PART ONE:

The Foundations
THE ROMAN EMPIRE

We are so accustomed to base our view of the world and our whole conception of history on the idea of Europe that it is hard for us to realise what the nature of that idea is. Europe is not a natural unity, like Australia or Africa; it is the result of a long process of historical evolution and spiritual development. From the geographical point of view Europe is simply the north-western prolongation of Asia, and possesses less physical unity than India or China or Siberia; anthropologically it is a medley of races, and the European type of man represents a social rather than a racial unity. And even in culture the unity of Europe is not the foundation and starting-point of European history, but the ultimate and unattained goal, towards which it has striven for more than a thousand years.

In prehistoric times Europe possessed no cultural unity. It was the meeting-place of a number of different streams of culture, which had their origin, for the most part, in the higher civilisations of the ancient East and were transmitted to the West by trade and colonisation or by a slow process of culture-contact. In this way, the Mediterranean, the Danube, the Atlantic and the Baltic were the main channels of cultural diffusion, and each of them was the basis of an independent development that in turn became the starting-point of a number of local cultures.

But the creation of a truly European civilisation was due not so much to the parallelism and convergence of these separate streams of culture as to the formation of a single
centre of higher culture that gradually dominated and absorbed the various local developments. This movement had its starting-point in the Aegean, where, as early as the third millennium, B.C., there had arisen a centre of culture comparable to the higher civilisations of Western Asia rather than to the barbaric cultures of the West. And on the foundation of this earlier development there finally arose the classical civilisation of ancient Greece, which is the true source of the European tradition.

It is from the Greeks that we derive all that is most distinctive in Western as opposed to Oriental culture—our science and philosophy, our literature and art, our political thought and our conceptions of law and of free political institutions. Moreover, it was with the Greeks that there first arose a distinct sense of the difference between European and Asiatic ideals and of the autonomy of Western civilisation. The European ideal of liberty was born in the fatal days of the Persian war, when the navies of Greece and Asia met in the Bay of Salamis and when the victorious Greeks raised their altar to Zeus the Giver of Freedom after the battle of Platea.

Apart from Hellenism, European civilisation and even the European idea of man would be inconceivable. Nevertheless Greek civilisation itself was far from being European in the geographical sense. It was confined to the Eastern Mediterranean, and while Asia Minor played a great part in its development from the beginning, continental Europe and even parts of continental Greece lay outside its zone of influence. Throughout its history it retained this intermediate character; for, though it extended westward to Sicily and Southern Italy, its chief movement of expansion was eastward into Asia. Hellenism had its first beginnings in Ionia and its end in Alexandria, Antioch and Byzantium.

The extension of this tradition of higher civilisation to the West was the work of Rome, whose mission it was to act as the intermediary between the civilised Hellenistic world of the Eastern Mediterranean and the barbaric peoples of Western Europe. At the same time as Alexander and his generals were conquering the East and sowing the seeds of Hellenistic culture broadcast over the East from the Nile to the Oxus, Rome was slowly and painfully building up her compact military peasant state in Central Italy. A single generation, in the years from 340 to 300 B.C., saw the rise of two new social organisms, the Hellenistic monarchy and the Italian confed-
eration, differing entirely from one another in spirit and in organisation, but, nevertheless, destined to be so drawn together that they ultimately absorbed one another and passed into a common unity.

The result of this process, no doubt, represents a victory for the Roman sword and the Roman genius for organization, but socially and intellectually it was the Greeks who conquered. The age of the Romanisation of the Hellenistic East was also the age of the Hellenisation of the Roman West, and the two movements converged to form a cosmopolitan civilisation, unified by the Roman political and military organisation, but based on the Hellenistic tradition of culture and inspired by Greek social ideals.

