapped by dropsy and his resources exhausted by the Persian war, saw his new conquests in Syria, Damascus, Palmyra, Antioch, Jerusalem and the rest fall almost without resistance to the Moslim. Large elements in the population went over to Islam. Then the Moslim turned east. The Persians had found an able general in Rustam; they had a great host with a force of elephants; and for three days they fought the Arabs at Kadessia (637) and broke at last in headlong rout.

The conquest of all Persia followed, and the Moslem Empire pushed far into Western Turkestan and eastward until it met the Chinese. Egypt fell almost without resistance to the new conquerors, who full of a fanatical belief in the sufficiency of the Koran, wiped out the vestiges of the book-copying industry of the Alexandria Library. The tide of conquest poured along the north coast of Africa to the Straits of Gibraltar and Spain. Spain was invaded in 710 and the Pyrenees Mountains were reached in 720. In 732 the Arab advance had reached the centre of France, but here it was stopped for good at the battle of Poitiers and thrust back as far as the Pyrenees again. The conquest of Egypt had given the Moslim a fleet, and for a time it looked as though they

would take Constantinople. They made repeated sea attacks between 672 and 718 but the great city held out against them.



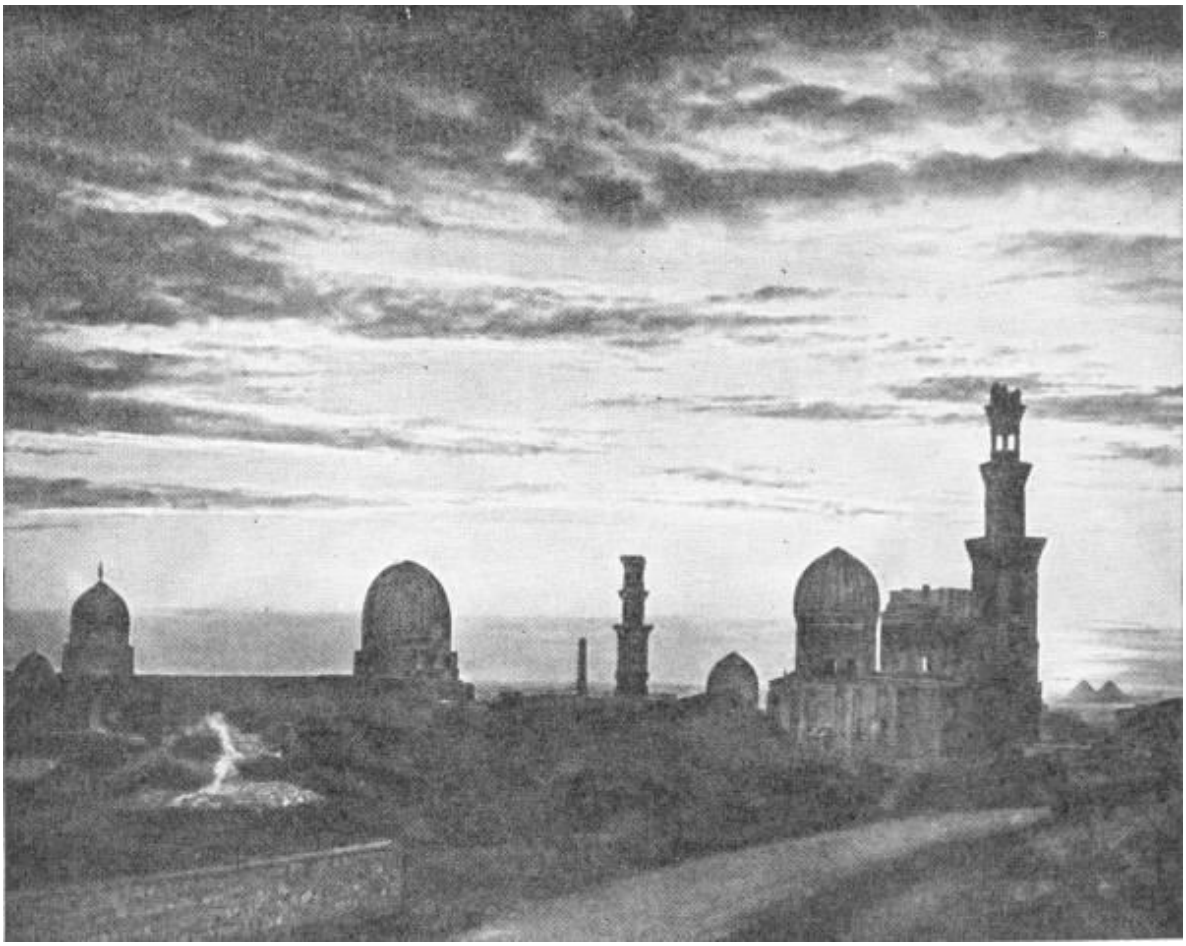
The Arabs had little political aptitude and no political experience, and this great empire with its capital now at Damascus, which stretched from Spain to China, was destined to break up very speedily. From the very beginning doctrinal differences undermined its unity. But our interest here lies not with the story of its political disintegration but with its effect upon the human mind and upon the general destinies

of our race. The Arab intelligence had been flung across the world even more swiftly and dramatically than had the Greek a thousand years before. The intellectual stimulation of the whole world west of China, the break-up of old ideas and development of new ones, was enormous.

