

EARLY ITALY AND THE ORIGINS OF ROME: c. 900–509 B.C.E.

- *What impact did Italian geography and the various peoples of Italy have on the development of Rome?*

The history of Rome begins with small agricultural settlements in the region that eventually became the city of Rome around 900 B.C.E. The Romans themselves, however, believed that the city actually began in 753 B.C.E.—the traditional date for the founding of the city by Romulus, Rome’s legendary first king. It is equally difficult to assign an end date to Rome, because long after the political dominance of Rome came to an end, the social and cultural legacies of the empire continued to influence life in lands impacted by Roman occupation. A great variety of dates might be offered to indicate the end of the empire; one such significant milestone took place in 476 C.E., when the German chieftain Odovacer (c. 435–493 C.E.) assassinated Romulus Augustulus, the

last emperor to ruler the western half of the Roman world. The first period in this remarkable span of more than a thousand years of dominance, however, ended in 509 B.C.E., according to Roman tradition, with the expulsion of the Etruscan monarch Tarquin the Proud, the seventh and last of Rome’s kings, and the establishment of an aristocratic republic.

Geography and Early Settlers of Italy

Geography was crucial in shaping the course of events in Italy. The Italian peninsula is 600 miles long and about four times the size of Greece, or two-thirds that of California. A great mountainous backbone, the Apennine range, runs almost the entire length of the peninsula. But the land is not as rugged as Greece, and the mountains did not create a formidable barrier to political unification. Unlike in Greece, a network of roads could be built to link the peninsula. Furthermore, the plain of Latium (LAH-tee-um) and its major city, Rome, occupied a strategic position. The hills near what became Rome were relatively easy to defend, and once



the Romans had begun to establish themselves as successful conquerors, they occupied a central position on the peninsula, which made it difficult for their enemies to unite successfully against them. The important central position of Rome was duplicated on a larger scale by the location of Italy itself. Italy juts into what is almost the center of the great Mediterranean sea. Once Italy was unified, its central position aided Rome in dominating the entire Mediterranean region.

Italy's most imposing valleys and useful harbors are on the western slopes of the Apennines, and the Italian peninsula extends into the western Mediterranean, not eastward. For much of its early history, therefore, cultural development in Italy was not as rapid as it might have been if the two peoples had come into close cultural contact sooner.

Both Greeks and Romans were descendants of a common Indo-European stock, and settlement of the Greek and Italian peninsulas followed broadly parallel stages. Between 2000 and 1000 B.C.E., when Indo-European peoples invaded the Aegean world, a western wing of this nomadic migration filtered into

the Italian peninsula, then inhabited by indigenous Neolithic peoples. The first invaders, skilled in the use of copper and bronze, settled in the Po valley. Another wave of Indo-Europeans, equipped with iron weapons and tools, followed; in time the newer and older settlers intermingled and spread throughout the peninsula. One group, the Latins, settled in the plain of Latium, in the lower valley of the Tiber River.

As the Iron Age began in the western Mediterranean, the cultures of Italy became increasingly complex. During the ninth century B.C.E., a people known as the Etruscans established dominance throughout most of central Italy. The exact origin of the Etruscans remains uncertain. Some experts believe them to have been a non-Indo-European people who came to Italy by sea from Asia Minor. Others believe that their origin is explained through a rapid and creative growth of already resident iron-using peoples in northern Italy. Perhaps a combination of the two explanations is most likely—that native creativity fueled by contact with immigrants from the East resulted in a distinctly vibrant and creative culture. Expanding from the west



coast up to the Po valley and south to the Bay of Naples, the Etruscans organized the less-advanced and disparate Italic peoples into a loose confederation of Etruscan-dominated city-states.

In the sixth century B.C.E., Rome became one of the cities controlled by the Etruscans, at a time when that city was not highly developed politically or culturally. The Etruscans brought with them a highly effective political system under the strong direction of kings, an aristocracy of landholding nobles, and a military organization superior to any they encountered among the Italic peoples. Etruscan cultural influence was particularly strong among their Roman subjects. Much of the area around the city was made more useful through Etruscan engineering skill, marsh drainage, and agricultural technology. Their religion, which included many Eastern elements such as the worship of numerous gods and goddesses, powerful priesthoods, rituals, and sacrifices to please the gods and ward off evil, also greatly influenced the development of Roman religious belief. Their funeral customs, which helped to shape Roman practices, show the prominent role of women in Etruscan society. They are usually portrayed in Etruscan tomb paintings as appearing in public, participating in banquets along with their husbands, and in general sharing in the pleasures of life on an equal footing with men.

After 750 B.C.E. Greek colonists migrated to southern Italy and Sicily, where their colonies provided a protective buffer against powerful and prosperous Carthage, a Phoenician colony established in North Africa about 800 B.C.E. The Greeks, along with the Etruscans, had a lasting influence on Roman culture—particularly with regard to religion and their sophisticated accomplishments in art and architecture.

Rome's Origins

Legend held that Rome was founded in 753 B.C.E. by Romulus. He and his twin brother, Remus, were sons of a nearby king's daughter who had been raped by Mars, the god of war. Thrown into the Tiber River by their wicked uncle who had seized the throne, they were rescued and nurtured by a she-wolf. Other legends told the story that Romulus's ancestor was Aeneas (ay-NEE-uhs), a Trojan hero who, after the fall of Troy, founded a settlement in Latium, near what came to be Rome. The Aeneas story, perhaps invented by later mythmakers, pleased the Romans because it linked their history with that of the Greeks, whose culture they thought more sophisticated than their own.

Turning from fable to fact, modern scholars believe that in the eighth century B.C.E. the inhabitants of some small Latin settlements on hills in the Tiber valley united and established a common meeting place, the Forum, around which the city of Rome

grew. Situated at a convenient place for fording the river and protected from invaders by surrounding hills and marshes, Rome was strategically located on excellent passes to both north and south. Because of their interest in gaining access to trade with the Greeks in the south, the expanding Etruscans conquered Rome about 625 B.C.E., and under their direction Rome became an important city.



The Roman Monarchy, 753–509 B.C.E.

Rome's political growth followed a pattern of development similar to that of the Greek city-states: monarchy similar to that described by Homer, oligarchy, modified democracy, and, finally, the permanent dictatorship of the Roman emperors. In moving from oligarchy to democracy, the Romans succeeded in avoiding the intermediate Greek stage of tyranny.

The executive power, both civil and military, of Rome's seven kings (the last three were Etruscans) was called the *imperium*, (the root word for both *imperialism* and *empire*) which was symbolized by an ax bound in a bundle of rods (*fasces*; FAS-kees). Imperium was officially conferred on the king by a popular assembly made up of male citizens, and the king was expected to turn for advice to a council of nobles called the Senate. Senators held their positions for life, and they and their families belonged to the *patrician* class, the fathers of the state (*pater* means "father"). The other class of Romans, the *plebeians*, or commoners, included small farmers, artisans, and many clients, or dependents, of patrician landowners. In 509 B.C.E. the patricians, with some plebeian assistance, overthrew the Etruscan monarchy and established an aristocratic form of government, known as the Republic.

THE REPUBLIC AND THE ROMAN CONQUEST OF ITALY: 509–133 B.C.E.

- How did the Romans conquer all of Italy and much of the Mediterranean by 130 B.C.E.?

The history of the Roman Republic can be divided into two distinct periods. During the first, from 509 to 133 B.C.E., two themes are dominant: a change from aristocracy to a more democratic constitution, the result of the gradual extension of political and social equality to the plebeian lower class; and the expansion of Roman military and political control, first in Italy, and then throughout the Mediterranean region.

The Early Wars of Rome

509 B.C.E.	Etruscans expelled from Rome
390 B.C.E.	Gauls attack and plunder Rome
338 B.C.E.	Rome emerges victor in wars with members of the Latin League
264–241 B.C.E.	Rome wins Sicily in First Punic War
218–201 B.C.E.	Rome defeats Hannibal in Second Punic War
149–146 B.C.E.	Carthage destroyed in Third Punic War

Establishment of the Republic

In 509 B.C.E. the patricians forced out the last Etruscan king, Tarquin the Proud (Tarquinius Superbus), claiming he had acted despotically. According to the Roman historian Livy, Tarquin was the first of the Roman kings to ignore the advice of the Senate and govern in a selfish and irresponsible manner. The patricians replaced the monarchy with an aristocracy they called a *republic* (*res publica*, “commonwealth”). The imperium of the one king was shared by two new magistrates, called *consuls*. Elected annually from the patrician class, the consuls exercised power in the interest of that class. In the event of war or serious domestic emergency, an “extraordinary” magistrate called a *dictator* could be substituted for the two consuls, but the man was given absolute power for six months only. The popular assembly was retained because the patricians could control it through their plebeian clients who, in return for a livelihood, voted as their patrons directed them.

Struggle of the Orders

For more than two centuries following the establishment of the Republic, the plebeians struggled for political and social equality. Outright civil war was avoided by the willingness of the patricians to accept the demands of the plebeians, even though patrician acceptance was often reluctant and usually slow. Much of the plebeians’ success in this struggle was due to their having been granted the right to organize themselves as a corporate body capable of collective action. This permission to organize, granted by the Senate early in the fifth century B.C.E., after the plebeians threatened to leave Rome and found a city elsewhere, established a sort of state within a state known

as the *Concilium Plebis* (kun-SIL-I-um PLAY-bis) or “gathering of the plebeians.” This assembly was presided over by plebeian leaders called *tribunes* and could pass *plebiscites* (“plebeian decrees”) that were binding only on the plebeian community. The tribunes were given sacred status, *sacrosanctitas* (sak-roh-SANG-ti-tahs), by the plebeian assembly in an effort to furnish them protection from any bodily harm that might come their way from patrician opponents. Tribunes also assumed the right to stop unjust or oppressive acts of the patrician consuls and Senate by uttering the word *veto* (“I forbid.”).

Another major concession to plebeian interests was in the field of law. Because the consuls often interpreted Rome’s unwritten customary law to suit patrician interests, the plebeians demanded that it be written down and made available for all to see. As a result, about 450 B.C.E., the law was inscribed on a dozen tablets of bronze and set up publicly in the Forum. This Code of the Twelve Tables was the first landmark development in the long history of Roman law.

In time the plebeians acquired other fundamental rights and safeguards: the rights to appeal a death sentence imposed by a consul and to be retried before the popular assembly were secured; marriage between patricians and plebeians, prohibited by the Code of the Twelve Tables, was legalized; and the enslavement of citizens for debt was abolished.

That their service in the Roman army was indispensable to the patricians greatly increased the plebeians’ bargaining position in the state. Since Rome was almost constantly at war during these years, the patrician leaders of the state were more ready to accommodate plebeian demands than to face the possibility of a withdrawal of military participation by the commoners. In addition, trade and commerce in early Rome came to be dominated by the plebeian class, since the patricians avoided commercial activities in favor of concentrating their wealth on the acquisition of land and country estates.

Little by little the plebeians acquired more power in the government. In 367 B.C.E. one consulship was reserved for the plebeians, and before the end of the century, plebeians were eligible to hold other important magistracies that the patricians had created in the meantime. Among these new offices, whose powers had originally been held by the consuls, were the *praetor* (PREE-tor; in charge of the administration of justice), *quaestor* (KWEE-ster; treasurer), and *ensor* (supervisor of public morals and the granting of state contracts).

The long struggle for equal status ended in 287 B.C.E. when the *Concilium Plebis* was recognized as a constitutional body, which then became known as the Tribal Assembly, and its plebiscites became laws binding on all citizens, patrician as well as plebeian.

The Roman Republic was technically a democracy, although in actual practice a senatorial aristocracy of noble patricians and rich plebeians continued to control the state. Having gained political and social equality, the plebeians were usually willing to allow the more experienced Senate to run the government from this time until 133 B.C.E., a period of almost constant warfare.

After 287 B.C.E. conflict in Roman society gradually assumed a new form. Before this time, the issue of greatest domestic importance had primarily been social and political inequality

This statue of a patrician with busts of his ancestors dates from either the first century B.C.E. or the first century C.E. The patricians were the aristocracy of Rome, and during the later Republic they came increasingly into conflict with senators and generals who took the part of the plebeians.

between the classes of patricians and plebeians. After equal political status was achieved, many rich plebeians were elected to the highest offices and became members of an expanded senatorial aristocracy. The new Roman "establishment" was prepared to guard its privileges even more fiercely than the old patricians had done. This fact became evident in 133 B.C.E. when a popular leader, Tiberius Gracchus (tai-BEE-ri-uhs GRAH-kuhs), arose to challenge the establishment.

The Conquest of Italy

The growth of Rome from a small city-state to the dominant power in the Mediterranean world in less than 400 years (509–133 B.C.E.) was a remarkable achievement. Roman expansion was not deliberately planned; rather, it was the result of dealing with unsettled conditions, first in Italy and then abroad, which were thought to threaten Rome's security. Rome always claimed that its wars were defensive, waged to protect itself from potentially hostile neighbors—Etruscans in the north, land-hungry hill tribes in central Italy, and Greeks in the south. Rome subdued them all after a long, determined effort and found itself master of all Italy south of the Po valley. In the process the Romans developed the administrative skills and traits of character—both fair-mindedness and ruthlessness—that would lead to the acquisition of an empire with possessions on three continents.



Soon after driving out their Etruscan overlords in 509 B.C.E., Rome and the Latin League, composed of other Latin peoples in Latium, entered into a defensive alliance against the Etruscans. This new combination was so successful that by the beginning of the fourth century B.C.E., it had become the chief power in central Italy. But at this time

(390 B.C.E.), a major disaster almost ended the history of Rome. A raiding army of Celts, called *Gauls* by the Romans, invaded Italy from central Europe, wiped out the Roman army, and almost destroyed the city by fire. The elderly members of the Senate, according to the traditional account, sat awaiting their fate with quiet dignity before they were massacred. Only a garrison on the Capitoline Hill held out under siege. After seven months and the receipt of a huge ransom in gold, the Gauls withdrew. The stubborn Romans rebuilt their city and protected it with a stone wall, part of which still stands. They also remodeled their army by replacing the solid line of fixed spears of the phalanx formation, borrowed from the Etruscans and Greeks, with much more maneuverable small units of 120 men, called *maniples*, armed with javelins instead of spears. It would be 800 years before another barbarian army would be able to conquer the city of Rome. In the years that followed Rome's recovery from the attack of the Gauls, the Latin League grew more and more

alarmed at Rome's increasing strength, and war broke out between the former allies. Upon Rome's victory in 338 B.C.E. the league was dissolved, and the Latin cities were forced to sign individual treaties with Rome.

But soon after the Roman victory over the Latin League, border clashes with aggressive mountain tribes of Samnium led to three fiercely fought Samnite wars and the extension of Rome's frontiers to the Greek colonies in southern Italy by 290 B.C.E. Fearing Roman conquest, the Greeks prepared for war and called in the mercenary army of the Greek king, Pyrrhus (PEER-uhs) of Epirus, who dreamed of becoming a second Alexander the Great. Pyrrhus's war elephants, unknown in Italy, twice defeated the Romans, but at so heavy a cost that such a triumph is still called a "Pyrrhic victory." When a third battle failed to persuade the Romans to make peace, Pyrrhus returned to his homeland. By 270 B.C.E. the Roman army had subdued the Greek city-states in

Italy, and the peninsula south of the Po River was under their control.