But this cosmopolitan civilisation was not as yet European. In the first century B.C. Europe had not come into existence. Rome herself was a Mediterranean Power, and up to this point her expansion had been confined to the Mediterranean coast lands. The incorporation of continental Europe in the Mediterranean cultural unity was due to the personal initiative and military genius of Julius Caesar—a remarkable instance of the way in which the whole course of history may be transformed by the will of an individual. When Caesar embarked on his enterprise in Gaul his primary motive was, no doubt, to strengthen his hold over the army and to provide a counterpoise to the conquests of his rival, Pompey, in the East. But it would be a mistake to judge his achievement as though it were an accidental by-product of his political ambitions. As Mommsen says, it is the peculiar characteristic of men of genius, like Caesar and Alexander, that they have the power to identify their interests and ambitions with the fulfilment of a universal purpose, and thus Julius Caesar used the temporary circumstances of Roman party politics to open a new world to Mediterranean civilisation. "That there is a bridge connecting the past glory of Hellas and Rome with the prouder fabric of modern history; that Western Europe is Romanic and Germanic Europe classic; that the names of Themistocles and Scipio have to us a very different sound from those of Asoka and Salmanassar; that Homer and Sophocles are not merely like the Vedas and Kalidasa attractive to the literary botanist, but bloom for us in our garden—all this is the work of Caesar; and while the creation of his great predecessor in the East has been almost wholly reduced to ruin by the tempests of the Middle Ages, the structure of Caesar has
outlasted those thousands of years which have changed religion and polity for the human race and even shifted for it the centre of civilisation itself, and it still stands erect for what we may designate as eternity.”

This conception of the work of Cassar and of the importance of the Roman contribution to modern culture has indeed been widely challenged in recent times. The modern cult of nationalism had led men to revise their historical scale of values and to look on the native cultures of barbaric Europe with very different eyes from those of our humanist predecessors. First the Germanic peoples and then the Celts have learnt to exalt the achievements of their ancestors—or rather of those whom they suppose to be their ancestors—and to minimise the debt that the Western peoples owe to Rome. Like M. Camille Jullian in his great History of Gaul, they regard the Roman Empire as an alien militarism that destroyed with brutal force the fair promise of a budding culture. And no doubt there is some ground for this view inasmuch as the Roman conquest was, in itself, brutal and destructive, and the imperial culture that it brought was stereotyped and lacking in originality. But it is very difficult to find any justification for M. Jullian’s belief that Celtic Gaul would have accepted the higher civilisation of the Hellenistic world without the intervention of Rome, or for the view of the modern German writers who believe that the Germanic world would have developed a brilliant native culture under the influence of the Asiatic world.

There is no inevitable law of progress that must force the barbarians of the West to create civilisations for themselves. Without any strong external influence, a simple tribal culture will remain unchanged for centuries, as we see in Morocco or in Albania. The creation of a new civilisation cannot be accomplished without a great deal of hard work, as Virgil himself says in the famous line: “Tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem”—“It was such a toil to found the Roman people.”

We cannot tell if the Celts or the Germans were capable of such an effort if they had been left to their own devices, or if some other power—Persian, or Arab or Turk—would have intervened to do the work for them. All that we know is that the work was actually done, and done by Rome. It was the act of Rome that dragged Western Europe out of its barbaric isolation and united it with the civilised society of the Medi-
terrestrial world. And the decisive factor in this achievement was supplied by the personality of Julius Caesar, in whom the Roman genius for conquest and organisation found its supreme representative.

It is indeed difficult to say what was the ultimate aim of Caesar's life work: whether, as Mommsen held, he desired to retain the civic traditions of the Roman state, or whether, as Eduard Meyer and many other modern writers believe, he aimed at the creation of a new monarchical state on Hellenistic lines. It is probable that there is some truth in both of these opinions and that the Alexandrine monarchy of Mark Antony and the principate of Augustus each represent one aspect of the Caesarian idea. However this may be, there can be no doubt about the aims and ideas of the man who was actually destined to complete Caesar's work, his adopted son and heir, the great Augustus. In his struggle against the Alexandrine monarchy of Antony and Cleopatra, Augustus stood forth as the conscious champion not only of Roman patriotism but of specifically Western ideals. In the eyes of his supporters, Actium, like Marathon and Salamis, was a battle of East and West, the final victory of the European ideals of order and liberty over oriental despotism. Virgil's great passage in the eighth book of the Aeneid shows us the formless hosts of oriental barbarism arrayed not only against the Penates and the divine guardians of the Roman state, but against the great gods of Greece—Poseidon, Aphrodite and Athene:

