THE BARBARIAN INVASIONS
AND THE FALL OF THE
EMPIRE IN THE WEST

The age of the barbarian invasions and the foundation of the new Germanic kingdoms in the West has always been regarded as one of the great turning-points in world history; and as the boundary between the ancient and mediaeval worlds. It may be compared with the age of invasion which destroyed the Mycenaean civilisation of the Aegean world in that it marks the appearance of a new racial element and the beginning of a new cultural development. Nevertheless it is easy to exaggerate the catastrophic character of the change. The breach with the old tradition of culture was far less sudden and less complete than that which occurred at the beginning of the Iron Age.

As we have already seen, the life had passed out of the ancient classical civilisation as early as the third century, and a new culture had arisen which was due not to the coming of the Germanic barbarians but to the infiltration of new influences from the East. The old culture of the city-state with its civic religion passed away owing to a gradual process of internal change, and its place was taken by a theocratic monarchy in close alliance with the new world-religion—Christianity. But while in the East this development was closely linked with a native oriental tradition of immense antiquity, in the West it was entirely new, with no basis in past history; and here, accordingly, it failed to strike root. In
its place we find the old European type of tribal society tending to reassert itself, and on the ruins of the provincial city-states there re-appears a rural society of noble landowners and peasant serfs, such as had existed in Central Europe before the coming of Rome. Consequently the new age in the West is not to be explained solely by the forcible intrusion of the Germanic peoples, but also to the renaissance of an older type of society on the soil of the Empire itself, as we see with special clearness in Western Britain. In fact, the break-up of the imperial system and the rise of the new territorial states might have followed very much the same course, even without the intervention of the barbarian invaders.

This transformation of society in the Western provinces of the Empire had already begun as far back as the end of the second century A.D. Its leading feature was the decline of the municipalities and of the middle classes, and the reformation of society on the basis of the two classes of landowner and peasant. We have already seen how the increasing pressure of taxation and of governmental control crushed the life out of the self-governing municipalities which had been the living cells of the earlier Roman imperial organism. The government did all in its power by forced measures to galvanise the machinery of municipal life into artificial activity and to prevent the middle classes from deserting the city or escaping their obligations by entering the ranks of the senatorial aristocracy or buying a privileged sinecure in the imperial service. But what they tried to build up with one hand, they destroyed with the other, since they rendered the life of the middle class economically impossible. Consequently the government was forced to supplement the decaying city magistracy both by an imperial official—the count—who was directly responsible to the central government and stood outside the municipal constitution, as well as by transferring responsibility to influential individuals such as neighbouring landowners or Christian bishops.

The city was, in fact, no longer a vital organ in the life of the Empire. Economically, the state was becoming purely agrarian and the primary concern of the government was to maintain the numbers of the rural population and the prosperity of agriculture. The whole finance of the Empire depended on the land tax, which was assessed not upon income but on a definite unit—the *jugum* or in the western provinces, the *centuria*—which represented the holding of a single
peasant. It was the same principle as the old English hide—in theory, the land of a single family, which was at once a fiscal unit and a rough measure of land. In both cases the unit was based on the amount of land which could be cultivated with a single team of oxen, but in the West this was very much larger than in the East, owing partly to the use of a team of eight oxen instead of two, partly to the lower standard of cultivation and taxation. The size of the Roman unit differed according to its productivity. In the East it might be 5 acres of vineyard, and of good arable land, or 60 acres of poorer quality, while in the West the Centuria consisted of 200 jugera, i.e., 120 acres. But, in any case, it was a definite unit, actually measured and registered by the officers of the cadastral survey. The assessment was known as capitaio (poll-tax) as well as jugatio (land tax), which shows the close connection between the land and the labourer. If a single one of these units went out of cultivation it was a direct loss to the revenue; and consequently the government, following the Egyptian precedent, not only bound the free farmer and his heirs to their holding, but forbade landlords to sell land without the slaves that cultivated it, or vice versa. Moreover, if a holding went out of cultivation owing to the death or disappearance of its owner, the neighbouring landowners were obliged to add it to their own holdings and became liable for the tax upon it. The policy of the government, however, defeated its own ends. The pressure of taxation was so great (at times it amounted to as much as 50 per cent. of the produce) that the small landowner was crushed out of existence, and driven to flight or to the slavery of debt.