Treatment of Conquered Peoples

Instead of killing or enslaving their defeated opponents in Italy, the Romans treated them fairly, a policy which in time created a strong loyalty to Rome throughout the peninsula. Roman citizenship was a prized possession that was not extended to all peoples in Italy until the first century B.C.E. Most defeated states were required to sign a treaty of alliance with Rome, which bound them to accept Rome's foreign policy and to supply troops for the Roman army. No tribute was required, and each allied state retained local self-government. Rome did, however, annex about one-fifth of the land its **legions** conquered in Italy, on which nearly 30 colonies were established by 250 B.C.E.



CASE STUDY

Greek and Roman Slavery

The First Punic War

After 270 B.C.E. Rome's only serious rival for dominance in the western Mediterranean was the city-state of Carthage. This prosperous state located near the modern city of Tunis began as a Phoenician colony on the northern African coast in the ninth century B.C.E. By the sixth century, Carthage had become not only independent but also the dominant commercial power in the western Mediterranean. Much more wealthy and populous than Rome, Carthage's magnificent navy controlled the northern coast of Africa, Sardinia, Corsica, western Sicily, and much of Spain. The city and its empire were governed by a commercial oligarchy of Semitic descendants of Carthage's founders. The native population was forced into service in agriculture or in the army and navy; mercenaries were also hired to secure the interests of the ruling minority.

There had been almost no conflicts of interest between Rome and Carthage before the First Punic War (from *Punicus*, Latin for "Phoenician") broke out in 264 B.C.E. In that year, Rome answered an appeal from a group of Italian mercenaries who were in control of the city of Messana, on the northern tip of Sicily next to Italy. These mercenaries were opposed by a Carthaginian force, and when the Roman Senate agreed to send an army to aid the mercenaries, a war between Carthage and Rome was the obvious result.

The First Punic War was a costly one for both combatants. Roman ground forces were quickly successful

in gaining control of most of Sicily, but the Carthaginian navy was unopposed, since the Romans had no need of a navy in their conquest of Italy. Rome constructed its fleet in hurried fashion and sent it against the Carthaginians with surprising initial success. Roman engineers furnished their new vessels with an invention called the *corvus*, or "crow," a boarding bridge at the bow of a ship that, when lowered, turned a naval engagement into a land battle. After a stunning defeat of the Carthaginian navy, the Romans invaded the African coast, lost decisively, and suffered the losses of large numbers of ships through violent storms in attempting to return home. Eventually, victory for Rome came through another victory over the Carthaginian navy, but the costs of victory were high; Rome and its Italian allies lost more than 500 ships in naval engagements and storms before Carthage asked for peace in 241 B.C.E. Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica were annexed as the first prizes in Rome's overseas empire, regulated and taxed—in contrast to Rome's allies in Italy—by Roman officials called *governors*.

The Contest with Hannibal

Stunned by its defeat in the First Punic War, Carthage concentrated on enlarging its empire in Spain. Rome's determination to prevent this led to the most famous and most difficult war in Roman history. While both powers sought a position of advantage, a young Carthaginian general, Hannibal, precipitated the Second Punic War by attacking Saguntum, a Spanish town claimed by Rome as an ally. Rome declared war, and Hannibal, seizing the initiative, in 218 B.C.E. led an army of about 40,000 men, 9000 cavalry troops, and a detachment of African elephants across the Alps into Italy. Although the crossing had cost him nearly half of his men and all but one of his elephants, Hannibal defeated the Romans in three major battles within three years, while ranging throughout Italy but not attacking Rome.

Hannibal's forces never matched those of the Romans in numbers, and the Carthaginian general was never given the reinforcements he requested from his home state. Nevertheless, Hannibal's brilliance as a commander was obvious. At the battle of Cannae (KAN-ee), in 216 B.C.E., Hannibal won his greatest victory by surrounding an army of nearly 80,000 Romans with 50,000 Carthaginians. Almost the entire Roman force was killed or captured. Even at this darkest hour of defeat, the Senate displayed the determination that was to become legendary. When the one consul who survived the battle returned to Rome to give his report, he was congratulated by the senators for "not despairing of the Republic."

The Romans ultimately produced a general, Scipio (SI-pee-oh), who was Hannibal's match in military

legion—A military organizational division, originally the largest permanent unit in the Roman army. The legion was the basis of the military system by which imperial Rome conquered and ruled its empire.

strategy and who was bold enough to invade Africa. Asked to return home after 15 years spent on Italian soil, Hannibal clashed with Scipio's legions at Zama, where the Carthaginians suffered a complete defeat. The power of Carthage was broken forever by a harsh treaty imposed in 201 B.C.E. Carthage was forced to pay a huge **war indemnity**, disarm its forces, and turn Spain over to the Romans. Hannibal fled to the Seleucid Empire, where he attempted to encourage anti-Roman sentiment, and eventually committed suicide in order to avoid Roman capture.

Roman Intervention East and West

The defeat of Carthage freed Rome to turn eastward and deal with King Philip V of Macedonia. Fearful of Rome's growing power, Philip had allied himself with Hannibal during the Second Punic War. In 200 B.C.E., Rome was ready to act, following an appeal from Pergamum and Rhodes for aid in protecting the smaller Hellenistic states from Philip, who was advancing in the Aegean, and from the Seleucid emperor, who was moving into Asia Minor. The heavy Macedonian phalanxes were no match for the mobile Roman legions, and in 197 B.C.E. Philip was soundly defeated in Macedonia. His dreams of empire were ended when Rome destroyed his navy and military bases in Greece. The Romans then proclaimed the independence of Greece and were praised as liberators by the grateful Greeks.

A few years later Rome declared war on the Seleucid emperor, who had moved into Greece, urged on by Hannibal and number of Greek states that resented

Rome's interference. The Romans forced the emperor to move out of Greece and Asia Minor, pay a huge indemnity, and give up his warships and war elephants. The Seleucids were checked again in 168 B.C.E. when a Roman ultimatum halted their invasion of Egypt. A Roman envoy met the advancing Seleucid army and, drawing a ring in the sand around the emperor, demanded that he decide on war or on peace with Rome before stepping out of it.

In the middle of the second century B.C.E. anti-Romanism became widespread in Greece, particularly among the poorer classes, who resented Rome's support of conservative governments and the status quo in general. In 146 B.C.E., after many Greeks had supported an attempted Macedonian revival, Rome destroyed Corinth, a hotbed of anti-Romanism, as an object lesson. The Romans also supported the oli-



Plutarch,
*The Life
of Cato
the Elder*

war indemnity—A payment to compensate for losses sustained or expenses incurred as a result of war. The Romans regularly imposed such war indemnities on their conquered enemies.

garchic factions in all Greek states and placed Greece under the watchful eye of the governor of Macedonia, a recently established Roman province.

In the West, meanwhile, Rome's more aggressive imperialism led to suspicion of Carthage's reviving prosperity and to a demand by Roman extremists for war—*Carthago delenda est* ("Carthage must be obliterated."). Obviously provoking the Third Punic War, the Romans besieged Carthage, which resisted for three years. Rome destroyed the city in 146 B.C.E. (the same year they destroyed Corinth), killed or enslaved almost all of its surviving inhabitants, leveled the buildings, and poured salt over its borders so that nothing would ever take root on its soil again. The powerful state that had dared to defy Rome was now obliterated, and the province of Africa was created in its place.

In 133 B.C.E. Rome acquired its first province in Asia when the king of Pergamum, dying without an heir, left his kingdom to Rome. The Senate accepted the bequest and created a new province, called Asia. With provinces on three continents—Europe, Africa, and Asia—the once obscure Roman Republic was now supreme in the ancient world.

Society and Religion in Early Rome

The most important unit of early Roman society was the family. The power of the family father (*pater familias*) was absolute, and strict discipline was imposed to instill in children the virtues to which the Romans attached particular importance—loyalty, courage, self-control, and respect for laws and ancestral customs. The Romans of the early Republic were stern, hard-working, and practical. The conservative values of an agrarian society formed the values of both Roman men and women. With much of a Roman man's time taken up with military or political concerns, women had great responsibilities in supervising the upbringing of children and maintaining estates and farms.

In contrast to the frequency of divorce in the late Republic, marriage in the early Republic was viewed as a lifelong union; patrician marriages were usually arranged between families and were undertaken primarily for the creation of children, but on many occasions such marriages resulted in mutual affection between husband and wife. Nonetheless, the authority of the Roman male within his own household was usually unchallenged.

The religion of the early Romans, before their contacts with the Etruscans and Greeks, is very difficult for scholars to describe with confidence. Available evidence for their views on life after death is vague. Religious practices were concerned with appeasing and honoring the spirits (*numina*) of the family and the state by the repetition of complicated rituals and formulas. Mispronunciation of even a sin-

gle syllable was enough to cause the ritual to become ineffective. Under Etruscan influence, major gods and goddesses were personified. The sky-spirit Jupiter became the patron god of Rome; Mars, spirit of vegetation, became god of war and agriculture; and Janus, whose temple doors remained open when the army was away at war, was originally the spirit guarding the city gate.

Although early Roman religion did not have great concern with morals, it had much to do with morale. It strengthened family solidarity and enhanced a patriotic devotion to the state and its gods. But the early Romans' respect for hard work, frugality, and family and state gods was to be challenged by the effects of Rome's expansion in Italy and over much of the Mediterranean area during the early Republic.

THE LATE REPUBLIC: 133–30 B.C.E.

- *What were the main reasons for the failure of the Roman Republic and the consolidation of power by Augustus?*

The century following 133 B.C.E. during which Rome's frontiers reached the Euphrates and the Rhine, witnessed the failure of the Republic to solve problems generated in part by the acquisition of an empire. These years serve as a good example of the failure of a democracy and its replacement by a dictatorship. The experience of the late Republic gives support to Thucydides' judgment that a democracy is incapable of running an empire. Athens kept its democracy but lost its empire; Rome would keep its empire and lose its democracy.

Effects of Roman Expansion

The political history of Rome to 133 B.C.E. possessed two dominant themes: the gradual extension of citizenship rights in Italy and the expansion of Roman dominion over the Mediterranean world. Largely as a result of this expansion, Rome faced critical social and economic problems by the middle of the second century B.C.E.

One of the most pressing problems Rome faced was the decline in the number of small landowners, whose service and devotion had made Rome great. Burdened by frequent military service, their farms and buildings destroyed by Hannibal, and unable to compete with the cheap grain imported from the new Roman province of Sicily, small farmers sold out and moved to the great city. Here they joined the unemployed and discontented *proletariat*, so called because

The Late Republic

133–123 B.C.E.	Reform movement of the Gracchi
88–82 B.C.E.	First Civil War (Marius vs. Sulla)
58–49 B.C.E.	Caesar conquers Gaul
49–45 B.C.E.	Second Civil War (Pompey vs. Caesar)
44 B.C.E.	Caesar assassinated
31 B.C.E.	Third Civil War (Octavian vs. Antony)
27 B.C.E.	Octavian (Augustus) becomes ruler of Rome

their only contribution was *proles*, “children.” The proletariat soon were the majority of the citizens in the city.

At the same time, improved farming methods learned from the Greeks and Carthaginians encouraged rich aristocrats to buy more and more land. Abandoning the cultivation of grain, they introduced large-scale scientific production of olive oil and wine, sheep, and cattle. This change was especially profitable because an abundance of cheaply purchased slaves from conquered territory was available to work on the estates. With the increase in the availability of slave labor came worsening treatment of the labor force, as well as deteriorating conditions for the declining numbers of free laborers on these large estates. These large slave plantations, called *latifundia* (lah-ti-FUN-dee-uh), became common in many parts of Italy.

The land problem was further complicated by the government's practice of leasing part of the territory acquired in the conquest of the Italian peninsula to anyone willing to pay a percentage of the crop or animals raised on it. Only the wealthy could afford to lease large tracts of this public land, and in time, they treated it as if it were their own property. Plebeian protests led to an attempt to limit the holdings of a single individual to 320 acres of public land, but the law enacted for that purpose was never enforced.

Corruption in the government was another sign of the growing problems of the Roman Republic. Provincial officials took advantage of the opportunity to engage in graft for great profit, and aggressive Roman businessmen scrambled selfishly for the profitable state contracts to supply the armies, collect taxes and loan money in the provinces, and lease state-owned mines and forests.

Although in theory the government allowed for an unhindered participation of all male citizens, in practice it remained a senatorial oligarchy. Wars tend to strengthen the executive power in a state, and in Rome the Senate traditionally had such power. Even the tribunes, guardians of the people's rights, became, for the most part, tools of the Senate. By the middle of the second century B.C.E. the government was in the hands of a wealthy, self-serving Senate, which became increasingly incapable of coping with the problems of gov-

erning a world-state. Ordinary citizens were mostly impoverished and landless, and Rome swarmed with fortune hunters, imported slaves, unemployed farmers, and discontented war veterans. The poverty of the many, coupled with the great wealth of the few, contrasted dramatically with the old Roman traits of discipline, simplicity, and respect for authority. The next century (133–30 B.C.E.) saw Rome torn apart by internal conflict, which led to the establishment of a permanent dictatorship and the end of the Republic.

Document

Columella: Roman Farm Women

Columella was a Roman citizen from Spain in the first century C.E. He served with the Roman legions and later retired to an agricultural estate, where he wrote his suggestions for how Roman farming could most efficiently be undertaken. The following excerpt from his works on agriculture describes the duties he believes should be given to the forewomen on Roman estates. Such women were usually under the supervision of a foreman; both were often slaves. Columella's listing of the forewoman's tasks gives us an insight into the wide range of duties for which such Roman farm women were held responsible:

The forewoman must not only store and guard the items which have been brought into the house and delivered to her; she should also inspect and examine them from time to time so that the furniture and clothing which have been stored do not disintegrate because of mold, and the fruits and vegetables and other necessities do not go rotten because of her neglect and slothfulness. On rainy days, or when a woman cannot do field work out of doors because of cold or frost, she should return to wool-working. Therefore, wool should be prepared and carded in advance so that she can more easily undertake and complete the required allotment of wool-working. For it will be beneficial if clothing is made at home for her and the stewards and the other valued slaves so the financial accounts of the *paterfamilias* are less strained. She ought to stay in one place as little as possible, for her job is not a sedentary one. At one moment she will have to go to the loom and teach the weavers whatever she knows better than them or, if she knows less, learn from someone who understands more. At another moment, she will have to check on those slaves who are preparing the food for the *familia*. Then she will also have to see that the kitchen, cowsheds, and even the stables are cleaned. And she will also have to open up the sickrooms occasionally, even if they are empty of patients, and keep them free of dirt, so that, when circumstance

demands, a well-ordered and healthy environment is provided for the sick. She will, in addition, have to be in attendance when the stewards of the pantry and cellar are weighing something, and also be present when the shepherds are milking in the stables or bringing the lambs or calves to nurse. But she will also certainly need to be present when the sheep are sheared, and to examine the wool carefully and compare the number of fleeces with the number of sheep. Then she must turn her attention to the slaves in the house and insist that they air out the furniture and clean and polish the metal items and free them from rust, and take to the craftsmen for repair other items which require mending.