Omnigenumque deum monstra et latrator Anubis
Contra Neptunum et Venerem contraxit Minervam
Tela tempit.

and the victory is due not so much to the Roman Mars as to the Hellenic Apollo:

Actius haece cernens arcum intendebat Apollo
Desuper omnis eo terrore Aegyptus et Indi
Omnis Arabs omnes vertebant terga Sabaei.

In actual fact the victory of Augustus saved European civilisation from being absorbed by the ancient East or overwhelmed by the Western barbarians and inaugurated a new period of expansion for classical culture. In the East the Roman Empire co-operated with the forces of Hellenism to extend Greek civilisation and municipal life. In the West, it brought Western and Central Europe into the orbit of Medi-
terrancean civilisation and created a solid bulwark against barbarian invasion. Augustus and his generals completed the work of Caesar by advancing the frontiers of the empire to the Danube from its source to the Black Sea, and though they failed in their great project for the conquest of Germany as far as the Elbe, they at least made southern Germany and the Rhineland a part of the Roman world.

Henceforward for more than four hundred years Central and Western Europe was submitted to a process of progressive Romanisation which affected every side of life and formed an enduring basis for the later development of European civilisation. The Roman Empire consisted essentially in the union of a military dictatorship with a society of city states. The latter inherited the traditions of the Hellenistic culture, whether in a pure or a latinised form, while the former represented both the Latin military tradition and that of the great Hellenistic monarchies which it had replaced.

At first sight it is the military aspect of Rome's work which is most impressive, but the civil process of urbanisation is even more important in the history of culture. It was Rome's chief mission to introduce the city into continental Europe, and with the city came the idea of citizenship and the civic tradition which had been the greatest creation of the Mediterranean culture. The Roman soldier and military engineer were the agents of this process of expansion; indeed the army itself was organised by Augustus as a preparation for citizenship and an agent for the diffusion of Roman culture and institutions in the new provinces.

Moreover, not only the colonies of veterans, such as Cologne, Treves, Aquileia and Merida, but also the fortresses and legionary headquarters, such as Sirmium or York or Mainz, became centres of Roman influence and of urban life. In the majority of cases, however, the urbanisation of the new lands was carried out by reorganising the existing Celtic tribal communities on the model of an Italian municipality or by attaching the more backward tribal territories to a town that already existed. In this way there was created a regular hierarchy of communities reaching from the barbaric tribe or populus at one end of the scale through the provincial city and the municipality with Latin rights up to the citizen colony at the other. Thus a continual process of assimilation and levelling up went on throughout the empire, by which client states were converted into provinces, provincial cities
into colonies, and citizen rights were granted to provincials. Each city was the political and religious centre of a rural territory, and the land-owning class was the governing body of citizens. It was the normal process for the freedman and the man who had enriched himself by trade to invest his money in land, and thus to become inscribed as a decurion on the roll of those who were eligible for municipal office, while the wealthy decurion normally obtained Roman citizenship, and according to his financial position on the census rolls, might eventually rise to knighthood or to the senatorial rank. The great senatorial properties, and still more those of the emperor and the imperial fisc, were organised independently of the local city territory, but it was a point of honour with the Roman senator to use his wealth for the adornment or service of his native city, as we see in the case of Pliny or Herodes Atticus. Moreover, the central government was far from being a mere tax-gatherer. Nerva and Trajan established a fund for providing Italian landowners with loans at a low rate of interest, the profits of which were used to promote the growth of the population by grants to poor parents and to orphans, and this system was afterwards extended to the provinces.