All this favoured the expansion of the senatorial aristocracy, which alone had the power to protect itself and its dependents from the oppression of the fisc, since its members were assessed not by the magistrates of the neighbouring city, but by the governor himself. It is true that the power of the landlord over his slaves was considerably limited. They were no longer chattels to be bought and sold; they were servus—enscriptitii glebae—who could not be separated from their holdings, and who consequently enjoyed their own family life. But, on the other hand, in compensation, the power of the landlord over his free tenants was enormously increased. Their tenure, as a rule, involved not only the payment of rent, but also a specified period of work on the lord's own land. Since he was responsible for their tax, they also, no less than the
slaves, were bound to the soil. And since the lord represented them to the revenue, he also came to represent them before the law. He possessed police powers, and in many cases he held his own local court and executed justice among his dependents. Thus slaves and tenants became fused in a single class of semi-servile peasants, in absolute political and social dependence on their lord, and to these were joined a growing number of small landowners, who sought to escape the oppression of the tax-gatherer by recommending themselves to the patronage of a neighbouring noble and resigning to him the property of their land, on condition that they should continue to enjoy the use of it.

Thus already before the fall of the Empire, a semi-feudal condition of society was establishing itself. In the fifth century we hear of nobles like Evudius, who could support 4,000 poor in time of famine, and raise his own troop of horse in time of war and the fortified “Burgus” of Pontius Lentius, which is described by Sidonius Apollinaris, with its walls and towers, might be the castle of a mediæval baron. As the Roman organisation weakened, the old conditions of pre-Roman Gallic society, which was based on the relation of the noble “patron” to his dependent “clients,” re-asserted themselves in a new guise. The senatorial noble lived on his lands, surrounded by the villages of his dependents. Part of his land was in his own hands, cultivated by the household slaves (casarii) and by the labour that was due from the tenants (coloni). The rest consisted of peasant holdings which paid rent and service to him.

This self-sufficient system of rural economy had grown up on the great imperial estates, which were administered as autonomous units by the procurators of the Empire and were jealously protected from all interference on the part of the municipalities or the provincial authorities. In Africa, especially, we find the system already fully developed as early as the second century A.D., and under the later Empire it spread to the great estates of the senatorial aristocracy. In many respects it resembles the later mediæval manor, and in France, at least, the majority of villages are derived not from the Roman vicus or from barbarian settlements, but as their names denote, from a private or imperial estate of the later Empire. In fact, throughout a great part of Gaul the land-owning nobility and the corresponding system of agrarian organisation survived the Germanic conquest and supplied one of the
main links of continuity between the Roman and the medi-

This social order did not pass away with the fall of the Western Empire. On the contrary, the Barbarian Invasions tended, on the whole, to favour its development by destroying the complicated machinery of the imperial bureaucracy, and thus increasing the centrifugal tendencies in society.

It is important to remember that, apart from a few exceptional cases, the Germanic settlement was a gradual process of infiltration rather than a sudden catastrophe. As far back as the second century A.D., the Roman government had adopted the practice of settling barbarian captives in the provinces, and during the fourth century enormous numbers of Germans and Sarmatians were established in devastated areas, especially in the Balkans and Northern Gaul, as agricultural and military colonists; so that the barbarian invaders usually found the frontier districts occupied by men of their own blood, who were familiar with Roman civilisation and had, to some extent, gone through a process of superficial Romanisation.