In Persia this fresh excited Arabic mind came into contact not only with Manichæan, Zoroastrian and Christian doctrine, but with the scientific Greek literature, preserved not only in Greek but in Syrian translations. It found Greek learning in Egypt also. Every-where, and particularly in Spain, it discovered an active Jewish tradition of speculation and discussion. In Central Asia it met Buddhism and the material achievements of Chinese civilization. It learnt the manufacture of paper—which made printed books possible—from the Chinese. And finally it came into touch with Indian mathematics and philosophy.

JERUSALEM, SHOWING THE MOSQUE OF OMAR
Photo: Lehnert & Landrock

Very speedily the intolerant self-sufficiency of the early days of faith, which made the Koran seem the only possible book, was dropped. Learning sprang up everywhere in the footsteps of the Arab conquerors. By the eighth century there was an educational organization throughout the whole "Arabized" world. In the ninth learned men in the schools of Cordoba in Spain were corresponding with learned men in Cairo, Bagdad, Bokhara and Samarkand. The Jewish mind assimilated very readily with the Arab, and for a time the two Semitic races worked together through the medium of Arabic. Long after the political break-up and enfeeblement of the Arabs, this intellectual community of the Arab-speaking world endured. It was still producing very considerable results in the thirteenth century.



VIEW OF CAIRO MOSQUES
Photo: Lehnert & Landrock

So it was that the systematic accumulation and criticism of facts which was first begun by the Greeks was resumed in this astonishing renascence of the Semitic world. The seed of Aristotle and the museum of Alexandria that had lain so long inactive and neglected now germinated and began to grow towards fruition. Very great

advances were made in mathematical, medical and physical science. The clumsy Roman numerals were ousted by the Arabic figures we use to this day and the zero sign was first employed. The very name algebra is Arabic. So is the word chemistry. The names of such stars as Algol, Aldebaran and Boötes preserve the traces of Arab conquests in the sky. Their philosophy was destined to reanimate the medieval philosophy of France and Italy and the whole Christian world.

The Arab experimental chemists were called alchemists, and they were still sufficiently barbaric in spirit to keep their methods and results secret as far as possible. They realized from the very beginning what enormous advantages their possible discoveries might give them, and what far-reaching consequences they might have on human life. They came upon many metallurgical and technical devices of the utmost value, alloys and dyes, distilling, tinctures and essences, optical glass; but the two chief ends they sought, they sought in vain. One was "the philosopher's stone"—a means of changing the metallic elements one into another and so getting a control of artificial gold, and the other was the *elixir vitœ*, a stimulant that would revivify age and prolong life indefinitely. The crabbed patient experimenting of these Arab alchemists spread into the Christian world. The fascination of their enquiries spread. Very gradually the activities of these alchemists became more social and co-operative. They found it profitable to exchange and compare ideas. By insensible gradations the last of the alchemists became the first of the experimental philosophers.

The old alchemists sought the philosopher's stone which was to transmute base metals to gold, and an elixir of immortality; they found the methods of modern experimental science which promise in the end to give man illimitable power over the world and over his own destiny.

XLV
THE DEVELOPMENT OF LATIN CHRISTENDOM

It is worth while to note the extremely shrunken dimensions of the share of the world remaining under Aryan control in the seventh and eighth centuries. A thousand years before, the Aryan-speaking races were triumphant over all the civilized world west of China. Now the Mongol had thrust as far as Hungary, nothing of Asia remained under Aryan rule except the Byzantine dominions in Asia Minor, and all Africa was lost and nearly all Spain. The great Hellenic world had shrunken to a few possessions round the nucleus of the trading city of Constantinople, and the memory of the Roman world was kept alive by the Latin of the western Christian priests. In vivid contrast to this tale

of retrogression, the Semitic tradition had risen again from subjugation and obscurity after a thousand years of darkness.

Yet the vitality of the Nordic peoples was not exhausted. Confined now to Central and North-Western Europe and terribly muddled in their social and political ideas, they were nevertheless building up gradually and steadily a new social order and preparing unconsciously for the recovery of a power even more extensive than that they had previously enjoyed.