Questions to Consider

1. How do you think the responsibilities of Roman forewomen compare to modern positions of responsibility on farms?
2. Do you find it surprising that such heavy responsibilities were often given to slave women? What might be the reasons for this?
3. What duties are omitted from the list of responsibilities given by Columella, and do you see any significance in their omission?

From Columella, *On Agriculture*, 12.3.5, 6, 8, and 9, in JoAnn Shelton, *As the Romans Did*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 204.

Reform Movement of the Gracchi

An awareness of Rome's serious social and economic problems led to the reform program of an idealistic and ambitious young aristocrat named Tiberius Gracchus. His reforming spirit was partly the product of newly imported philosophical arguments from Greece and an awareness that the old Roman values and customs were fast slipping away. He sought to stop Roman decline by restoring the backbone of the old Roman society, the small landowner. Supported by a **faction** of senators, Tiberius was elected tribune for the year 133 B.C.E. at the age of 29.

Tiberius proposed to the Tribal Assembly that the act limiting the holding of public land to 320 acres per male citizen, plus 160 acres for each of two grown-up sons, be reenacted. Much of the public land would continue to be held by the present occupants and their heirs as private property, but the rest was to be taken back and granted to the poor in small plots of 9 to 18 acres. The recipients were to pay a small rent and could not sell their holdings. When it became evident that the Tribal Assembly would adopt Tiberius's proposal, opposing senators persuaded one of the other tribunes to veto the measure. On the ground that a tribune who opposed the will of the people had no right to his office, Tiberius took a fateful—and, the Senate claimed, unconstitutional—step by having the assembly depose the tribune in question. The agrarian bill was then passed.

To ensure the implementation of his agrarian reform, Tiberius again violated custom by standing for reelection in the Tribal Assembly after completing his one-year term. Claiming that he sought to make himself king, partisans of the Senate murdered Tiberius and 300 of his followers.

Tiberius's work was taken up by his younger brother, Gaius Gracchus, who was elected tribune for 123 B.C.E. In addition to the allocation of public land to the poor, Gaius proposed establishing Roman colonies in southern Italy and in Africa—his enemies said near the site of Carthage. To protect the poor against speculation in the grain market (especially in times of famine), Gaius committed the government to the purchase, storage, and distribution of wheat to the urban poor at about half the actual market price. Unfortunately, what Gaius intended as a relief measure later became a dole, through which nearly free food was distributed—all too often for the advancement of astute politicians—to the entire proletariat.

Another of Gaius's proposals would have granted citizenship to Rome's Italian allies, who felt they were being mistreated by Roman officials. This proposal

cost Gaius the support of the Roman proletariat, which did not wish to share the privileges of citizenship or share its control of the Tribal Assembly. In 121 B.C.E. Gaius failed to be reelected to a third term as tribune. In a further effort to guard against Gaius's leadership, the Senate again resorted to force. It decreed that the consuls could take any action deemed necessary "to protect the state and suppress the tyrants." Three thousand of Gaius's followers were killed in rioting or were arrested and executed, a fate Gaius avoided by committing suicide.

Through these actions, the Senate had shown that it had no intention of initiating needed domestic reforms or of allowing others to do so, and the deaths of Tiberius and Gaius were ominous signals of the way the Republic would decide its internal disputes in the future. In foreign affairs as well, the Senate demonstrated ineptness. Rome was forced to grant citizenship to its Italian allies after the Senate's failure to deal with their grievances pushed them into open revolt (90–88 B.C.E.). Other shortsighted actions led to the first of the three civil wars that assisted in the destruction of the Republic.

The First Civil War: Marius Against Sulla

Between 111 and 105 B.C.E. Roman armies, dispatched by the Senate and commanded by senators, failed to protect Roman business interests in Numidia, a kingdom in North Africa allied to Rome. Nor were they able to prevent Germanic tribes from overrunning southern Gaul, then a Roman province, and threatening Italy itself. Accusing the Senate of neglect and incompetence in directing Rome's foreign affairs, the Roman commercial class and common people joined together to elect Gaius Marius consul in 107 B.C.E., and the Tribal Assembly commissioned him to raise an army to put down the foreign danger. Marius first pacified North Africa and then crushed the first German threat to Rome. In the process, he created a new-style Roman army that was destined to play a major role in the turbulent history of the late Republic.

Unlike the old Roman army, which was composed of conscripts who owned their own land and thought of themselves as loyal citizens of the Republic, the new army created by Marius was recruited from landless citizens for long terms of service. These professional soldiers identified their own interests with those of their commanders, to whom they swore loyalty and looked to for bonuses of land and money, since the Senate had refused their requests for such support. Thus the character of the army changed from a militia of draftees to a "personal army" in which loyalty to the state was replaced with loyalty to the commander.

faction—A like-minded, organized group that operates within another group or government. In Rome, various factions rivaled each other for political power in the state.

In 133 B.C.E., a tribune named Tiberius Gracchus proposed a solution to a major crisis in the Roman state. Redistribution of land to the landless and unemployed residents of the city would allow these individuals to become productive citizens, strengthen the economy, and enable the Roman system of military service, which was dependent on land-owning citizens, to function more effectively. Even though such reform was thought to be necessary by many in the Roman aristocracy, Tiberius was resented for the power and prestige his land law gave him, and he was assassinated by rival aristocrats. The tradition of nonviolent domestic reform through compromise and debate was ended in Rome; many students of Roman history see in the assassination of Tiberius, and of his younger brother Gaius ten years after, the first indications of the breakdown of the Roman Republic:

... Flavius got to (Tiberius), and informed him that the rich men, in a sitting of the senate, seeing they could not prevail upon the consul to espouse their quarrel, had come to a final determination amongst themselves that he should be assassinated, and to that purpose had a great number of their friends and servants ready armed to accomplish it. Tiberius no sooner communicated this confederacy to those about him, but they immediately tucked up their gowns, broke the halberts which the officers used to keep the crowd off into pieces, and distributed them amongst themselves, resolving to resist the attack with these. Those who stood at a distance wondered, and asked what was the occasion; Tiberius, knowing they could not hear him at that distance, lifted his hand to his head wishing to intimate the great danger which he apprehended himself to be in. His Adversaries, taking notice of that action, ran off at once to the senate-house, and declared that Tiberius desired the people to bestow a crown upon him, as if this were the meaning of his touching his head. This news created general confusion in the senators, and Nasica at once called upon the consul to punish the tyrant, and defend the government. The consul mildly replied that he would not be the first to do any violence. . . . But Nasica, rising from his seat, "Since the consul," said he, "regards not the safety of the commonwealth, let every one who will defend the laws, follow me." He then, casting the skirt of his gown over his head, hastened to the capitol; those who bore him company, wrapped their gowns also about their arms, and forced their way after him. And as they were persons of the greatest authority in the city, the common people did not venture to obstruct their passing but were rather so eager to clear the way for them, that they tumbled over one another in haste. The attendants they brought with them had furnished themselves with clubs and staves from their houses, and they themselves picked up the feet and other fragments of stools and chairs, which were broken by the hasty flight of the common people. Thus armed, they made towards Tiberius, knocking down those whom they found in front of him, and those were soon wholly dispersed and many of them slain. Tiberius tried to save himself by flight. As he was running, he was stopped by one who caught hold of

him by the gown; but he threw it off, and fled in his under-garment only. And stumbling over those who before had been knocked down, as he was endeavouring to get up again, Publius Satureius, a tribune, one of his colleagues was observed to give him the first fatal stroke, by hitting him upon the head with the foot of a stool. The second blow was claimed, as though it had been a deed to be proud of, by Lucius Rufus. And of the rest there fell above three hundred killed by clubs and staves only, none by an iron weapon.

This, we are told, was the first sedition amongst the Romans, since the abrogation of kingly government, that ended in the effusion of blood. . . . Tiberius himself might then have been easily induced, by mere persuasion, to give way, and certainly, if attacked at all, must have yielded without any recourse to violence and bloodshed. . . . But it is evident, that this conspiracy was fomented against him, more out of the hatred and malice which the rich men had to his person, than for the reasons which they commonly pretended against him. In testimony of which we may adduce the cruelty and unnatural insults which they used to his dead body. For they would not suffer his own brother, though he earnestly begged the favour, to bury him in the night, but threw him, together with the other corpses, into the river. Neither did their animosity stop here; for they banished some of his friends without legal process, and slew as many of the others as they could lay their hands on; amongst whom Diphanes, the orator, was slain, and one Caius Villius cruelly murdered by being shut up in a large tun with vipers and serpents.

Questions to Consider

1. Do you think that Tiberius's assassination could represent a crucial step in the decline of the Roman Republic?
2. Does Plutarch's description of the assassination give you the impression that the assassination was a well-thought-out plan, or action taken in haste? Why?
3. If Tiberius Gracchus's assassination was planned by the Senatorial opposition, what did this group have to gain by Tiberius's death? Why did they resort to violence?

From Plutarch, *Life of Tiberius Gracchus*, 16–20, in *Readings in Ancient History*, vol. 2, ed. William Davis (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1913) pp. 108–109.

Ambitious generals were in a position to use their military power to seize the government.

Encouraged by growing anti-Roman sentiment in the province of Asia and in Greece caused by corrupt governors, tax collectors, and moneylenders, in 88 B.C.E. the king of Pontus, in Asia Minor, declared war on Rome. The Senate ordered Cornelius Sulla, an able general and a strong supporter of the Senate's authority, to march east and restore order. As a countermove, the Tribal Assembly chose Marius for the eastern command. In effect both the Senate and the Tribal Assembly, whose power the Gracchi had revived, claimed to be the ultimate authority in the state. The result was the first of a series of civil wars between rival generals, each claiming to champion the cause of either the Senate or the Tribal Assembly. The first civil war ended in a complete victory for Sulla, who in 82 B.C.E. was appointed dictator by the Senate, not for a maximum of six months but for an unlimited term as "dictator for the revision of the constitution."

Sulla intended to restore the pre-eminence of the Senate. He drastically reduced the powers of the tribunes and the Tribal Assembly, giving the Senate virtually complete control of all legislation. Having massacred several thousand of the opposition, Sulla was convinced that his constitutional improvements would be permanent, and in 79 B.C.E., he voluntarily resigned his dictatorship and retired from public life.

The Second Civil War: Pompey Against Caesar

The first of the civil wars and its aftermath increased both discontent and division in the state and fueled the ambitions of younger individuals eager for personal power. The first of these men to come forward was Pompey (106–48 B.C.E.), who had won fame as a military leader. In 70 B.C.E. he was elected consul. Although he was a former supporter of Sulla, he won popularity with the commoners by repealing Sulla's laws limiting the

client state—A kingdom or region that Rome considered to be dependent on Rome's patronage. Such states enjoyed some measure of independence but were expected to seek approval from Rome for any major undertaking. If client states failed to satisfy Roman expectations, Rome usually moved to establish permanent control.

power of the tribunes and the Tribal Assembly. Pompey then put an end to disorder in the East caused by piracy (the result of the Senate's neglect of the Roman navy), the continuing threats of the king of Pontus, and the political uncertainty caused by the collapse of the Seleucid Empire. New Roman provinces and **client states** set up by Pompey brought order eastward as far as the Euphrates. These included the province of Syria—the last remnant of the once vast Seleucid Empire—and the client state of Judea, supervised by the governor of Syria.

Marcus Crassus (MAR-kuhs KRAS-suhs) was another ambitious member of the Senate who was also reputed to be the richest man in Rome resulting from his shrewd business dealings throughout the empire. Crassus was given special military command in 71 B.C.E. to crush the rebellion of nearly 70,000 slaves in southern and central Italy led by the gladiator Spartacus.



A magnificent and idealized representation of Julius Caesar (100–44 B.C.E.), consummate politician, military strategist, and the first Roman to be awarded the title Dictator for Life. Caesar, in possession of more power than any previous Roman political leader, was assassinated in 44 B.C.E. by opponents who feared that he would destroy the Republic.

Still another ambitious and able leader beginning his public career in the 60s was Gaius Julius Caesar (100–44 B.C.E.) From a noble family, Caesar nonetheless chose to appeal to the commoners for most of his support.

Pompey, Crassus, and Caesar all found that the Senate stood in the way of their desires for more control in the state. To negate senatorial opposition, these three politicians agreed to cooperate with one another in an informal arrangement later called the First Triumvirate. All three politicians would pool their resources to help each individual member reach his personal goals in the state and subvert the opposition of the Senate. In 59 B.C.E. Julius Caesar was elected consul and worked to enact legislation favored by Pompey and Crassus. Following his consulship, Caesar spent nine years conquering Gaul, under the pretext of protecting the Gauls from the Germans across the Rhine. He accumulated a fortune in plunder and trained a loyal army of veterans. During his absence from Rome, he kept his name before the citizens by publishing an attractively written account of his military feats, *Commentaries on the Gallic War*.

Crassus was killed in battle against the Parthians of Persia in 53 B.C.E. Steadily becoming more fearful of Caesar's growing power, Pompey associated himself with the Senate in order to limit Caesar's authority. When the Senate demanded in 49 B.C.E. that Caesar disband his army, he crossed the Rubicon, the river in northern Italy that formed the boundary of his province, and in effect declared war on Pompey and the Senate. He marched on Rome while Pompey and most of the Senate fled to Greece, where Caesar eventually defeated them at Pharsalus (FAR-sa-luhs) in 48 B.C.E. Pompey was killed in Egypt when he sought refuge there. By 45 B.C.E. Caesar had eliminated all military threats against him, and he returned in triumph to Rome to exercise what he hoped would be unlimited power.

As he assumed the title of "dictator for the administration of public affairs," Caesar initiated far-reaching reforms. He granted citizenship to the Gauls and packed the Senate with many new non-Italian members, making it a more truly representative body as well as a rubber stamp for his policies. In the interest of the poorer citizens, he reduced debts, inaugurated a public works program, established colonies outside Italy, and decreed that one-third of the laborers on the slave-worked estates in Italy be persons of free birth. As a result, he was able to reduce from 320,000 to 150,000 the number of people in the city of Rome receiving free grain. (The population of Rome is estimated to have been 500,000 at this time.) His most enduring act was the reform of the calendar in the light of Egyptian knowledge; with minor changes, this calendar of 365 1/4 days is still in use today.

Caesar realized that the Republic was dead. In his own words, "The Republic is merely a name, without form or substance." He believed that only intelligent autocratic leadership could save Rome from continued civil war and collapse. But Caesar inspired the hatred of many, particularly those who viewed him as a high-handed egomaniac who not only had destroyed the Republic but also even aspired to having himself recognized as a god. On the Ides (fifteenth day) of March, 44 B.C.E., a group of conspirators, led by Brutus and other ex-Pompeians whom Caesar had pardoned, stabbed him to death in the Senate, and Rome was once more drawn into conflict.

The Third Civil War: Antony Versus Octavian

Following Caesar's death, his 18-year-old grand-nephew and heir, Octavian (63 B.C.E.–14 C.E.), allied himself with Caesar's chief lieutenant, Mark Antony, against the conspirators and the Senate. The conspirators' armies were defeated at Philippi in Macedonia in 42 B.C.E. Then for more than a decade, Octavian and Antony exercised dictatorial power and

divided the Roman world between them. But the ambitions of each man proved too great for the alliance to endure.