The army itself was largely recruited from these barbarian settlers, as well as from mercenaries and allies from beyond the frontiers, who, in the fourth century, came to form the elite of the Roman troops. To many of the barbarians, in fact, the Empire was, as Fustel de Coulanges has said, “not an enemy but a career.” This is true, above all, of the foederati, the “allied peoples,” who stood in the same relations to the Empire as the tribes of the North-West Frontier to the Government of India, and supplied tribal levies to the imperial army in return for regular subsidies. In the West the most important of these peoples were the Franks, especially of the Salian branch. After their defeat by Julian in 358, this people were allowed to settle in Toxandria or Northern Belgium as foederati or allies. But even before this date Franks had entered the army in large numbers. Constantine is said to have favoured them, and Silvanus, the master of the troops, who revolted against Constantine in 355, was the son of a Frankish officer. In the second half of the fourth century many of the leading figures in the history of the Western Empire were Franks, such as Merobaudes, the minister of Gratian, Arbogast, the king-maker and the most dangerous rival of Theodosius, and Bauto, the father-in-law of the Emperor Arcadius.

Even more important was the position of the Goths in the
East; indeed, they were the true makers of history throughout the period that we are considering. The Visigoths, who were settled on the Lower Danube in Dacia and the neighbouring regions, had become foederati of the Empire in 332, and thenceforward remained at peace with the Romans for a generation. The Visigoths were the first of the Germanic peoples to receive Christianity through the preaching of Ulphilas, a Roman citizen of Gothic descent, who was the founder not only of Germanic Christianity, but also of Teutonic literature through his Gothic translation of the Bible. Owing, however, to the domination of Arianism in the Eastern Empire at this period, the Visigoths accepted an Arian form of Christianity, and, through their influence, Arianism became the national religion of all the East German peoples.

Meanwhile, the eastern section of the Gothic people, the Ostrogoths, who had remained behind in South Russia, had established a powerful independent kingdom, the supremacy of which was recognised by all the peoples of Eastern Europe from the mouth of the Vistula to the Caucasus. The culture of this state, as we have seen, was not purely Germanic, but owed its distinctive features to the conquered or allied Sarmatians, who were themselves strongly influenced by the culture of Iran and Central Asia. In this way the Gothic peoples acquired the new style of art and the new system of warfare that they afterwards transmitted to the other Germanic peoples. The Sarmatians were essentially a people of horsemen, and it is to them that we owe the invention (or at least the introduction into Europe) of the use of stirrups and spurs. This invention had a revolutionary effect on tactics by rendering possible the development of heavy cavalry, which was to dominate European warfare for the next thousand years. In fact, the mail-clad Sarmatian and Gothic horseman, armed with lance and sword, was the true ancestor and prototype of the mediaeval knight.

But the Ostrogothic kingdom did not only exert a powerful influence on the culture of the barbarian peoples; it was the direct source of the movement which destroyed the unity of the Roman Empire and created the new barbarian kingdoms in the West. Throughout the period of invasions it was South Russia and the Danube frontier, rather than Germany and the Rhine, that were the storm-centre of Europe. It was here that the southward migration of Germanic peoples from the Baltic met the westward movement of Asiatic peoples from the
steppes, and their combined forces, pushed onwards by the pressure of new hordes of East Mongolian nomads in the rear, broke in an irresistible wave on the defences of the Roman Empire.

The ultimate source of this movement is to be found in the far East, on the frontier of the Chinese Empire, whence the Huns, the age-long scourge of civilised China, had been expelled by the efforts of the Han emperors and the establishment of the great line of frontier defences from North China to Eastern Turkestan. The flood which was thus dyked back in the East flowed westwards until it piled up against the barriers of the Roman West.