The ordinary well-to-do citizen was as much a country as a city dweller, for in addition to his town house, he had his rural estate with its staff of slaves and dependent coloni centring in the villa, which combined the farm building of the domain with the often luxurious residence of the owner. In Britain, and in the north of France, the city was little more than an administrative centre, and the so-called citizens lived mainly on their estates, but their culture formed part of the regular urban civilisation of the rest of the Empire, as we can see from the plentiful villa remains in England, with their baths and central heating and mosaic floors. In Northern France and Belgium, these country estates preserved their identity through the Barbarian invasions and the Middle Ages, and even at the present day bear names which are derived from those of their original Gallo-Roman proprietors.

During the first two centuries of the Empire this system led to an extraordinarily rapid development of urban life and economic prosperity in the new provinces. In Gaul and Spain not only the external forms of civic life, but the social and intellectual culture of the Roman-Hellenistic world were diffused throughout the country, while on the Rhine and the
Danube there was an equally rapid development of agricultural colonisation and commercial prosperity. Even the outlying regions, such as Britain and Dacia, shared in the general prosperity and became initiated into the higher civilisation of the Mediterranean world. The whole empire was bound together socially by common laws and a common culture, and materially by the vast system of roads, which rendered communications easier and safer than at any time before the seventeenth century.

In the second century, under the wise rule of the great Flavian and Antonine emperors, this movement of expansion attained its full development. Never had the ancient world seemed more prosperous, more civilised, or more peaceful. Rome seemed to have realised the Stoic ideal of a world state in which all men should live at peace with one another under the rule of a just and enlightened monarchy. Yet appearances were deceptive.

All this brilliant expansion of urban civilisation had in it the seeds of its own decline. It was an external and superficial development, like that of modern European civilisation in the East or in eighteenth-century Russia. It was imposed from above and was never completely assimilated by the subject populations. It was essentially the civilisation of a leisured class, the urban bourgeoisie and their dependents, and though the process of urbanisation promoted the advance of civilisation, it also involved a vast increase of unproductive expenditure and a growing strain on the resources of the empire. As Professor Rostovtzeff has said, every new city meant the creation of a new hive of drones. The expansion of urban civilisation in the imperial age was, in fact, to an even greater extent than that of modern industrialism, a great system of exploitation which organised the resources of the newly conquered lands and concentrated them in the hands of a minority consisting of capitalists and business men; and since the basis of the system was landed property rather than industry, it was less elastic and less capable of adapting itself to the requirements of a growing urban population. So long as the empire was expanding the system paid its way, for every new war resulted in fresh territories to urbanise and new supplies of cheap slave labour. But as soon as the process of expansion came to an end and the empire was forced to stand on the defensive against new barbarian invasions, the economic balance was destroyed. The resources of the empire began to
diminish, while its expenditure continued to increase. The imperial government was obliged to raise the taxes and the other burdens of the cities, and the wealthy municipal aristocracy, which supplied the cities with unpaid magistrates and administrators and was corporately responsible for the payment of taxes, was gradually ruined.

And at the same time the progress of urbanisation also weakened the military foundations of the imperial system. The army was the heart of the Empire. All the cosmopolitan medley of races and religions, with their divergent interests of classes and cities, was in the last resort held together by a comparatively small but highly trained army of professional soldiers. But it was an ever-present source of danger; for this tremendous fighting machine was too strong and too highly organised to be controlled by the constitutional organs of a city state. Already, at the beginning of the first century B.C., the old citizen army of the Roman Republic had become a professional army of mercenaries led by generals who were half politicians and half military adventurers. It was the greatest of all the achievements of Augustus to overcome the monstrous development of Roman militarism and to restore the ideal of a citizen army, not, indeed, in the old sense, but in the only form that was possible in the new conditions. According to the design of Augustus the legionary army was to be a school of citizenship, offered by Roman citizens of Italian origin and recruited in part from Italy and in part from the urban communities of the most Romanised parts of the Empire. Enlistment in the army carried with it the right of citizenship, and when the long term of military service—sixteen or twenty years—had expired, the soldier received a grant of money or land and re-entered civil life either in his native city or as a member of one of the military colonies that were continually being established as centres of Roman culture and influence in the outlying provinces. Thus, in spite of the hard conditions of service, the army offered a sure path to social and even economic advancement, and it attracted volunteers from the best elements in the population. In every Italian city, and after the time of Vespasian in the provincial cities as well, the guilds of cadets—collegia juvenum—trained the sons of citizens for military service, while the veterans held an honoured and influential place in municipal life.