Antony, who took charge of the eastern half of the empire, became completely infatuated with Queen Cleopatra, the last of the Egyptian Ptolemies. He even went so far as to transfer Roman territories to her control. Octavian took advantage of Antony's blunders to propagandize Rome and Italy against Antony and his foreign lover-queen. The resulting struggle was portrayed by Octavian as a war between the Roman West and the "oriental" East. When Octavian's fleet met Antony's near Actium in Greece, first Cleopatra and then Antony deserted the battle and fled to Egypt. There Antony committed suicide, as Cleopatra did soon afterward when Alexandria was captured by Octavian in 30 B.C.E.

THE ROMAN EMPIRE AND THE PAX ROMANA: 30 B.C.E.–476 C.E.

- What were the most significant achievements of the Roman Empire, and what were its greatest failures?

At the end of a century of civil violence, Rome was at last united under one leader, Octavian, who was hailed by the grateful Romans as the "father of his country." The Republic gave way to the permanent dictatorship of the empire, and two centuries of imperial greatness, known as the *Pax Romana* ("Roman Peace"), followed. But in the third century, the empire was beset with challenges that proved disastrous: economic stagnation, Germanic invasions, and finally the loss of imperial control of the empire in the west.

Reconstruction Under Augustus

Following his triumphal return to Rome, Octavian in 27 B.C.E. announced that he would "restore the Republic." But he did so only outwardly by blending republican institutions with his own strong personal leadership. He consulted the Senate on important issues, allowed it to retain control over Italy and half of the provinces, and gave it the legislative functions of the nearly unused Tribal Assembly. The Senate in return bestowed on Octavian the title *Augustus* ("The Revered," a title previously used for gods), by which he was known thereafter.

During the rest of his 45-year rule, Augustus never again held the office of dictator, and he seldom held the consulship. Throughout his career he kept the powers of a tribune, which gave him the right to initi-



Excerpt
from
Suetonius,
*The Life of
Augustus*

The Roman Empire

- 14–68 C.E. Period of the Julio-Claudian emperors
- 64 C.E. Rome destroyed by fire; Emperor Nero attributes fire to Christians
- 69–96 C.E. Period of the Flavian emperors
- 79 C.E. Mount Vesuvius erupts, destroying Pompeii
- 96–180 C.E. Period of the Antonine emperors
- 313 C.E. Emperor Constantine issues Edict of Milan; Christians free to worship
- 378 C.E. Battle of Adrianople; Germanic invasions into Roman Empire begin
- 395 C.E. Roman Empire divided into eastern and western empires
- 476 C.E. Last Roman emperor in the West assassinated

ate legislation and to veto the legislative and administrative acts of others. He also kept for himself the governorship of the frontier provinces, where the armies were stationed. Augustus's nearly total control of the army meant that his power could not be successfully

challenged. From his military title, *imperator* ("victorious general"), is derived our modern term *emperor*.

Augustus constructed a constitution in which his power was in reality almost unlimited, yet disguised through his masterful use of the institutions of the old republic. He preferred the modest title of *princeps*, "first citizen" or "leader," that he felt best described his position, and his form of virtual dictatorship is therefore known as the Principate. At the beginning of the empire, then, political power was in appearances divided between the princeps and the senatorial aristocrats. This arrangement was continued by most of Augustus's successors during the next two centuries.

Seeking to heal the scars of more than a century of civil strife, Augustus concentrated on internal reform. He annexed Egypt and extended the Roman frontier to the Danube as a defense against barbarian invasions, but he failed in an attempt to conquer Germany up to the Elbe River. As a result, the Germans were never Romanized, as the Celts of Gaul and Spain were.

Through legislation and propaganda, Augustus attempted to check moral and social decline and revive the old Roman ideals and traditions. He rebuilt deteriorated temples, revived old priesthoods, and restored religious festivals. He attempted to reestablish the integrity of the family by legislating against adultery, the chief grounds for divorce, which had become quite common during the late Republic. A permanent court



The Roman Empire at the time of Augustus.

was set up to prosecute adulterous wives and their lovers. Among those found guilty and banished from Rome were Augustus's own daughter and granddaughter. Finally, to disarm the gangs that had been terrorizing citizens, he outlawed the carrying of daggers.

Augustus greatly reduced the corruption and exploitation that had flourished in the late Republic by creating a well-paid civil service, open to all classes. He also established a permanent standing army, stationed in the frontier provinces and kept out of politics. More than 40 colonies of retired soldiers were founded throughout the empire. Augustus's reforms also gave rise to a new optimism and patriotism that were reflected in the art and literature of the Augustan Age.



Augustus on his accomplishments

The Julio-Claudian and Flavian Emperors

Augustus was followed by four descendants from among his family, the line of the Julio-Claudians, who ruled from 14 to 68 C.E. Augustus's stepson Tiberius, whom the Senate accepted as his successor, and Claudius were fairly efficient and devoted rulers; in Claudius's reign the Roman occupation of Britain began in 43 C.E. The other two rulers of this imperial line disregarded the appearance that they were only the first among all citizens: Caligula (Ka-LIG-eu-lah), Tiberius's nephew and successor, was a megalomaniac who demanded to be worshiped as a god and considered the idea of having his favorite horse elected to high office in Rome; Nero, Claudius's adopted son and successor, was notorious for his immorality, for the

murders of his wife and his mother, and for beginning the persecutions of Christians in Rome. Caligula and Nero have been immortalized through history for their excesses and depravity, yet both functioned effectively as emperors for at least some duration of their reigns. Nero in particular was recognized to be intelligent and accomplished by some of his contemporaries.

The Julio-Claudian line ended in 68 C.E. when Nero, declared a public enemy by the Senate and facing army revolts, committed suicide. In the following year, four emperors were proclaimed by rival armies, with Vespasian (ves-PAY-si-an) the final victor. For nearly 30 years (69–96 C.E.) the Flavian dynasty (Vespasian followed by his two sons, Titus and Domitian) provided the empire with effective but autocratic rule. The fiction of republican institutions gave way to a scarcely veiled monarchy as the Flavians openly treated the office of emperor as theirs by right of conquest and inheritance.

The Antonines: "Five Good Emperors"

An end to autocracy and a return to the Augustan principle of an administration of equals—emperor and Senate—characterized the rule of the Antonine emperors (96–180 C.E.), under whom the empire reached the height of its prosperity and power. Selected on the basis of proven ability, these "good emperors" succeeded in establishing a spirit of confidence and optimism among the governing classes throughout the empire. Two of these emperors are especially worthy of mention.

Hadrian reigned from 117 to 138 C.E. His first important act was to stabilize the boundaries of the



The villa of the emperor Hadrian at Tivoli, a short distance away from Rome's congestion. Hadrian had the landscaped

empire. He gave up as indefensible recently conquered Armenia and Mesopotamia and erected protective walls in Germany and Britain. Hadrian traveled extensively, inspecting almost every province of the empire. New cities were founded, old ones were restored, and many public works were constructed, among them the famous Pantheon, still standing in Rome.

The last of the "five good emperors" was Marcus Aurelius (MAHR-kuhs ah-REE-lee-uhs), who ruled from 161 to 180 C.E. He preferred the study of philosophy and the quiet contemplation of his books to the blood and brutality of the battlefield. Yet he was repeatedly troubled by the invasions of the Parthians from the east and Germans from across the Danube. While engaged in his Germanic campaigns, he wrote his *Meditations*, a collection of personal thoughts notable for its Stoic idealism and love of humanity. Like a good Stoic, Marcus Aurelius died at his post at Vindobona (Vienna); at Rome his equestrian statue still stands on the Capitoline Hill.

The Pax Romana

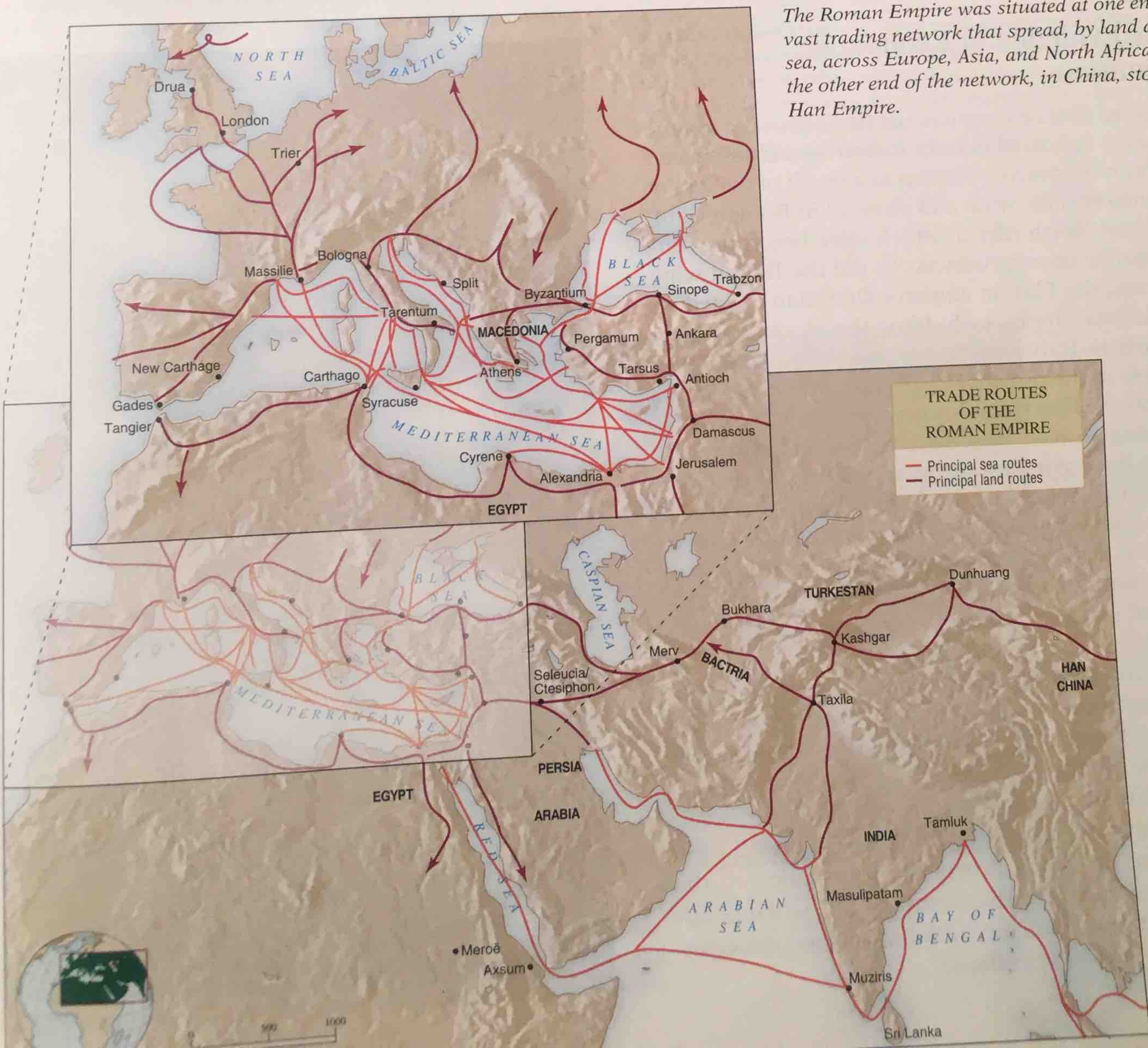
In its finest period, the empire was a vast area stretching from Britain to the Euphrates and populated by more than 100 million people. It was welded together into an orderly and generally peaceful state, bringing stability and prosperity to the Mediterranean region and beyond. Non-Romans were equally conscious of the rich benefits derived from the Pax Romana, which began with Augustus and reached its fullest development under the Five Good Emperors. They welcomed the peace, prosperity, and administrative efficiency of the empire. Cities increased in number and were largely self-governed by their own upper-class magistrates and senates.

DOCUMENT
Excerpt from Aelius Aristides, *The Roman Oration*

Economic Prosperity

Rome's unification of the ancient Mediterranean world had far-reaching economic consequences. The

The Roman Empire was situated at one end of a vast trading network that spread, by land and sea, across Europe, Asia, and North Africa. At the other end of the network, in China, stood the Han Empire.



Pax Romana was responsible for the elimination of tolls and other artificial barriers, the suppression of piracy and lawlessness, and the establishment of a reliable coinage. Such factors, in addition to the longest period of peace the West has ever enjoyed, explain in large measure the great expansion of commerce that occurred in the first and second centuries C.E. Industry was also stimulated, but its expansion was limited since wealth remained concentrated and no mass market for industrial goods was created. Industry remained organized on a small-shop basis, with producers widely scattered, resulting in self-sufficiency.

The economy of the empire remained basically agricultural, and huge estates, the *latifundia*, prospered. On these tracts, usually belonging to absentee owners, large numbers of *coloni*, free tenants, tilled the soil as sharecroppers. The *coloni* were replacing slave labor, which was becoming increasingly hard to secure with the disappearance of the flow of war captives.

Early Evidence of Economic Stagnation

Late in the first century C.E. the first sign of economic stagnation appeared in Italy. Italian agriculture began to suffer from overproduction as a result of the loss of Italy's markets for wine and olive oil in Roman Gaul, Spain, and North Africa, which were becoming self-sufficient in those products. To aid the Italian wine producers, the Flavian emperor Domitian created an artificial scarcity by forbidding the planting of new vineyards in Italy and by ordering half the existing vineyards in the provinces to be plowed under. A century later the Five Good Emperors sought to solve the continuing problem of overproduction in Italy by subsidizing the buying power of consumers. Loans at 5 percent interest were made to ailing landowners, with the interest to be paid into the treasuries of Italian municipalities and earmarked "for girls and boys of needy parents to be supported at public expense." This system of state subsidies was soon extended to the provinces.