In 40 B.C. the West Huns left their old homes and set out towards the West, followed a century and a half later by the remnants of the Northern Huns. By the third century they had driven the Sarmatians from the Volga region, and in the following century they invaded Europe. In A.D. 375 they overwhelmed the Ostrogothic Kingdom and advanced against the Visigoths. The latter threw themselves on the mercy of Rome and were allowed to cross the Danube and settle in Moesia, but the oppression of the Roman officials caused them to mutiny, and, reinforced by Ostrogoths and Sarmatian Alans from across the Danube, they invaded the Balkan provinces. In 378 they met the Emperor Valens and his army in front of Adrianople, and their victory was due to the irresistible onslaught of the Sarmatian and Ostrogothic horsemen, led by the Alan kings, Alathmus and Saphrax. This is one of the decisive battles of history, since it marks the definite victory of the barbarian cavalry over the Roman infantry. Gratian and Theodosius were able to restore the power of the Empire, but they could not restore the prestige of the Roman legions. The Goths remained quartered in the Empire, the Visigoths in Moesia and the Ostrogoths in Pannonia, and Gothic and Alan contingents, serving under their own leaders, became the mainstay of the Roman armies. The favour which Gratian and Theodosius showed to their Alan and Gothic mercenaries was unpopular in the West and was one of the chief causes of the successive attempts of the Gallic armies, supported by conservative and pagan elements, to assert the independence of the Western Empire against Constantinople. The resultant civil wars had a disastrous effect on the fortunes of the Empire in the West. Not only were the Western armies weakened and demoralised by their defeats, but Theodosius was
forced to transfer the capital of the Western Empire from Gaul to North Italy. From Milan and Ravenna the emperors were able to keep in touch with their colleagues in the East, but they could no longer guard the Western frontiers as they had done at Treves. Gaul was the vital centre of the Roman defensive system, and the withdrawal of the government to Italy prepared the way for the disintegration of the Western Empire.4

With the death of Theodosius the forces of destruction were finally unleashed. The Visigoths quartered in Moesia revolted, and after ravaging the Balkans, marched westward into Italy, followed by fresh hordes of barbarians from across the Upper Danube. The barbarian commander of the Western armies, Stilicho, the Vandal, succeeded in repelling the invaders for the moment, but the Rhine was left unguarded, and on the last day of A.D. 406 a horde of peoples, Vandals and Suevi, headed by the ubiquitous Alans, burst into Gaul, and after ravaging the country from end to end, passed on into Spain. The whole of the West was a chaos in which Roman generals, barbarian chiefs, and peasant insurgents fought one another indiscriminately. Far away at Bethlehem St. Jerome wrote: “A remnant of us survives not by our merits, but by the mercy of God. Innumerable savage peoples have occupied the whole of Gaul. All that lies between the Alps and the Pyrenees, the Rhine and the Ocean is devastated by the barbarians.18 Formerly from the Julian Alps to the Black Sea our property was no longer our own, and for the space of thirty years the frontier of the Danube was broken and men fought over the lands of the Empire. Time has dried our tears, and saved for a few greybeards, the rest, born in captivity and siege, no longer regret the liberty of which the very memory is lost. But who could believe that Rome, on her own soil, fights no longer for glory, but for her existence; and no longer even fights, but purchases her life with gold and precious things.”

Certainly in the second and third decades of the fifth century the last days of the Empire seemed to have come. Rome herself had been sacked by Alaric, his successor had established a Visigothic Kingdom in Southern France, the Vandals had conquered Africa, and the Franks, the Burgundians and the Allemanni had occupied the west bank of the Rhine, while the Huns devastated both the Eastern and the Western provinces. Nevertheless, as the tumult subsided, the invaders
found that it was not to their interest to destroy the Empire. The Goths had been allies of the Empire almost for a century, and during the last thirty years had been quartered on the Roman provinces. Consequently when they had conquered their new kingdoms in the West, they found no difficulty in establishing a *modus vivendi* with the Roman population and in admitting the nominal supremacy of the Empire. Athaulf the Visigoth himself declared that he had once wished to destroy the name of Rome and to be the founder of a new Gothic Empire, but he had come to realise that the undisciplined barbarism of the Goths was powerless to create a state without the laws of Rome, and he now preferred the glory of using the Gothic power to restore the Roman name.