By degrees, however, this system lost its efficacy. The pop
ulation of Italy and of the more Romanised provinces grew steadily more unsuitable for military service, and the army began to lose its connection with the citizen class in the towns. From the time of Vespasian the army, with the exception of the praetorian guard, which was stationed at Rome, became entirely provincial in composition, and Italians no longer served in the legions, while in the second century, from the reign of Hadrian onwards, the principle of local recruiting became general, and the legions gradually became identified with the frontier provinces in which they were quartered. Thus the army gradually lost contact with the citizen population of the more urbanised parts of the Empire and became a separate class with a strong sense of social solidarity. Even in the first century the esprit de corps of the armies of the Rhine and the Danube and the Eastern provinces had been responsible for the disastrous civil war of the year A.D. 69, and it became an even more serious danger when the troops began to be drawn from a lower social stratum. By the end of the second century the army consisted almost entirely of men of peasant origin who were only half-Romanised, and whose whole interest and loyalty centred in their corps and their commanders. But the commanders, who were members of the upper classes—senators and knights—and not permanently connected with the army, were often mere figureheads. The real power in the army was the corps of company officers—the centurions—most of whom had risen from the ranks and whose whole life was devoted to their profession. In the civil wars that followed the fall of Commodus in A.D. 193, the army became conscious of its power, and Septimius Severus was obliged to increase their privileges, especially those of the centurions, who were granted the rank of knighthood and thus became eligible for the higher commands.

Henceforward the emperors were driven to adopt the maxim of Septimius Severus: “Enrich the soldiers and scorn the rest.” The old opposition between the city state and the mercenary army, between the ideals of citizenship and military despotism—the opposition that had already destroyed the Roman Republic and had been for a time removed by the work of Augustus—now reappeared in a more serious form than ever before and destroyed the social balance of the imperial system. The Empire gradually lost its constitutional character as a community of city states governed by the twofold authority of the Roman Senate and Princeps, and be-
The Roman Empire

came a pure military despotism. Throughout the third century, and above all in the disastrous fifty years from 235 to 285, the legions made and unmade emperors at their pleasure, and the civilised world was torn to pieces by civil war and barbarian invasions. Many of these emperors were good men and gallant soldiers, but they were almost without exception ex-centurions—for the most part men of humble origin and little education, who were called from the barracks-yard to control a situation that would have taxed the powers of the greatest of statesmen.

It is therefore not surprising that the economic conditions of the Empire went from bad to worse under the rule of a succession of sergeant-majors. In order to satisfy the demands of the soldiers and the needs of war, an enormous increase of taxation was necessary, and at the same time the inflation of the coinage, which had reached vast proportions by the second half of the century, led to a disastrous rise in prices and a loss of economic stability. Hence the government was driven to resort to a system of forced levies in kind and compulsory services which increased the distress of the subject population.

Thus the military anarchy of the third century produced a profound change in the constitution of Roman society. According to the view of Professor Rostovtzeff, this change was nothing less than a social revolution in which the exploited peasant class avenged itself by means of the army on the rich and cultured city bourgeoisie. This is perhaps an overstatement, but even if there was no conscious class conflict the issue was the same. The provincial cities and the wealthy classes were ruined, and the old senatorial aristocracy was replaced by a new military caste that was largely of peasant origin.