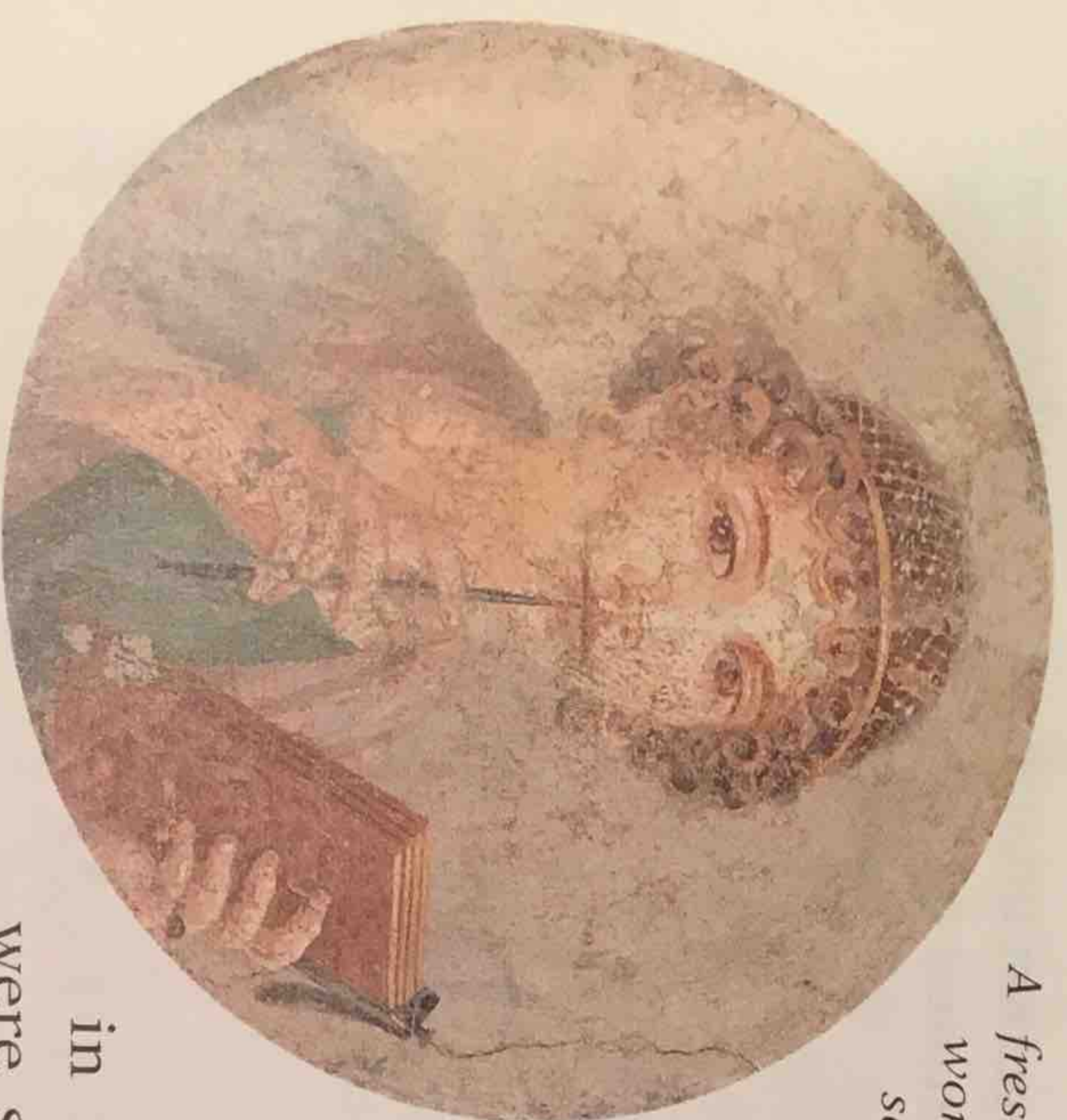
Also contributing to Roman economic stagnation was the continuing drain of money to the East for the purchase of such luxury goods as silks and spices and the failure of city governments within the empire to keep their finances in order, thus making it necessary for the imperial government to intervene. Such early evidence of declining prosperity foreshadowed the economic crisis of the third century C.E., when political anarchy and monetary inflation caused the economy of the empire to collapse.

Roman Society During the Empire

The social structure of Rome and of the entire empire underwent slow but significant change in the early centuries of the Common Era. At the top of the Roman social order were the old senatorial families who lived as absentee owners of huge estates and left commerce and finance to a large and wealthy middle class. In contrast to the tenements of the poor, the homes of the rich were palatial, as revealed by excavations at Pompeii, which was buried and so preserved by the eruption of the volcano Vesuvius in 79 C.E. These elaborate villas contained courts and gardens with fountains, rooms with marble walls, mosaics on the floors, and numerous frescoes and other works of art. An interesting feature of Roman furniture was the abundance of couches

Wall painting of an imaginary garden, recently excavated in the villa of Livia Drusilla, the wife of the emperor Augustus. The scene is painted on the wall of Livia's triclinium, a large living and dining area within the villa, and dates to circa 10 B.C.E. Trees, fruits, birds, and flowers of all varieties are portrayed to create a perfect natural setting.





A fresco portrait of a young woman from Pompeii. She seems to be caught in thought as she prepares to make an entry in her diary.

and the scarcity of chairs. People usually reclined, even at meals.

Roman women in the early empire were still very much the subjects of their fathers or husbands. They could not vote, they had almost no opportunity to represent their own interests in the law courts, nor could they initiate divorce proceedings unless a husband could be convicted of sorcery or murder. Women of very high social status continued to be looked upon as valuable assets in creating marriage alliances between families for eventual political or economic advantage. Wives of many emperors were regarded as representations of the ideal Roman woman, but most such highborn women were given little actual power. With the steady increase in the west of the number of noble women from the eastern empire, where women were permitted more indepen-

dence of character and action, and through the growing popularity of eastern **mystery religions**, which highlighted the significance of women, the western empire began slowly to grant more rights to its female citizens.

The lower classes in the cities found recreation in social clubs, or guilds, called *collegia* (co-LEE-gee-ah), each comprising the workers of one trade. The activity of the *collegia* did not center on economic goals, like modern trade unions, but on the worship of a god and on feasts, celebrations, and decent burials for members. The social conditions of slaves varied greatly. Those in domestic service were often treated humanely, with their years of efficient service sometimes rewarded by emancipation or a less demanding retirement from service. Freed slaves were sometimes able to rise to positions of significance in business, letters, and the imperial service. But conditions among slaves on the large estates could be indescribably harsh.

Beginning with Augustus, however, legal restrictions protected slaves from mistreatment.



Slaves in Roman Law

mystery religion—Secret religious cults popular in both Greece and Rome. They reached their peak of popularity in the first three centuries C.E. Their members met secretly to share meals and take part in dances and ceremonies, especially initiation rites. Observance of the proper rites and rituals were thought to provide the initiated with a blessed and blissful existence in the afterlife.

Recreation played a key role in Roman social life. Both rich and poor were exceedingly fond of their public baths, which in the capital alone numbered 800 during the early days of the empire. The larger baths contained enclosed gardens, promenades, gymnasia, libraries, and famous works of art as well as a sequence of cleansing rooms through which one moved—the sweat room, the warm room where sweat was scraped off by a slave (soap was unknown), the tepid room for cooling off, and the invigorating cold bath. Another popular room was the lavatory, with its long row of marble toilets equipped with comfortable arm rests.

Footraces, boxing, and wrestling were popular sports, but chariot racing and gladiatorial contests were the chief amusements. By the first century C.E. the Roman calendar had as many as 100 days set aside as holidays, the majority of which were given over to games furnished at public expense. The most spectacular sport was chariot racing. The largest of six racecourses at Rome was the Circus Maximus, a huge marble-faced structure seating about 150,000 spectators. The games, which included as many as 24 races each day, were presided over by the emperor or his representative. The crowds bet furiously on their favorite charioteers, whose fame equaled that of the sports heroes of our own day.

Of equal or greater popularity were the gladiatorial contests, organized by both emperors and private promoters as regular features on the amusement calendar. These spectacles were held in arenas, the largest and most famous of which was the Colosseum, opened in 80 C.E. The contests took various forms. Ferocious animals were pitted against armed combatants



IMAGE
Roman
Colosseum

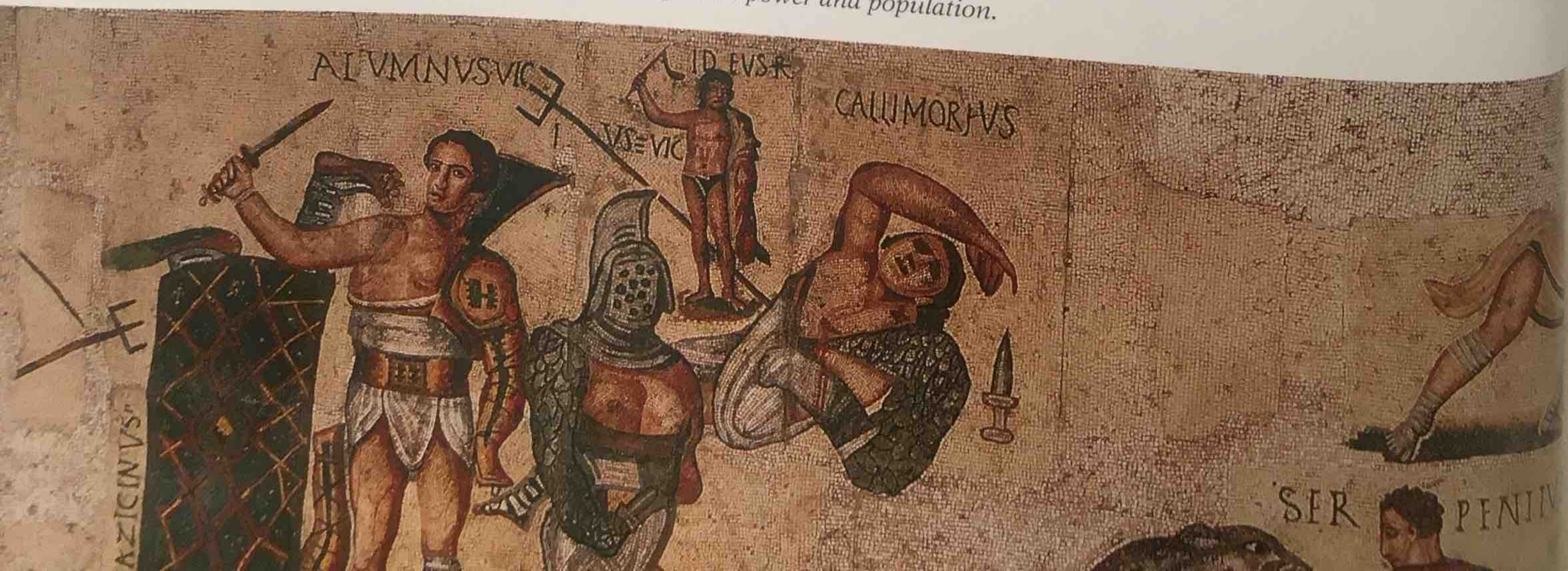
or occasionally even against unarmed men and women who had been condemned to death. Another type of contest was the fight to the death between gladiators, generally equipped with different types of weapons but matched on equal terms. It was not uncommon for the life of a defeated gladiator who had fought courageously to be spared at the request of the spectators. Although many Romans considered these bloodletting contests barbaric, they continued until the fifth century, when Christian rulers outlawed them.

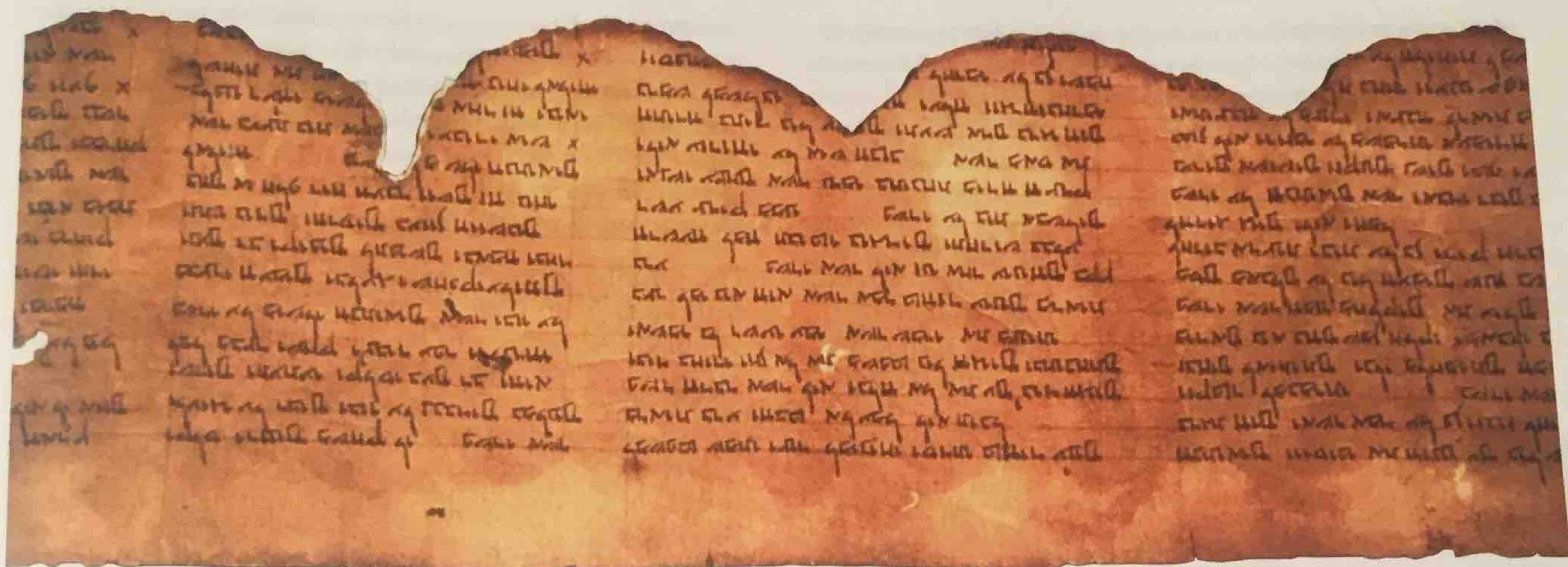
THE RISE OF CHRISTIANITY

- *How did Christianity grow from humble beginnings to become the sole religion of the Roman Empire?*

The growth of the Christian religion, from its modest beginnings in an obscure part of the Roman Empire to its eventual dominance as the one and only religion tolerated by that same empire that had once persecuted its followers, is a remarkable story. The rise and ultimate victory of Christianity in the Roman world has even been identified by many observers throughout Europe's history as perhaps the most significant reason for the ultimate decline and fall from dominance of the Roman Empire itself. Whether Christianity was the primary cause of Rome's demise remains a highly debated topic, but there is no controversy about the fact that the religion's growth and development in the ancient world changed not just the course of European but also of world history.

A mosaic from the third century B.C.E. depicting gladiators. Introduced to Rome by the Etruscans, gladiatorial contests grew in popularity and cruelty as Rome grew in power and population.





A partially unrolled section of the texts known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, now preserved and displayed at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The Scrolls were preserved by the Essenes, a sect of Jewish militant and religious zealots, whose nearby monastery was destroyed by the Romans in the Jewish revolt of 66–70 B.C.E.

The Jewish Background

Following the conquests of Alexander the Great in the Near East, the Ptolemies and then the Seleucids ruled Palestine. After the Jews returned from exile in Babylonia in 538 B.C.E. (see Chapter 1), they attempted to create a theocratic community based on God's law (the *Torah*) as contained in the *Pentateuch* (PEN-tah-teuk), the first five books of the Old Testament. Later they added to this record the teachings of the prophets and the writings of priests and scholars.

Jewish religious life in Jerusalem centered on the Temple at Jerusalem, and Jewish groups outside Palestine—the Jews of the Diaspora, those who did not return to Palestine after the Babylonian exile—met in local *synagogues* (from the Greek word for “assembly”) for public worship and instruction in the Scriptures.

During the Hellenistic Age, Greek philosophy and culture constantly influenced the Jews outside Palestine, most of whom spoke Greek, and contributed to factionalism among the Jews in Palestine. Religious conflict often developed into open warfare.