This programme was most fully realised in the Ostrogothic Kingdom which Theodoric established in Italy in 493. No other barbarian state reached so high a level of culture or assimilated the Roman tradition of government to the same extent. But, with the exception of the Vandals in Africa, who remained the irreconcilable enemies of Rome, the other East German peoples—the Visigoths in Spain and Southern Gaul, the Suevi in Spain and the Burgundians in Eastern Gaul—came to terms with the Empire and accepted the nominal status of allies or *foederati*.

They were quartered on the Roman provincials, as a kind of permanent garrison, in the same way in which they had been temporarily settled in the Danube provinces in the previous century. Thus the two peoples lived side by side, each preserving its own laws, its own institutions and its own religion—in the one case Catholic, in the other Arian. They were parasites upon the Roman social organism, and though they weakened its vitality, they did not destroy it. The life of the old Roman landowning aristocracy went on without essential change, as we see from the letters of Sidonius Apollinaris in Gaul and Cassiodorus in Italy, and like the latter, they often held high office under the new rulers.

Hence the East Germanic kingdoms were short lived. They had no roots in the soil and quickly withered away. In Gaul they were absorbed by the Franks, in Italy and Africa they were swept away by the Byzantine revival under Justinian, in Spain they were destroyed by the Moslem conquest at the beginning of the eighth century. In the North, however, the situation was different. The West German peoples swarmed across the frontiers—the Franks in Belgium and on the lower
Rhine, the Allemanni on the Upper Rhine and in Switzerland, the Rugians and the Bavarians on the Upper Danube—and took possession of the whole land. All these peoples were heathens, who still lived their old tribal life and had little contact with the higher Roman culture. They did not live as a parasitic military aristocracy on the conquered population like the Goths; they sought not subsidies, but land for settlement. The Roman landowning class was exterminated, the cities were in many cases destroyed, and a new tribal agrarian society came into existence. In so far as the old population survived, it was as serfs and vinedressers, or as refugees in the mountains and the forests.

In Britain the situation was rather different, for here the movement of invasion was twofold. From the middle of the fourth century the main danger to Roman Britain had come not from the Germans, but from the Celts beyond the frontiers, in Ireland and Scotland. In 567 their combined forces had swept over the whole country, and it was at this time that the majority of the towns and villas had been destroyed. At the same time the Saxon pirates were raiding the eastern and southern coasts of Britain as well as the western coasts of France.

Thus Roman British civilisation was caught between two fires and perished. Its last sign of vitality was the conversion of its Celtic destroyers by men like St. Ninian and St. Patrick, the latter the son of a British decurion who had been carried off to Ireland as a slave in one of the many invasions. The tradition that the Saxons were invited into Britain by the provincials themselves as a protection against the Picts and Scots is in itself very probable. For it is but another instance of the custom of quartering barbarian "allies" on the provinces in return for military services, and the departure of the legions would have left large tracts of land vacant for settlement. But by that time the Roman British civilisation was already moribund, and the subsequent history of the Saxon conquest is that of the struggle between two rival tribal societies—neither of them Roman in culture—the Celtic in Wales and Strathclyde, and the Germanic in Eastern Britain. It is true that the former was now Christian, but it was not the Christianity of the imperial Church with its city bishoprics and strict hierarchical constitution, such as had existed in Roman Britain. It was a new creation due to the grafting of Christianity on to the Celtic tribal culture. Its organisation was based on the
local monastery rather than the diocesan bishopric, and it reached its highest development, not in Britain, but in Ireland, which in this age was the seat of a rich and original culture. The work of the Irish monastic schools and the Irish monastic saints was of enormous importance to European society in the age that followed the barbarian invasions, but it is not in them that the chief element of continuity with the civilization of the ancient world is to be sought. The bridge between the Roman and the mediæval worlds is to be found in Gaul. In the Mediterranean provinces the traditions of Roman culture were still overwhelmingly strong. In Roman Germany and Britain the barbarian tribal society had carried everything before it. It was only in Gaul that the two societies and the two cultures met on comparatively equal terms, and that the conditions were favourable to a process of fusion and unification which might supply the basis of a new order.