At last the military anarchy was brought to an end and the Empire was restored by the Dalmatian soldier, Diocletian. But it was no longer the same empire. The foundations on which Augustus had built—the Roman senate, the Italian citizen class, and the city states of the provinces—had all of them lost their strength. There remained only the imperial government and the imperial army, and, accordingly, the work of restoration had to be carried out from above by a bureaucratic organisation of the most absolute kind. The seeds of this development had been present in the Empire from the beginning; for, although in the West the Emperor
was theoretically merely the first magistrate of the Roman
Republic and the commander of the Roman armies, in the
East he occupied a different position. He was the heir of the
tradition of the great Hellenistic monarchies, which in their
turn had inherited the traditions of the ancient oriental states.
This was, above all, the case in Egypt, which had never
been annexed by the Republic, and which was acquired by
Augustus as the personal dominion of the Emperor and ad-
ministered directly by imperial officials. Thus the Roman em-
perors stepped into the place of the Ptolemies and the Phar-
sohs and took over the control of a society that embodied the
most complete system of state socialism that the ancient world
had known. "In direct opposition to the structure of economic
life in Greece and Italy," writes Professor Rostovtzeff, "the
whole economic organisation of Egypt was built up on the
principle of centralisation and control by the Government,
as well as the nationalisation of all production in agricultural
and industrial life. Everything was for the State and through
the State, nothing for the individual . . . Nowhere in
the whole evolution of mankind can be found so far reaching
and so systematic limitations as those that applied to private
property in Ptolemaic Egypt."

The social and economic history of the later Empire is the
history of the extension to the rest of the provinces of the main
principles of this Egyptian Hellenistic system. The administra-
tion of the vast imperial estates, the development of the offi-
cial hierarchy, the régime of tribute in kind and of forced
services, above all the fixation of status in the hereditary
guilds, and the binding of the cultivator to his holding and
the craftsman and the trader to his calling, were already fully
developed institutions in Egypt centuries before they came to
be applied to the rest of the Empire. The system of compulsory
state services—liturgies or munera—was, however, common to
the Hellenistic East, and it had begun to make its influence
felt in the West as early as the second century. What Diocle-
tian did, therefore, was not to introduce a new principle, but
to make these oriental institutions an essential part of the
imperial system. The old institutions of the city state, which
rested on private property and a privileged citizen class, had
become anachronism, and in their place there arose a
bureaucratic unitary state based on the principle of universal
service.

It was the task of Diocletian and his successors to reorganise
the administration and the finances of the Empire on these foundations. And though this undoubtedly led to an enormous increase in the economic burdens of the population and a decline of social and political freedom, we who live in the fourth decade of the twentieth century are in a better position than the historians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to realise the problems of the age and to do justice to the grim tenacity with which these tough Illyrian emperors fought against the social and economic forces that threatened to overwhelm ancient civilization. At least Diocletian succeeded in his primary tasks of warding off barbarian invasion and putting an end to the state of military anarchy that was destroying the Empire. He did this by a drastic reorganisation of the Roman military system. From the beginning it had been the fundamental principle of the Roman state that authority—imperium—was indivisible and that the supreme magistrates—the consuls—and their representatives in the provinces—the proconsuls—were ex officio the commanders of the Roman armies; and under the Empire the same conditions obtained with regard to the emperor and his provincial representatives—the legates. In theory this principle secured the control of the army by the state, but it actually resulted, both at the close of the Republic and during the third century of the Empire, in the control of the state by the army. Diocletian put an end to this state of things by the radical separation of civil and military command. The army and the civil service were constituted as two independent hierarchies which were united only in their common head—the emperor. The provincial governor was no longer a sort of viceroy in his province. He had no control over the troops, and his province, which under Diocletian's successors became much reduced in size, was grouped with several others so as to form a diocese under the supervision of a new official, the vicar, who was himself responsible to the Praetorian Prefect, the chief minister of the Empire. In the same way the army underwent a similar process of reorganisation. The great frontier armies of the Rhine, the Danube and the East, whose rivalries and revolts had led to so many civil wars, were replaced by second-line troops, consisting of an hereditary class of peasant soldiers, while the best troops were stationed behind the frontiers as a field army which could be used as a striking force wherever it was needed. At the same time the historic legion of 5,400 men with its auxiliaries was
reduced to a regiment of 1,000 to 1,400 men under a tribune, and was put under the control not of the civil governor, but of a new military officer—the duke. The supreme command was in the hands of the emperor himself, and since Diocletian could not be everywhere at the same time, he returned to the old Roman principle of collegiate authority and associated with himself, first his comrade Maximian, to whom he entrusted the defence of the western frontiers, and then the sub-emperors, the Caesars Constantius and Galerius. There was now an emperor to each frontier. From Treves Constantius watched the Rhine and Britain; Galerius at Sirmium, west of Belgrade, controlled the Danube; while the senior partners occupied the key positions of the second line—Maximian at Milan to defend Italy, and Diocletian at Nicomedia, the strategic centre of the Empire, whence he could keep his eyes on the Danube to the north and the Persian frontier in the east. Thus Rome was no longer the centre of the Empire. She was left to nurse the memory of her past glory, while the tide of civilisation ebbed back to the east. The work of Diocletian found its completion in that of Constantine, who gave the new Empire a new capital and a new religion, and thus inaugurated a new civilisation which was not that of the classical world.