It was in the midst of a civil war that the Roman legions first made their appearance. In 63 B.C.E. Pompey, who was then completing his pacification of Asia Minor and Syria, made Judea a Roman dependency, subject to the Roman governor of Syria. Later, Herod the Great, a half-Jewish, half-Arab leader from Edom, was appointed king of Judea by Mark Antony and reigned from 37 to 4 B.C.E. Soon after Herod's death, Judea became a Roman administrative unit ruled by officials called *procurators*. The best-known procurator was Pontius Pilate, who ruled from 26 to 36 C.E. and under whose government Jesus was crucified. The Jews remained unhappy and divided under Roman domination. For centuries the prophets had taught

that God would one day create a new Israel under a Messiah—a leader anointed by God. Many Jews lost hope in a political Messiah and an earthly kingdom and instead began to hope for a Messiah who would lead all the righteous to a spiritual kingdom.

The Life and Teaching of Jesus

The Jewish sect that became Christianity bears the unmistakable imprint of the personality of its founder, Jesus of Nazareth. According to the biblical accounts pieced together from the four Gospels, he was born in Bethlehem during Herod's reign; therefore, he must have been born by the time of Herod's death in 4 B.C.E.—probably not in the year that traditionally begins the Christian or Common Era, 1 C.E. After spending the first years of his adult life as a carpenter in the village of Nazareth, Jesus began preaching love for one's fellow human beings and urging people to turn away from sin.

Reports of Jesus's miracles, such as casting out demons, healing the sick, raising the dead, and walking on water, spread among the Jews as he and his 12 apostles traveled from village to village. When he came to Jerusalem to observe the feast of the Passover, huge crowds greeted him enthusiastically as the promised Messiah. But his opponents, most importantly the influential sect of the **Pharisees**, accused him of distortion

Pharisees—Jewish religious party that emerged c. 160 B.C.E. in Palestine. The Pharisees believed that the Jewish oral tradition was as valid as the law presented in the Old Testament. Their belief that reason must be applied in the interpretation of the Old Testament and its application to contemporary problems has now become basic to Jewish theology.



DOCUMENT

Excerpt from
the Gospel
According to
Luke

of Jewish religious law, and with treason for claiming to be king of the Jews. He was crucified, a standard Roman penalty for treason, probably in 30 C.E.

The Spread of Christianity

Soon after Jesus's death, word spread that he had been seen alive after his crucifixion and had spoken to his disciples, giving them comfort and reassurance. Initially, there were few converts in Palestine, but the Hellenized Jews living in foreign lands, in contact with new ideas and modes of living, were less firmly committed to traditional Jewish **doctrines**.



The Spread of Christianity to 300 C.E.

The new faith first made rapid headway among the Jewish communities in such cities as Damascus, Antioch (where its followers were first called "Christians" by the Greeks), Corinth, and Rome.

The first followers of Jesus had no thought of breaking away from Judaism. But because they adhered to the requirements of the Jewish law, their new message did not easily attract non-Jews. These obstacles were largely removed through more liberal and cosmopolitan teachings of an early Christian convert now known as Saint Paul. Because of his powerful influence, he has been called the second founder of Christianity.

Originally named Saul, Paul was of Jewish ancestry but a Roman citizen by birth. He was raised in the cosmopolitan city of Tarsus, in Asia Minor, and possessed a thorough knowledge of Greek culture. He was also a strict Pharisee who considered Christians to be traitors to the sacred law, and he took an active part in their persecution. One day about 33 C.E., while traveling to Damascus to prosecute the Christian community there, Saul experienced a conversion to the very beliefs he had been vigorously opposing. His conversion caused him to change his name, and also the whole course of his life—from an opponent of the new religion into the greatest of the early Christian missionaries.

Paul taught that Jesus was the Christ (from the Greek *Christos*, "Messiah"), the Son of God, and that he had died to atone for the sins of all people, and to bring salvation to Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) alike. Adherence to the complexities of the Jewish law was unnecessary.

After covering 8000 miles teaching and preaching, Paul supposedly was put to death in Rome about 65 C.E., the same year as Peter, founder of the church at Rome, during the reign of Nero. By that time Christian communities had been established in all the major cities in the East and at Rome. Paul had performed a very important service to these infant communities of

doctrine—A specific position that is taught or advocated. In a religious context, a doctrine is an official position that must be accepted by those who wish to consider themselves believers.

believers by instructing them, either through visits or letters, in the fundamental beliefs of the new religion. He had served as an authority by which standardization of belief could be achieved.

Reasons for the Spread of Christianity

The popular mystery religions that the Romans had embraced from Greece and the Near East during the troubled last century of the Republic gave spiritual satisfaction not provided by Rome's early ritualistic forms of worship. These mystery religions included the worship of the Phrygian Cybele (Si-BEH-lee), the Great Mother (*Magna Mater*); the Egyptian Isis, sister and wife of Osiris; the Greek Dionysus, called Bacchus by the Romans; and the Persian sun-god Mithras, the intermediary between humans and Ahura-Mazda, the great Lord of Light, whose sacred day of worship was called Sunday and from whose cult women were excluded. Common to all the mystery religions were the notions of a divine savior and the promise of everlasting life.

Followers of these mystery cults found Christian beliefs and practices familiar enough to convert easily to the new faith. But Christianity had far more to offer than the mystery religions did. Its founder was not a creature of myth, like the gods and goddesses of the mystery cults, but a real person whose ethical teachings were preserved by his followers and later written down. Shared with the Jews was the concept of a single omnipotent God, the God of the Hebrew Scriptures, now the God of all humanity. Moreover, Christianity was a dynamic, aggressive faith. It upheld the spiritual equality of all people—rich and poor, slave and freeborn, male and female. Women were among Jesus's audiences, and Paul's letters give much evidence of women active in the early church. One of Jesus's closest and favored followers was said to have been Mary Magdalene, a former prostitute. According to the so-called Gnostic Gospels, which the church declared heretical in the early fourth century and ordered destroyed, "Christ loved her more than all the disciples."

Christianity taught that God, the loving Father, had sent his only Son to atone for human sins and offered a vision of immortality and an opportunity to be "born again," cleansed of sin. Its converts were bound together by faith and hope, and they took seriously their obligation of caring for orphans, widows, and other unfortunates. The courage with which some of their number faced death and persecution impressed even their bitterest enemies.

Persecution of the Christians

The Roman government tolerated any religion that did not threaten the safety and stability of the empire.

versive danger to society and the state. Christians, as monotheists, refused to offer sacrifice to the state cults on behalf of the emperor—not even a few grains of incense cast upon an altar. Offering sacrifice to the state cults was considered an essential patriotic rite uniting all Roman subjects in common loyalty to the imperial government. For Christians, however, there was only one God: they could sacrifice to no others. In the eyes of many Roman officials, this attitude branded them as traitors.

To the Romans, the Christians were a secret antisocial group forming a state within a state—“walling themselves off from the rest of mankind,” as a pagan writer observed. Many were pacifists who refused to serve in the army, denied the legitimacy of other religious sects, and refused to associate with pagans or take part in social functions that they considered sinful or degrading.

During the first two centuries after Jesus’s crucifixion, persecution of Christians was sporadic and local, such as that at Rome under Nero. But during the late third and fourth centuries, when the empire was in danger of collapse, three organized efforts were launched to suppress Christianity throughout the empire. By far the longest and most systematic campaign against the Christians, who made up perhaps one-tenth of the population in the early fourth century, was instigated by the emperor Diocletian (dai-o-KLEE-shan) from 303 to 311. He stringently imposed the death penalty on anyone who refused to sacrifice to Roman gods. But the inspired defiance of the Christian **martyrs**, who seemed to welcome death, had a persuasive effect on many observers. “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church” became a Christian slogan.

Church Organization

Viewing the present world as something that would end quickly with the imminent second coming of Christ and the last judgment of the living and the dead, the earliest Christians saw no need to build a formal religious bureaucracy. But after it became clear that the second coming would not be immediate, a church organization emerged to manage the day-to-day business of defining, maintaining, and spreading the faith.

At first there was little or no distinction between laity and **clergy**. Traveling teachers visited Christian communities, preaching and giving advice. But the

martyrs—Those who voluntarily suffer death rather than deny their religious convictions. The early Christian church saw the suffering of martyrs as a test of their faith. Many saints of the early church underwent martyrdom during the persecutions imposed by Roman authorities.

clergy—The recognized group or body of persons who are officials of a religious organization. In the early Christian church, the clergy were ordained (recognized as officials through ceremonial appointment) and considered apart from the laity, or the believers who were not officials of the church.

steady growth in the number of Christians made necessary special church officials who could devote all their time to religious work, clarifying the body of Christian doctrine, conducting services, and collecting money for charitable purposes.

The earliest officials were called *presbyters* (“elders”), *deacons* (“servers”), or *bishops* (“overseers”). By the second century, the offices of bishop and presbyter had become distinct. Christian communities in villages near the main church, which was usually located in a city, were administered by priests who were responsible to a bishop. The *diocese*, a territorial administrative division under the jurisdiction of a bishop, usually corresponded to a Roman administrative district of the same name. The bishops were reputed to be the direct successors of the apostles and, like them, the guardians of Christian teaching and traditions.

A number of dioceses made up a *province*. The bishop of the most important city in each province enjoyed more prestige than his fellows and was known as an *archbishop* or *metropolitan*. The provinces were grouped into larger administrative divisions called *patriarchates*. The title of *patriarch* was applied to the bishop of such great cities as Rome, Constantinople, and Alexandria.

The bishop of Rome rose to a position of preeminence in the hierarchy of the church in the western empire. At first only one of several patriarchs, the Roman bishop gradually became recognized as the leader of the church in the West and was given the title of *pope*, from the Greek word for “father.” Many factors explain the emergence of the papacy (the office and jurisdiction of the pope) at Rome. As the largest city in the West and the capital of the empire, Rome had an aura of prestige that was transferred to its bishop. After political Rome had fallen, religious Rome remained. When the empire in the West collapsed in the fifth century, the bishop of Rome emerged as a stable and dominant figure looked up to by all. The primacy of Rome was fully evident during the pontificate of Leo I, the Great (440–461), who provided both the leadership that saved Italy from invasion by the Huns (see page 158) and the major theoretical support for papal leadership of the church, the Petrine theory. This doctrine held that because Peter, whom Jesus had made leader of the apostles, was the first bishop of Rome, his authority over all Christians was handed on to his successors at Rome. The church in the East, insisting on the equality of all the apostles, never accepted the Petrine theory.

Foundations of Christian Doctrine and Worship

While the administrative structure of the church adapted to changing conditions in the West, a combination of theologians and church administrators

defined and systematized Christian beliefs, sometimes by arbitrary means. This process of fixing Christian doctrine, or *dogma*, began with Paul, who stressed Jesus's divinity and explained his death as an atonement for the sins of all humanity.

In time, differences of opinion over doctrinal matters caused many controversies. One of the most important was over a belief called *Arianism*. At issue was the relative position of the three persons of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The view that Father and Son were equal was vigorously denied by Arius (256–336), a priest from Alexandria. He believed that Christ logically could not fully be God because he was not of a substance identical with God and, as a created being, was not coeternal with his creator. The controversy became so serious that in 325 the emperor Constantine convened the first ecumenical church council to resolve the problem. This Council of Nicaea (ni-SEE-a) was the first of such councils in early church history. With Constantine presiding, the council found the Arian position to be a *heresy*—an opinion or doctrine contrary to the official teaching of the church—and Christ was declared to be of the same substance as God, uncreated and coeternal with him. This mystical concept of the Trinity, essential to the central Christian doctrine of the *incarnation*—God becoming man in Christ—received official formulation in the Nicene Creed. However, Arius's views found acceptance among the Germans, and his version of the doctrine of the Trinity was adopted throughout Europe and North Africa.

The **liturgy** of the early churches was plain and simple, consisting of prayer, Scripture reading, hymns, and preaching. Early Christians worshipped God and sought salvation through individual efforts. Following the growth of church organization and proclamation of official dogma, however, the church came to be viewed as the indispensable intermediary between God and humans. Without the church, the individual could not hope for salvation.

The development of the church's dogma owed much to the church fathers of the second through fifth centuries. Since most of them were intellectuals who came to Christianity thoroughly equipped with a classical education, they maintained that Greek philoso-

heresy—Any belief rejected as false by religious authorities. In Christianity, the official teachings of the church were believed to be based on divine revelation, and so heretics were viewed as perversely rejecting the guidance of the church. Numerous Christian heresies appeared from the second century onwards.

liturgy—The organization of services for public worship. A standardized and formal presentation of services usually associated with public worship. In the early Christian context, the formal organization of services usually connected with the Eucharist.

phy and Christianity were compatible. Because reason (*logos* in Greek) and truth came from God, philosophy was considered a proper tool with which one could discover God's perfection. Thus Christianity was viewed as a superior philosophy that could supersede all pagan philosophies and religions.

In the West three church fathers made highly significant contributions to the formation of Christian dogma and organization. The scholarship of Jerome (340–420) made possible the church-authorized translation of the Bible into Latin. In a revised form, it is still the official translation of the Roman Catholic Church. Jerome also justified Christian use of the literature and learning of the classical world.

Another of the church fathers, St. Ambrose (340–397), resigned his government post to become bishop of Milan, where he employed his great administrative skills to establish a model bishopric. By criticizing the actions of the strong emperor Theodosius I and forcing him to do public penance, Ambrose was the first to assert the church's superiority over the state in spiritual matters.

St. Augustine (354 – 430) was the most influential of all the church fathers in the west. At the age of 32, as he relates in his *Confessions*, one of the world's great autobiographies, he found in Christianity the answer to his long search for meaning in life. Before, he had shared the doubts of men who search for spiritual satisfaction. He blended classical logic and philosophy with Christian belief to lay the foundation of much of the church's theology.

The Regular Clergy

The secular clergy moved through the world (*saeculum*; SAI-keu-lum), administering the church's services and communicating its teachings to the laity, the common people. But another type of clergy also arose: the regular clergy, so called because they lived by a rule (*regula*) within monasteries. These monks sought seclusion from the distractions of this world in order to prepare themselves for the next. In so doing, they helped preserve and spread the heritage of the classical world along with the faith.

The monastic way of life was older than formalized Christianity, having existed among the Essenes, a militant Jewish communal group. Christian ascetics, who had abandoned worldly life to live as hermits, could be found in Egypt and the East as early as the first century C.E. They pursued spiritual perfection by denying their physical feelings, torturing themselves, and fasting. In Syria, for example, St. Simeon Stylites sat for 33 years atop a 60-foot-high pillar. A disciple then surpassed his record by three months.

In a more moderate expression of **asceticism**, Christian monks in Egypt developed a monastic life in which, seeking a common spiritual goal, they lived together under a common set of regulations. St. Basil (330–379), a Greek bishop in Asia Minor, drew up a rule based on work, charity, and a communal life that still allowed each monk to retain most of his independence. The Rule of St. Basil became the standard system in the eastern church.

In the West the work of St. Benedict (c. 480–543) paralleled St. Basil's efforts in the East. About 529 Benedict led a band of followers to a high hill between Rome and Naples, named Monte Cassino, where they erected a monastery on the site of an ancient pagan temple. For his monks Benedict composed a rule that gave order and discipline to western monasticism. Benedictine monks took three basic vows—of poverty, chastity, and obedience to the *abbot*, the head of the monastery. The daily activities of the Benedictine monks were closely regulated: They participated in eight divine services, labored in fields or workshops for six or seven hours, and spent about two hours studying and preserving the writing of Latin antiquity at a time when illiteracy was widespread throughout western Europe. Benedictine monasticism was to be one of the most dynamic civilizing forces in early medieval Europe.