Before this was possible, however, it was necessary to find some principle of union. It was not enough for the barbarians to tolerate Roman culture and to adopt some of the external forms of Roman government. The true representative of the conquered population was not the Roman bureaucrat or lawyer, but the Christian bishop. When the collapse of the imperial government in the West took place, the bishop remained the natural leader of the Roman population. He organized the defence of his city, like Sidonius Apollinaris at Clermont; he treated with the barbarian leaders, like St. Lupus with Attila and St. Germanus with the king of the Alans; and above all he was at once the representative of the new spiritual society and of the old secular culture.

Through all the disaster of the age of invasion, the leaders of Christian society, men like Sidonius Apollinaris or St. Avitus, kept their faith not only in their religion, but in the imperial destiny of Rome and in the supremacy of the ancient culture.

The Christians felt that so long as the Church survived, the work of the Empire could not be undone. By becoming Christians—or rather Catholics—the barbarians would themselves become Roman. "the barbarian flood would break itself against the rock of Christ." As Paulinus of Nola writes concerning a Christian missionary (Niceta of Remesiana),

Per te
Barbari discunt resonare Christum
Corde Roman.
The one great obstacle to the union of Roman and barbarian in a single society was the difference of religion. All the early Germanic kingdoms, in Gaul the Burgundians and Visigoths, the Ostrogoths in Italy, the Visigoths and Suevi in Spain, and above all the Vandals in Africa, were Arians and were thus in a state of permanent opposition to the Church of the Empire and the subject populations. Hence the paradoxical fact that the unification of Gaul proceeded not from the comparatively civilised Roman-Gothic kingdom of the south-west, but from the barbarous Frankish kingdom in the north-east. Yet in spite of their heathenism, the Franks possessed a longer tradition of association with the Empire than any of the other West German peoples. The Salian Franks had been settled on imperial territory in Belgium and on the Lower Rhine since the middle of the fourth century, and in the fifth century they fought as allies of the Roman governors of Gaul against the Saxons, the Visigoths and the Huns. In 486 their king, Clodovech or Clovis, conquered the territory between the Loire and the Somme, which was the last relic of independent Roman Gaul, and thus became ruler of a mixed Roman-Germanic kingdom. But it was his conversion to Catholic Christianity in 493 which was the turning-point in the history of the age, for it inaugurated the alliance between the Frankish kingdom and the Church, which was the foundation of mediæval history, and which ultimately gave rise to the restored Empire of the West under Charlemagne. Its immediate effect was to facilitate the unification of Gaul by the absorption of the Arian kingdoms, and to cause the recognition of Clovis by the imperial government at Constantinople as the representative of Roman authority.

It was as the representative of Catholicism against Arianism that Clovis undertook his great campaign against the Goths in 507. "Verily it grieves my soul," he is reputed to have said, "that these Arians should hold a part of Gaul; with God's help let us go and conquer them and take their territories." In the pages of Gregory of Tours, the campaign appears as a holy war and the advance of Clovis is marked at every step by miraculous signs of the divine favour. The victory of Vouillé and the conquest of Aquitaine certainly marked the appearance of a new Catholic state in the West, and its importance was recognised by the Emperor Anastasius, who forthwith conferred on Clovis the insignia of a Roman magistrate. In the course of the next thirty years the Frankish monarchy ad-
vanced with extraordinary rapidity. Not only was Gaul united once more, but eastward its power extended far beyond the old Roman frontiers. The Alamanni, the Thuringians and the Bavarians were conquered in rapid succession, and a great state arose which was the ancestor not only of France but of mediaeval Germany as well. And in nothing did the Franks show more clearly their assimilation of the Roman tradition than in this work of conquest and organisation east of the Rhine. To this day Southern Germany and its people bear the mark of their rule.