Yet, in spite of these profound changes the work of Rome was not undone. In fact it was only in this later period that the social unity of the Empire was completely realised and that men became fully conscious of the universal character of the Roman state. The early Empire outside Italy had been a foreign power imposed from above on a number of conquered societies; its relations were primarily not with the individual but with the subject community. To the ordinary man the state was not the Roman Empire but his native city. It was only in proportion as the imperial bureaucracy encroached on the old city administration that a man’s local citizenship became subordinated to his membership of the Empire.

Thus the decay of the old city constitution was not an unmitigated misfortune, for it was accompanied by a development of imperial citizenship. The third century, which saw the rise of a centralised bureaucratic state, also saw the extension of Roman citizenship to the provincials and the transformation of Roman law from the possession of a privileged class to the common law of the Empire. And this de-
velopment rested not merely on the desire of the central
government to increase its control over its subjects; it also
had a basis in the social and political ideals of the age. These
ideals already find expression in the writings of Greek men
of letters, such as Dio Chrysostom and Aelius Aristides, who
were the leaders of that somewhat academic revival of classi-
cal culture which characterised the second century A.D. They
saw in the Roman Empire the realisation of the traditional
Hellenistic idea of the unity of the civilised world—the oecu-
mena—and they held up to the emperors the Stoic ideal of
an enlightened monarchy in which the ruler dedicates his life
to the service of his subjects and regards government, not as
a privilege, but as a duty. Thus the great emperors of the
second century, from Trajan to Marcus Aurelius, who laid the
foundations of the bureaucratic régime, had no intention of
destroying civic liberty. Their ideal was that which was ex-
pressed by Marcus Aurelius as "the ideal of a polity in which
there is the same law for all, a polity administered with re-
gard to equal rights and equal freedom of speech, and the
ideal of a kingly government which respects most of all the
freedom of the governed." And the same ideal inspired the
great jurists of the following century, such as Ulpian and
Papinian, through whom the humane and enlightened princi-
pies of the Antonine period became incorporated in the
traditions of later Roman law. Even in the darkest period of
the later Empire these ideas never entirely disappeared. The
Roman felt that the Empire stood for all there was in the
world of civilisation and justice and freedom, and down to
the seventh century they still loved to repeat the old saying
that alone among the rulers of the earth the Roman emperor
ruled over free men while the chiefs of the barbarians lorded
it over slaves.