Women also played an important role in monastic Christianity. In Egypt an early-fifth-century bishop declared that 20,000 women—twice the number of men—were living in desert communities as nuns. In the West several fourth-century biographies of aristocratic women describe how they turned their villas and palaces into monasteries for women of all classes and remained firmly in control of their institutions. These communities became famous for their social and educational services, in addition to providing a different way of life for women who sought alternatives to the usual pattern of marriage, motherhood, and family life.

Official Recognition and Acceptance of Christianity

In 311 the emperor Galerius (ga-LEH-ree-uhs) recognized that persecution of Christians had failed to eliminate the belief and issued an edict of toleration, making Christianity a legal religion in the East. Two years later Constantine granted Christians freedom of

worship throughout the empire by issuing, in 313, the Edict of Milan, an order decreeing that Christianity would be tolerated throughout the empire.

Why Constantine did this is open to debate. His Christian biographers assert that the night before a decisive battle at the Milvian Bridge, he looked to the sky and saw a cross with the words "*Hoc vinces*" ("By this, conquer") written on it. The next day, Constantine led his troops to victory, raising the cross as his symbol. The victory also played a role in his embrace of Christianity, which allowed him to build on the support of Christians, who, at 20 percent of the empire, constituted the most organized and unified segment of the population. His actions at the Council of Nicaea (see p. 154) as a self-proclaimed "thirteenth apostle" showed that the Christian Church was to be his state church. Constantine and his mother, Helena, remained deeply committed to Christianity, but he waited until just before his death to be baptized. All of his successors but one were Christian.

This sole exception was Julian the Apostate (361–363), a military hero and scholar who had been raised a Christian but then renounced his faith and sought to revive paganism. But Julian did not persecute the Christians, and his efforts to revive paganism failed.

The emperor Theodosius I (379–395) made Christianity the official religion of the empire. Paganism was now persecuted, Christian authorities sentenced large numbers of pagan philosophers to death, pagan philosophical schools (including Plato's Academy) were closed, and non-Christian works of art and literature were destroyed. Even the Olympic games were suppressed. One famous victim of this persecution by Christians was the philosopher Hypatia (hi-PAY-shi-ah), who in 415 was killed by a Christian mob in Alexandria. By the age of 25, she had become famous throughout the eastern half of the empire as a lecturer on Greek philosophy. Her popularity and beauty aroused the resentment of Cyril, the archbishop of Alexandria, who had already led a mob in destroying the homes and businesses of the city's Jews. He incited the mob to abduct Hypatia, who was dragged into a nearby church and hacked to death.

The Roman Crisis of the Third Century

In the third century C.E., internal anarchy and foreign invasion drastically transformed the Roman Empire. Augustus's constitutional monarchy, in which the emperor shared power with the Senate, had changed to a despotic absolute monarchy, in which the emperors made no attempt to hide the fact that they were backed by the military and would tolerate no senatorial influence. By the late third century, the emperor was no

asceticism—The denial of physical or psychological desires in order to achieve a spiritual ideal or goal. The quest for spiritual purity, the need for forgiveness, and the wish to earn merit or gain access to supernatural powers all are reasons for ascetic practice. Common forms of ascetic self-denial include celibacy, abstinence, and fasting.

longer addressed as *princeps*, "first among equals," but as *dominus et deus*, "lord and god." The Principate had been replaced by the absolute rule known as the Dominate.

The transformation of the Roman Empire in the third century was foreshadowed by the reign of Commodus (KOM-moh-duhs), who in 180 C.E. began a 12-year rule characterized by incompetence, corruption, cruelty, and neglect of affairs of state. He was strangled in 192, and civil war followed for a year until the establishment of the Severan dynasty (193–235). The Severan dynasty was intimidated by the military, whose commanders the emperors attempted to placate through bribes and exorbitant favors.

After 235, when the last member of the Severan dynasty was murdered by his own troops, 50 years of bloody civil wars, Germanic invasions, and new foreign threats ensued. Of the 26 men who claimed the title of emperor during this time, only one died a natural death. Prolonged economic decline was equally deadly to the well-being of the empire as military anarchy and foreign invasions. The economy became static, inflation set in, and the concentration of land ownership in the hands of the few destroyed the small farming classes. The *latifundia*, with their fortified villas, grew as the number of *coloni*—sharecroppers—grew. As the rural tax base declined, chaotic conditions took their toll on trade, and by the end of the period, the government refused to accept its own money for taxes and required payment in goods and services.

A much needed reconstruction of the empire was accomplished by Diocletian (285–305), a rough-hewn soldier and shrewd administrator. To increase the strength of the government, he completed the trend toward autocracy, leaving the Senate in a greatly diminished role. He attempted to restructure the empire to ensure better government and an efficient succession scheme. Diocletian also tried to stop the economic decay of the empire by issuing new coins based on silver and gold and by imposing a freeze on prices and wages.

Diocletian's succession scheme collapsed when Constantine (306–337) overcame his rivals to take power. Constantine continued

Diocletian's attempts to ensure the production of essential goods and services as well as the collection of taxes. He imposed decrees tying people and their children to the same occupation in the same place. Most important, he moved the capital to the site of the old Greek colony of Byzantium, renaming it Constantinople (see Chapter 6). By doing so, he, in effect, left Rome open to the attacks of the advancing Germanic peoples but ensured the continuation of Roman government in a new, safer location.

The Germanic Tribes

Waves of restless and diverse Germanic tribes were drawn into the power vacuum created during the two centuries of Rome's decline after 180. While the west-



Bust of the emperor Commodus (177–192 C.E.) portrayed as Hercules. The son of the philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius, Commodus was physically impressive and often dressed as Hercules and performed as a gladiator. He was one of Rome's most corrupt and despised rulers.

ernmost German tribes (Franks, Angles, and Saxons) had achieved a settled agricultural life in the third and early fourth centuries, the Goths, Vandals, and Lombards remained largely nomadic.

The economic and legal practices of the Germanic tribes set them apart from the Romans. They engaged in so little commerce that cattle, rather than money, sufficed as a measure of value. A basic factor behind Germanic restlessness seems to have been land hunger. Their numbers were increasing, much of their land was forest and swamp, and their agricultural methods were inefficient. In an effort to eliminate blood feuds, the tribal law codes of the Germans encouraged the payment of compensation as an alternative for an aggrieved kin or family seeking vengeance. For the infliction of specific injuries, a stipulated payment, termed a *bot*, was required. The amount of compensation varied according to the severity of the crime and the social position of the victim.

Lack of written laws made it necessary to hold trials to determine guilt or innocence. A person standing trial could produce oath-helpers who would swear to his innocence. If unable to obtain oath-helpers, the accused was subjected to trial by ordeal, of which there were three kinds. In the first, the defendant had to lift a small stone out of a vessel of boiling water; unless his scalded arm healed within a prescribed number of days, he was judged guilty. In the second, he had to walk blindfolded and barefoot across a floor on which lay pieces of red-hot metal; success in avoiding the metal was a sign of innocence. In the third, the bound defendant was thrown into a stream; if he sank he was innocent, but if he floated, he was guilty because water was considered a divine element that would not accept a guilty person.

According to the Roman historian Tacitus, the Germans were notorious as heavy drinkers and gamblers, but Tacitus praised their courage, respect for women, and freedom from many Roman vices. A favorite amusement was listening to the tribal bards recite old tales of heroes and gods. Each warrior leader had a retinue of followers who were linked to him by personal loyalty. The war band—*comitatus* (ko-mi-TAH-tus) in Latin—had an important bearing on the origin of medieval political patterns, which were based on similar personal bonds between vassals and their lords. The heroic values associated with the *comitatus* also continued into the Middle Ages, where they contributed to the basis of the value system of the nobility.

During the many centuries that the Romans and Germans faced each other across the Rhine-Danube frontier, there was much contact—peaceful as well as warlike—between the two peoples. Roman trade

reached into German territory, and Germans entered the Roman Empire as slaves. During the troubled third century, many Germans were invited to settle on vacated lands within the empire or to serve in the Roman legions. By the fourth century, the bulk of the Roman army and its generals in the west were German.

The Germans beyond the frontiers were kept in check by force of arms, by frontier walls, by diplomacy and gifts, and by playing off one tribe against another. In the last decades of the fourth century, however, these methods proved insufficient to prevent a series of new invasions.

The Germanic Invasions

The impetus behind the increasing German activity on the frontiers in the late fourth century was the approach of the Huns. These nomads—superb horsemen and fighters from central Asia—had plundered and slain their Asian neighbors for centuries. In 372 they crossed the Volga River and soon subjugated the easternmost Germanic tribe, the Ostrogoths. Terrified at the prospect of being conquered, the Visigoths, who found themselves next in the path of the advancing Huns, petitioned the Romans to allow them to settle as allies inside the empire. Permission was granted, and in 376 the entire tribe of Visigoths crossed the Danube into Roman territory. But corrupt Roman officials soon cheated and mistreated them, and the proud Germanic tribe went on a rampage. Valens (VAH-lens), the East Roman emperor, tried to stop them, but he lost both his army and his life in the battle of Adrianople in 378.

Adrianople has been described as one of history's decisive battles since it destroyed the legend of the invincibility of the Roman legions and ushered in a century and a half of chaos. For a few years, the emperor Theodosius I held back the Visigoths, but after his death in 395, they began to migrate and pillage under their leader, Alaric. He invaded Italy, and in 410 his followers sacked Rome. The weak West Roman emperor ceded southern Gaul to the Visigoths, who soon expanded into Spain. Their Spanish kingdom lasted until the Muslim conquest of the eighth century.

To counter Alaric's threat to Italy, the Romans had withdrawn most of their troops from the Rhine frontier in 406 and from Britain the following year. A flood of Germanic tribes soon surged across the unguarded frontiers. The Vandals pushed their way through Gaul to Spain and, after pressure from the Visigoths, moved on to Africa, the granary of the empire. In 455 a Vandal raiding force sailed over from Africa, and Rome was sacked a second time. Meanwhile, the Burgundians settled in the Rhone



Tacitus,
Germania

valley, the Franks gradually spread across Gaul, and the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes invaded Britain. Although each of these tribes set up a German-ruled kingdom within the confines of the empire, only the Franks in Gaul and the Angles and Saxons in Britain managed to establish kingdoms that lasted longer than a few generations.

Meanwhile, the Huns pushed farther into Europe. Led by Attila, the "scourge of God," the mounted nomads crossed the Rhine in 451. The remaining Roman forces in Gaul, joined by the Visigoths, defeated the Huns near Troyes, France. Attila then plundered northern Italy and planned to take Rome, but disease, lack of supplies, and the dramatic appeal of Pope Leo I, whose actions brought great prestige to the papacy, caused him to return to the plains of eastern Europe. The Huns' threat disintegrated after 453, when Attila died on the night of his marriage to a Germanic princess.

The End of the West Roman Empire, 395–476 C.E.

After the death of Theodosius I in 395, the Roman Empire was divided between his two sons. The decline of Roman rule in the West was hastened as a series of weakened emperors abandoned Rome and sought safety behind the marshes at the northern Italian city of Ravenna. The leaders of the imperial army, whose ranks were now mainly German, exercised the real power.

In 475 Orestes, a German army commander, forced the Senate to elect his young son Romulus Augustulus ("Little Augustus") emperor in the West. The following year another German chieftain, Odovacar, murdered Romulus Augustulus and named himself head of the government. The murder of this boy, who ironically bore the names of the legendary founder of Rome and the founder of the empire, marks the traditional "fall" of the Roman Empire in the West, since no emperor was named to carry on the succession. Instead, the emperor in Constantinople commissioned Theodoric (thee-O-doh-rik), king of the Germanic tribe of the Ostrogoths, to lead his people into Italy and establish order. The Ostrogothic Kingdom of Italy, with its capital now at Ravenna, restored order on the peninsula, but the political unity of the western empire fell into steady decline. Because he appreciated the culture he had seen at Constantinople, Theodoric attempted to preserve much of the culture of the Roman West, but the basic fabric of society in western Europe was in gradual transition into a new construct which combined useful institutions of both older Roman and new Germanic elements. A new society was evolving.

THE ROMAN LEGACY

- What seem to be the greatest cultural achievements of the ancient Romans, and what effects, if any, do they continue to have on the modern world?

The Romans left a remarkable legacy to their successors. They excelled in the art of government and created a workable and enduring world-state that brought peace and order to extensive lands on three continents. For a time during the empire, probably one-third of the world's population owed allegiance to the Roman superpower. In addition to their skills in administration, the formulation and application of law, and their gifts as architects and engineers, Roman achievements in the arts, literature, philosophy, and religious thought were also greatly influential on the peoples and cultures that were the heir of their accomplishments.

Evolution of Roman Law

Of the many contributions made by the Romans in government, Roman law is one of the most significant. Roman law evolved slowly over a period of about a thousand years. At first, as in all early societies, the law was unwritten custom, handed down from the remote past, and harsh in its judgments. As noted earlier, in the fifth century B.C.E. this law was put in writing in the Code of the Twelve Tables, as the result of plebeian demand. During the remainder of the Republic, the body of Roman law (*jus civile*, "law of the citizen") was enlarged by legislation passed by the Senate and the assembly and by judicial interpretation of existing law to meet new conditions. By the second century C.E. the emperor had become the sole source of law, a responsibility he entrusted to scholars "skilled in the law" (*jurisprudentes*). These scholars were loyal to the principle of equity ("Follow the beneficial interpretation"; "The letter of the law is the height of injustice") and to Stoic philosophy with its concept of a "law of nature" (*jus naturale*) common to all people and obtainable by human reason. As a result, the absolute power of the Roman father over the family was weakened, women gained control over their property, and the principle that an accused person was innocent until proven guilty was established. Finally, in the sixth century C.E. the enormous bulk of Roman law from all sources was codified and so preserved for the future.

Roman Engineering and Architecture

Always at the hub of the sprawling empire was Rome, with close to a million inhabitants by the early days of the empire. Augustus boasted that he had found a city of brick and had

less, Rome presented a great contrast of magnificence and slums, of splendid public buildings and poorly constructed tenements, which often collapsed or caught fire.

The empire's needs required a communication system of paved roads and bridges as well as huge public buildings and aqueducts. As road builders, the Romans surpassed all previous peoples. Constructed of layers of stone and gravel according to sound engineering principles, their roads were planned for the use of armies and messengers and were kept in constant repair. The earliest and best-known main Roman highway was the Appian Way. Running from Rome to the Bay of Naples, it was built about 300 B.C.E. to facilitate Rome's expansion southward. It has been said that the speed of travel possible on Roman highways was not surpassed until the early nineteenth century. In designing their bridges and aqueducts, the Romans placed a series of stone arches next to one another to provide mutual support. At times several tiers of arches were used, one above the other. Fourteen aqueducts, stretching a total of 265 miles, supplied some 50 gallons of water daily for each inhabitant of Rome.

At first the Romans copied Etruscan architectural models, but later they combined basic Greek elements with distinctly Roman innovations. By using concrete—a Roman invention—faced with brick or stone, they developed new methods for enclosing space. The Greeks' static post-and-lintel system was replaced by the more dynamic techniques of vaulting derived from the arch, also borrowed from the Etruscans.