The new state behaved from the first as the heir of the imperial tradition. It salvaged what remained of the wreckage of the Roman administrator, and set it to work anew. After the model of the Emperors, the barbarian king had his "Sacred Palace" with its hierarchy of officials. His Chancery, with its Roman-Gallic scribes, preserved the forms and the routine of the old administration. His revenue was derived from the estates of the imperial fisc and from the land tax, which was based on the old system of property registers. The administrative unit was not the Germanic Hundred as it existed in the old Frankish territories of the north, but the city territory under the authority of the Count. Even the personnel of the administration was as much Roman as Frankish. Protadius and Claudius were mayors of the Palace under Queen Brunhild, and the ablest commander of the Frankish armies in the sixth century was the Patrician Mummolus. In some respects the power of the Frankish monarchy was more absolute than that of the old imperial government, at least in regard to the Church, which now falls more and more under the control of the state, so that the bishop, while losing nothing of his social importance, becomes, along with the count, the leading representative of the royal authority in his diocese.

But, on the other hand, the barbarian element in the new state is no less evident. The Roman unity has disappeared and with it the Roman idea of a reign of law. Indeed, there is a medley of tribes and peoples, each living its own life according to its own code of laws. The Frank, the Gallo-Roman and the Burgundian are judged not by the common law of the state, but each by his own national code. Even where institutions have been taken over bodily from Rome, the spirit that informs them is no longer the same. For the moving power behind the imposing structure of the Frankish state is still the barbarian warrior tribe. The power that keeps society together
is not the civil authority of the state and its law courts, but the personal loyalty of the tribesman to his chief and his kinsfolk and of the warrior to his leader. The notion of "fidelity," the relation of the individual who swears allegiance to a powerful lord in return for protection, takes the place of the legal relation of the public magistrate to the free citizen. Crime was considered primarily as an offence against the individual and his kin, and was atoned for by a composition or wergild that differed according to a man's rank and nationality.

This intermingling of Germanic and late-Roman elements which we see in the structure of the state runs through the whole culture of the age. At the beginning of the conquest the two elements stand over against one another in sharp contrast, but in the course of time each loses its individuality and finally gives place to a new unity. It is possible to study this process with exceptional clearness in the field of art, owing to the recent work of archaeologists, especially those of Scandinavia. We can trace two distinct currents of art coming into Europe from the fourth century onwards, the Iranian-Gothic and the Syrian-Byzantine. Both of these originated, like so many of the cultural influences of prehistoric times, in Western Asia, and they also follow the two great channels of prehistoric intercourse—on the one hand the way of the Mediterranean, on the other the way of the Russian steppe north of the Black Sea and the valleys of the Danube and the Vistula. It was during their settlement in South Russia that the Germanic peoples acquired from the Sarmatians the art of polychrome jewellery and the fantastic style of animal ornamentation which had already characterised Scythian art. The latter became the characteristic style of the whole Germanic world from the sixth century, even as far north as Scandinavia; but the former is confined to the peoples who migrated from South Russia, such as the Goths and the non-Germanic Alans, and to the peoples whom they influenced. Beautiful examples of this fine jewellers' work have been found as far west as Spain, at Herbes in South-west France, and in Kent and the Isle of Wight, a fact which points to the close connection of Jutish culture with that of the Franks across the Channel rather than with Denmark. On the other hand, the region of Anglian settlement shows signs, in its cruciform and square-headed brooches, of a connection with Scandinavia, while the early Saxon art of Southern Britain differs alike from the rest of England and
from the continent in the use of geometric rather than animal ornament and in the preservation of typically Roman designs, such as the "egg and tongue" border and the guilloche. The comparative duration of these schools of Germanic art affords a measure of the degree to which the invading peoples preserved their independent culture or yielded to the influence of their new environment. In this country the Teutonic artistic tradition survived until the close of the seventh century, but in France the Mediterranean influence of Syrian and Byzantine art appeared as early as the middle of the sixth century, and its victory is a sign of what a Scandinavian scholar has termed "the de-Germanization of Frankish culture."