We must not suppose that Roman patriotism had disap-
ppeared because the institutions of the city state were morib-
dand, and the Empire itself seemed falling into decay. On the
contrary it is just in this period that we find the clearest reali-
sation of what the world owed to the work of Rome. It runs
through all the literature of the fifth century and is common
alike to Christian and pagan writers. It was the cult of
Rome rather than a belief in the pagan gods that explains the
attachment of aristocratic conservatives like Symmachus to
the old religion and brings a note of genuine passion and
conviction into the artificial poetry of Claudian and Rutilius
Namatianus. There is something touching in the devotion of the Gallic senator Namatian to Rome, "the mother of gods and men," in her misfortunes and in his belief that she would surmount the disasters that had overtaken her—"ordo renascendi est crescere posse malis"—"it is the law of progress to advance by misfortune."

But the supreme claim of Rome upon the loyalty of Namatian and Claudian, the Gaul and the Egyptian, is to be found in the generosity with which she had given the conquered peoples a share in her laws and has made the whole world into one city. She it is," writes Claudian, "who alone has received the conquered into her bosom and fostered the human race under a common name." And these ideas are not peculiar to the defenders of the lost cause of the old religion; they are equally characteristic of Christian writers such as Ambrose, Orosius and Prudentius. In fact, Prudentius gave a still wider significance to the conception of Rome's universal mission, since he brought it into organic relation with the ideals of the new world religion. "What," he asks, "is the secret of Rome's historical destiny? It is that God wills the unity of mankind, since the religion of Christ demands a social foundation of peace and international amity. Hitherto the whole earth from east to west had been rent asunder by continual strife. To curb this madness God has taught the nations to be obedient to the same laws and all to become Romans. Now we see mankind living as citizens of one city and members of a common household. Men come from distant lands across the seas to one common forum, and the peoples are united by commerce and culture and intermarriage. From the intermingling of peoples a single race is born. This is the meaning of all the victories and triumphs of the Roman Empire: the Roman peace has prepared the road for the coming of Christ. For what place was there for God or for the acceptance of truth, in a savage world in which men's minds were at strife and there was no common basis of law?" And he concludes:

En aedc, omnipotens, concordibus influe terrist
jam munus te, Christe, capit, quem congrege nexn
Pax et Roma tenent.12

And thus, although Prudentius had no more idea of the approaching fall of the Western Empire than had Claudian or Namatian, he had divined with almost prophetic insight
the true significance of the changes that had come upon the ancient world. The new Christian Rome, whose advent Prudentius had hailed, was indeed destined to inherit the Roman tradition and to preserve the old ideal of Roman unity in a changed world. For it was to Rome that the new peoples owed the very idea of the possibility of a common civilisation. Through all the chaos of the dark ages that were to follow, men cherished the memory of the universal peace and order of the Roman Empire, with its common religion, its common law and its common culture; and the repeated efforts of the Middle Ages to return to the past and to recover this lost unity and civilisation led the new peoples forward to the future and prepared the way for the coming of a new European culture.
THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The influence of Christianity on the formation of the European unity is a striking example of the way in which the course of historical development is modified and determined by the intervention of new spiritual influences. History is not to be explained as a closed order in which each stage is the inevitable and logical result of that which has gone before. There is in it always a mysterious and inexplicable element, due not only to the influence of chance or the initiative of the individual genius, but also to the creative power of spiritual forces.

Thus in the case of the ancient world we can see that the artificial material civilisation of the Roman Empire stood in need of some religious inspiration of a more profound kind than was contained in the official cults of the city-state; and we might have guessed that this spiritual deficiency would lead to an infiltration of oriental religious influences, such as actually occurred during the imperial age. But no one could have foretold the actual appearance of Christianity and the way in which it would transform the life and thought of ancient civilisation.

The religion which was destined to conquer the Roman Empire and to become permanently identified with the life of the West was indeed of purely oriental origin and had no roots in the European past or in the traditions of classical civilisation. But its orientalism was not that of the cosmopolitan world of religious syncretism in which Greek philosophy