Heavy concrete barrel vaults, cross (or groin) vaults, and domes—all so solid that they exerted no sidewise thrust—made possible the vast interiors that distinguish Roman architecture. The barrel vault was essentially a series of connected arches resembling a tunnel, and the cross vault consisted of two barrel vaults intersecting at right angles. The largest Roman domed structure is the Pantheon, the oldest massive roofed building in the world that is still intact. As its name indicates, it was dedicated to "all the gods" by the emperor Hadrian as a symbol of the union of Greeks and Romans on equal terms. The great dome rests on thick round walls of poured concrete with no window openings to weaken them. The only light enters through a great hole, 30 feet wide, at the top of the dome. The size of the dome remained unsurpassed until the twentieth century.



IMAGE
The interior of the Pantheon, Rome

The typical Roman **basilica**, which served as a social and commercial center and as a law court, was not domed or vaulted. It was a rectangular structure with a light wooden ceiling held up by rows of columns that divided the interior into a central **nave** and side aisles. The roof over the nave was raised to admit light. The Roman basilica would eventually evolve into the Christian church.

Roman buildings were built to last, and their size, grandeur, and decorative richness aptly symbolized the proud imperial spirit of Rome. Whereas the Greeks designed the temple, theater, and stadium, the Romans contributed the triumphal arch, bath, basilica, amphitheater, and multistoried apartment house. Perhaps the most famous Roman building is the Colosseum, a huge amphitheater about 1/4 mile in circumference and with a seating capacity of about 45,000. On the exterior, its arches are decorated with Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian columns.



Marble representation of a dying Gallic woman and her husband committing suicide rather than be taken prisoner by the Romans. The Romans regarded the Gauls as courageous but unsophisticated in politics and culture.

Sculpture and Painting

After the conquest of Greece, many Romans acquired a passion for Greek art. The homes of the wealthy were filled with statues, either brought to Rome as plunder or copied in Greece and shipped to Rome in great number.

Although strongly influenced by Etruscan and Greek models, the Romans developed a distinctive sculpture of their own, particularly portrait sculpture, which was remarkably realistic. Their skill in

basilica—Originally a secular public building in ancient Rome, typically a large rectangular structure with an open hall and a raised platform at one or both ends. "Basilica" is also a title of honor given to a Roman Catholic or Greek Orthodox church distinguished by its antiquity or its role as an international center of worship.

nave—Main part of a Christian church, extending from the entrance (the narthex) to the transept or chancel (area around the altar). In a basilican church (see basilica), which has side aisles, nave refers only to the central section.

portraiture probably originated in the early practice of making and preserving wax images of the heads of important deceased family members. During the Principate, portraiture and relief sculpture tended to idealize the likenesses of the emperors. The Romans developed a great number of decorative motifs, such as cupids, garlands of flowers, and scrolls of various patterns, which are still used today.

What little Roman painting has been preserved clearly reflects the influence of Hellenistic Greek models. The Romans were particularly skilled in producing floor mosaics—often copies of Hellenistic paintings—and in painting frescoes. The frescoes still to be seen in Pompeii and elsewhere show that the artists drew objects in clear though idealized perspective.

Literary Rome

In literature as in art, the Romans originally turned to the Greeks for their models. Roman epic, dramatic, and lyric poetry forms were usually written in conscious imitation of the Greek masterpieces. Although first conforming to Greek examples and standards, Latin prose and poetry developed an originality and substance that ensure its value as one of the world's great literatures. Its influence was extremely strong on medieval and Renaissance literary efforts, and it continues even now on western literary themes and styles.

The Golden and Silver Ages of Latin Literature, c. 100 B.C.E.–138 C.E.

106–43 B.C.E.	Cicero: Orations and letters
c. 87–54 B.C.E.	Catullus: Poems and epigrams
c. 99–55 B.C.E.	Lucretius: Philosophical poem <i>On the Nature of Things</i>
70–19 B.C.E.	Virgil: Epic poem <i>Aeneid</i>
65–8 B.C.E.	Horace: Poems
43 B.C.E.–17 C.E.	Ovid: <i>The Art of Love</i> ; <i>Metamorphoses</i>
59 B.C.E.–17 C.E.	Livy: <i>History of Rome</i>
c. 55 B.C.E.–117 C.E.	Tacitus: <i>Annals, Histories</i> , <i>Agricola</i>
c. 50 B.C.E.–127 C.E.	Juvenal: <i>Satires</i>
c. 46–c. 126 C.E.	Plutarch: <i>Parallel Lives</i>

Formal Latin literature did not begin until the mid-third century B.C.E. when a Greek slave named Livius Andronicus translated Homer's *Odyssey* and several Greek plays into Latin. By the end of that century the first of a series of Latin epics dealing with Rome's past was composed. Only a few fragments have survived.

The oldest examples of Latin literature to survive intact are the 21 comedies of Plautus (c. 254–184 B.C.E.), which were adapted from Hellenistic Greek originals but with many Roman allusions, colloquialisms, and customs added. Plautus's comedies are bawdy and vigorously humorous, and their rollicking plots of illicit love and character portraits reveal the level of culture and taste in early Rome. The works of Plautus suggest many of the types that modern comedy has assumed, including farce, burlesque, and comedy of manners.

Literature of the Late Republic and Empire

Latin literature came of age in the first century B.C.E., when an outpouring of intellectual effort coincided with the last years of the Republic. This era is often called the Ciceronian period because of the stature and lasting influence of Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 B.C.E.), one of the greatest masters of Latin prose and an outstanding intellectual force in Roman history.

Acclaimed as the greatest orator of his day, Cicero found time during his busy public life to write extensively on philosophy, political theory, and rhetoric. Some 900 of his letters survive. Together with 58 speeches, they give us insight into Cicero's personality as well as life in the late Republic. Cicero also made a rich contribution by passing on to the Romans and to later ages much of Greek thought—especially that of Plato and the Stoics—and at the same time interpreting philosophical concepts from the standpoint of a Roman intellectual and practical man of affairs.

Two notable poets of the Ciceronian period were Catullus (Kah-TUHL-luhs) and Lucretius (loo-KREE-shuhs). Catullus (c. 87–54 B.C.E.) was a socially active young man who wrote highly personal lyric poetry. His best-known poems are addressed to "Lesbia," an unprincipled noblewoman ten years older than he, with whom he carried on a passionate affair. Catullus's contemporary Lucretius (c. 99–55 B.C.E.) found in the philosophy of Epicurus (e-pee-KEU-ruhs) an antidote to his profound disillusionment with his fellow citizens, whom he criticized for their lack of morals and obsession for wealth and sensual pleasures.

Augustus provided the Roman world with a stability and confidence that encouraged a further out-

pouring of literary creativity. The literature of the Augustan Age was notable particularly for its poetry. Virgil (70–19 B.C.E.) is considered the greatest of all Roman poets. His masterpiece, the great epic poem called the *Aeneid* (ay-NEE-id), glorified the work of Augustus and emphasized Rome's destiny to conquer and rule the world. Using Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as his models, Virgil recounted the fortunes of Aeneas, the legendary founder of the Latin people, who came from Troy to Italy to fulfill his destiny.

As the most noted poet after Vergil, Horace (65–8 B.C.E.) often praised the work of Augustus and the emperor's great mission. But most of Horace's poetry is concerned with everyday human interests and moods, and succeeding generations up to the present have been attracted by his serene outlook on life.

Quite a different sort of poet was Ovid (43 B.C.E.–17 C.E.). His preference for themes of sensual love in his *Art of Love* and other poems caused Augustus to exile him from Rome. But Ovid was also a first-rate storyteller, and it is largely through his *Metamorphoses*, a witty verse collection of Greek stories about the life of the gods—not neglecting their love lives—that classical mythology was transmitted to the modern world.

The literature of the later empire, especially the period between the deaths of Augustus and Hadrian (14–138 C.E.), substituted a more critical and negative spirit for the patriotism and optimism of the Augustan Age. Despite a great emphasis on artificial stylistic devices, the period was memorable for the moral emphasis of much of its literature, seen in the historical works of Tacitus and Plutarch, the philosophical works of Seneca, and especially the poetry of Juvenal (c. 50 B.C.E.–127 C.E.), who has been called one of the greatest satiric poets, who attacked the shortcomings of Roman society and its overwhelming concern for material gain and sensual pleasures.



Juvenal,
Satires

The Writing of History

Two Roman historians produced notable works of lasting significance during the Augustan age and the early empire. The first, Livy (59 B.C.E.–17 C.E.), was a contemporary of Vergil. His immense *History of Rome*, like the *Aeneid*, is of epic proportions and glorifies Rome's conquests and ancestral greatness. By assembling the legends and traditions of early Roman history and folding them into a continuous narrative, Livy, like Vergil, intended to advance Augustus's program of moral and social regeneration. He praised the virtues of the ancient Romans and sought to draw moral lessons from an idealized past.

Tacitus (55–117 C.E.), like his contemporary Juvenal, was concerned with the declining morality of both

the Roman nobility and common citizens. In his *Germania* he contrasted the life of the idealized, simple Germanic tribes with the corrupt and immoral existence of the Roman upper classes. In the *Annals* and *Histories* he used his vivid, succinct prose to depict the shortcomings of the emperors and their courts from the death of Augustus to 96 C.E. Tacitus idealized the earlier Republic, and because he viewed the emperors as tyrants, he could not do justice to the positive contributions of imperial government.

The most famous Greek author in the empire was Plutarch (c. 46–c. 126 C.E.). He lectured on philosophy in Rome before retiring to his small hometown to pursue research on the outstanding figures in Roman and Greek history in order to discover what qualities make people great or unworthy. His *Parallel Lives*, containing 46 biographies of famous Greeks and Romans arranged in pairs for the purpose of comparison, is one of the great readable classics of world literature. Because many of the sources Plutarch used have been lost, his *Lives* is a treasure house of valuable information for the historian.

Religion and Philosophy

The turmoil of the late Republic helped erode the traditions, values, and religion of earlier Rome. For spiritual satisfaction and salvation, many Romans turned increasingly to the mystery cults of Greece (see Chapter 4) or to the Near East. Among the latter were Cybele, the Great Mother, and the Egyptian goddess Isis, who attracted the greatest number of women followers. A faithful mother herself, she extended a mother's arms to the weary of this world.

But the more intellectually sophisticated of Romans turned to Greek philosophy, particularly Epicureanism and Stoicism, for meaning. As young men, both Vergil and Horace embraced Epicureanism, but Lucretius became the most important Roman interpreter of this philosophy. In *On the Nature of Things*, Lucretius followed Epicurus in basing his explanation of the “nature of things” on materialism and atomism. He called on people to free themselves from the fear of death—which was drawing them to the emotional mystery religions of Greece and the East—since souls, like bodies, are composed of atoms that fall apart when death comes. Lucretius urged his readers to seek pleasure in the study of philosophy and not from material gain or such sensual excitements as love.

More in line with Roman taste, especially in the days of the empire, was Stoicism. The emphasis of Roman Stoicism was on living a just life, constancy to duty, courage in adversity, and service to humanity. Stoic influence had a humanizing effect on Roman

law by introducing such concepts as the law of nature and the brotherhood of all, including slaves. The law of nature, as defined by Cicero, was an eternal truth that ordered all the rational thought upon which human law must be based.

One of the outstanding Roman Stoics was Seneca (4 B.C.E.–65 C.E.), Nero's tutor and a writer of moral essays and tragedies. He was regarded with high favor by the leaders of the early Christian church, for his Stoicism, like that of the ex-slave Epictetus (eh-pik-TEE-tuhs) (d. 135 C.E.) and the emperor Marcus Aurelius, had the appearance of a religious creed. He stressed an all-wise Providence, or God, and believed that each person possessed a spark of the divine.

Science in the Roman Empire

The Romans were accomplished at putting the findings of Hellenistic science to practical use, and they became extremely skilled in engineering, applied medicine, and public health. The Romans pioneered in public health service and developed the extensive practice of *hydrotherapy*, the use of mineral baths for healing. Beginning in the early empire, doctors were employed in infirmaries where soldiers, officials, and the poor could obtain free medical care. Great aqueducts and admirable drainage systems also indicate Roman concern for public health.

Characteristic of their utilitarian approach to science was their interest in amassing large encyclopedias. The most important of these was the *Natural History*, compiled by Pliny (PLI-nee) the Elder (23–79 C.E.), an enthusiastic collector of all kinds of scientific odds and ends. In writing his massive work, Pliny is reputed to have read more than 2000 books. The result is an intriguing mixture of fact and fable thrown together with scarcely any method of classification. Nevertheless, it was the most widely read work on science during the empire and the early medieval period in Europe.

Two of the last great scientific minds of the ancient world were two Greeks, Claudius Ptolemy and Galen, both of whom lived in the second century C.E., an era succeeding the greatness of Hellenic civilization and the growing dominance of Rome. Ptolemy resided at Alexandria, where he became celebrated as a geographer, astronomer, and mathematician. His maps show a comparatively accurate knowledge of a broad section of the known world. But he exaggerated the size of Asia, an error that influenced Columbus to underestimate the width of the Atlantic and to set sail from Spain in search of Asia. His work on astronomy, usually called the *Almagest* ("The Great Work") from the title of the Ara-

bic translation, presented the geocentric (earth-centered) view of the universe that prevailed until the sixteenth century. In mathematics, Ptolemy's work in improving and developing trigonometry became the basis for modern knowledge of the subject.

Galen, born in Pergamum, in Asia Minor, was a physician for a school of gladiators. His fame spread, and he was called to Rome, where he became physician to the emperor Marcus Aurelius. Galen was responsible for notable advances in physiology and anatomy; for example, he was the first to explain the mechanism of respiration. Forbidden by the Roman government to dissect human bodies, Galen experimented with animals and demonstrated that an excised heart can continue to beat outside the body and that injuries to one side of the brain produce effects in the opposite side of the body. Galen's medical encyclopedia, in which he summarized the medical knowledge of antiquity, remained the standard authority until the sixteenth century.

CONCLUSION

The story of Rome's rise from a collection of insignificant and unsophisticated villages along the banks of the Tiber to the mighty capital of an empire that included most of western Europe, the Mediterranean region, and the Near East will always remain one of the most fascinating stories in world history. Through the creation of a unified and cosmopolitan empire, the heritage of earlier near Eastern and Greek cultures was preserved, synthesized, and disseminated—and of course the Romans made significant original contributions of their own. They excelled in political theory, governmental administration, and jurisprudence. Roman military might, conquest, and pacification also enabled the growth and development of trade and commerce throughout the Mediterranean and beyond. The security of the empire, and its vast network of roads, fostered a thriving exchange of ideas as well as tangible goods. The growth and triumph of the Christian religion in the West was due in large part to the material benefits provided by the empire's infrastructure, along with the Roman capacity to adapt and refine the innovations of others.

Rome's greatest achievement was perhaps the establishment of peace and prosperity over a vast area for long periods under a stable and acceptable government. The long-enduring empire and its success in uniting a great variety of cultures and peoples under one system of government had a lasting effect on nations and peoples that came after the fall of the empire in western Europe. The cos-