The same problem exists in the case of religion and literature and thought, though here the evidence is much less satisfactory. Except in England, the native German religion hardly survived the conquest of the Empire. In some cases, as with the Goths, Christianity was victorious in the fourth century, and the Gothic translation of the Bible by the Arian bishop Ulfilas is the first beginning of Teutonic literature. From the Goths Christianity quickly spread to the other East German peoples, but the West Germans retained their national religion to a much later date; and the conversion of the Frankish royal house and that of the ruling classes of the other German peoples whom they conquered did not immediately affect the mass of the rural population. Moreover, even when the Germans had nominally accepted Christianity, their manners and ideas remained those of a pagan warrior society. The burial of King Alaric in the bed of the River Busento, surrounded with his treasure and his slaughtered slaves, recalls the funeral of Patroclus rather than that of a Christian king. For this was the Heroic Age of the Germanic peoples, and as Professor Chadwick has shown, it affords a real sociological parallel to the Homeric Age of ancient Greece. In both periods the contact of an ancient settled civilisation with a primitive warlike society had set up a process of change, which broke down the organisation alike of the conquered state and the conquering tribe, and left the individual war-leader and his followers as the dominant social factor. The splendour of these warrior princes, the "sackers of cities," and the dramatic story of their adventures remained a memory and an ideal to the barbarous ages that followed. Theodoric of Verona, Gunther of Worms, King Etzel the Hun, Beowulf, Hildebrand and the
rest are the figures of an epic cycle that became the common property of the Teutonic peoples; and though they never found their Homer, the story of the Need of the Nibelungs and the destruction of the Burgundian Kingdom by the Huns is not inferior in tragedy to that of the fall of Troy and the fate of the House of Atreus. Compared with these heroic legends the literature of the conquered society seems poor enough. The poetry of Sidonius Apollinaris and Venantius Fortunatus is the expiring effort of a decadent tradition. Nevertheless, it was the Latin tradition that was victorious throughout the conquered lands, and the survival of the classical tradition was of vital importance for the future of Europe and the birth of the mediaeval culture. In spite of their lack of literary quality, writers like Orosius and Isidore of Seville, Cassiodorus and Gregory the Great, did more to shape the minds of later generations than many geniuses of the first order.

The tradition of Latin culture lived on in the Church and the monasteries, and since the barbarians themselves had yielded to Christianity, it was no longer merely the culture of the conquered population, but the dominant power in the new order.

Thus by the sixth century a preliminary fusion had already taken place between the four different elements that went to make up the new European culture. The effect of the invasions was to set up a process of cultural and racial intermixture between the Germanic barbarians on the one hand, and the society of the Roman Empire on the other. The vital centre of the process was in Gaul, where the two societies met on more nearly equal terms than elsewhere, but its influence extended over the whole of Western Europe, so that all the Western peoples became in varying degrees Romano-Germanic in culture. Where the Germanic element was weakest, as in Italy, it was reinforced in the sixth century by new barbarian invasions, and where the tradition of Roman culture seemed to have perished, as in Britain and Germany, it was revived by the work of the Church and the monasteries in the seventh and eighth centuries. In spite of the apparent victory of barbarism, the Church remained as the representative of the old traditions of culture and as a bond of spiritual unity between the descendants of the conquered Romans and their barbarian conquerors. But it was centuries before the constructive ele-
ments in Western Europe were strong enough to overcome the forces of disintegration and barbarism. The leadership of culture had passed to the East, and the "Dark Ages" of western civilisation coincide with the golden age of Byzantine and Islamic culture.