We have told how at the beginning of the sixth century there remained no central government in Western Europe at all. That world was divided up among numbers of local rulers holding their own as they could. This was too insecure a state of affairs to last; a system of co-operation and association grew up in this disorder, the feudal system, which has left its traces upon European life up to the present time. This feudal system was a sort of crystallization of society about power. Everywhere the lone man felt insecure and was prepared to barter a certain amount of his liberty for help and protection. He sought a stronger man as his lord and protector; he gave him military services and paid him dues, and in return he was confirmed in his possession of what was his. His lord again found safety in vassalage to a still greater lord. Cities also found it convenient to have feudal protectors, and monasteries and church estates bound themselves by similar ties. No doubt in many cases allegiance was claimed before it was offered; the system grew downward as well as upward. So a sort of pyramidal system grew up, varying widely in different localities, permitting at first a considerable play of violence and private warfare but making steadily for order and a new reign of law. The pyramids grew up until some became recognizable as kingdoms. Already by the early sixth century a Frankish kingdom existed under its founder Clovis in what is now France and the Netherlands, and presently Visigothic and Lombard and Gothic kingdoms were in existence.

The Moslim when they crossed the Pyrenees in 720 found this Frankish kingdom under the practical rule of Charles Martel, the Mayor of the Palace of a degenerate descendant of Clovis, and experienced the decisive defeat of Poitiers (732) at his hands. This Charles Martel was practically overlord of Europe north of the Alps from the Pyrenees to Hungary. He ruled over a multitude of subordinate lords speaking French- Latin, and High and Low German languages. His son Pepin extinguished the last descendants of Clovis and took the kingly state and title. His grandson Charlemagne, who began to reign in 768, found himself lord of a realm so large that he could think of reviving the title of Latin Emperor. He conquered North Italy and made himself master of Rome.

Approaching the story of Europe as we do from the wider horizons of a world history we can see much more distinctly than the mere nationalist historian how cramping and disastrous this tradition of the Latin Roman Empire was. A narrow intense struggle for this phantom predominance was to consume European energy for more than a thousand years. Through all that period it is possible to trace certain unquenchable antagonisms; they run through the wits of Europe like the obsessions of a demented mind. One driving force was this ambition of successful rulers, which Charlemagne (Charles the Great) embodied, to become Cæsar. The realm of Charlemagne consisted of a complex of feudal German states at various stages of barbarism. West of the Rhine, most of these German peoples had learnt to speak various Latinized dialects which fused at last to form French. East of the Rhine, the racially similar German peoples did not lose their German speech. On account of this, communication was difficult between these two groups of barbarian conquerors and a split easily brought about. The split was made the more easy by the fact that the Frankish usage made it seem natural to divide the empire of Charlemagne among his

sons at his death. So one aspect of the history of Europe from the days of Charlemagne onwards is a history of first this monarch and his family and then that, struggling to a precarious headship of the kings, princes, dukes, bishops and cities of Europe, while a steadily deepening antagonism between the French and German speaking elements develops in the medley. There was a formality of election for each emperor; and the climax of his ambition was to struggle to the possession of that worn-out, misplaced capital Rome and to a coronation there.

The next factor in the European political disorder was the resolve of the Church at Rome to make no temporal prince but the Pope of Rome himself emperor in effect. He was already pontifex maximus; for all practical purposes he held the decaying city; if he had no armies he had at least a vast propaganda organization in his priests throughout the whole Latin world; if he had little power over men's bodies he held the keys of heaven and hell in their imaginations and could exercise much influence upon their souls. So throughout the middle ages while one prince manœuvred against another first for equality, then for ascendancy, and at last for the supreme prize, the Pope of Rome, sometimes boldly, sometimes craftily, sometimes feebly—for the Popes were a succession of oldish men and the average reign of a Pope was not more than two years—manœuvred for the submission of all the princes to himself as the ultimate overlord of Christendom.

But these antagonisms of prince against prince and of Emperor against Pope do not by any means exhaust the factors of the European confusion. There was still an Emperor in Constantinople speaking Greek and claiming the allegiance of all Europe. When Charlemagne sought to revive the empire, it was merely the Latin end of the empire he revived. It was natural that a sense of rivalry between Latin Empire and Greek Empire should develop very readily. And still more readily did the rivalry of Greek-speaking Christianity and the newer Latin-speaking version develop. The Pope of Rome claimed to be the successor of St. Peter, the chief of the apostles of Christ, and the head of the Christian community everywhere. Neither the emperor nor the patriarch in Constantinople were disposed to acknowledge this claim. A dispute about a fine point in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity consummated a long series of dissensions in a final rupture in 1054. The Latin Church and the Greek Church became and remained thereafter distinct and frankly antagonistic. This antagonism must be added to the others in our estimate of the conflicts that wasted Latin Christendom in the middle ages.