which was to form the intellectual capital of Western Christendom for more than a thousand years.

And thus, when the Western Empire fell before the barbarians, the Church was not involved in its disaster. It was an autonomous order which possessed its own principle of unity and its own organs of social authority. It was able at once to become the heir and representative of the old Roman culture and the teacher and guide of the new barbarian peoples. In the East it was not so. The Byzantine Church became so closely bound up with the Byzantine Empire that it formed a single social organism which could not be divided without being destroyed. Anything that threatened the unity of the Empire also endangered the unity of the Church. And so it was that while the Eastern Empire resisted the attacks of the barbarians, the Eastern Church lost its unity owing to the reaction of the oriental nationalities to the ecclesiastical centralisation of the Byzantine state. Among the oriental peoples, nationality took on a purely religious form and the state was ultimately swallowed up by the Church.

But although from the fifth century the two halves of the Empire drifted apart in religion as well as in politics, the division was not complete. The Papacy still preserved a certain primacy in the East, as Harnack says, "even in the eyes of the Orientals there attached to the Roman Bishop a special something, which was wanting to all the rest, a nimbus which conferred upon him a special authority." And similarly, the Western Church still regarded itself as in a sense the Church of the Empire, and continued to recognise the ecumenical character of the General Councils which were convoked by the Byzantine Emperor.

These conditions characterised the whole period with which we are about to deal. It was not until the eleventh century that the religious bond which united East and West was finally destroyed and Western Christendom emerged as an independent unity, separated alike in culture and religion from the rest of the old Roman world.
THE CLASSICAL TRADITION
AND CHRISTIANITY

If Europe owes its political existence to the Roman Empire and its spiritual unity to the Catholic Church, it is indebted for its intellectual culture to a third factor—the Classical Tradition—which is also one of the fundamental elements that have gone to the making of the European unity.

It is indeed difficult for us to realize the extent of our debt, for the classical tradition has become so much a part of Western culture that we are no longer fully conscious of its influence on our minds. Throughout European history this tradition has been the constant foundation of Western letters and Western thought. It was first diffused through the West by the cosmopolitan culture of the Roman Empire. It survived the fall of Rome and remained through the Middle Ages as an integral part of the intellectual heritage of the Christian Church, and in the age of the Renaissance it arose with renewed strength to become the inspiration and model of the new European literatures and the basis of all secular education.

Thus for nearly two thousand years Europe had been taught in the same school and by the same masters, so that the schoolboy and undergraduate of the nineteenth century were still reading the same books and conforming their minds to the same standards as their Roman predecessors eighteen hundred years before.

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It is almost impossible to overrate the cumulative influence of so ancient and continuous a tradition. There is nothing to be compared with it in history except the Confucian tradition in China, and it is curious to reflect that both of them seem finally in danger of coming to an end at the same moment and under the influence of the same forces.

But the classical tradition of Europe differs from that of China in one important particular. It is not of indigenous origin, for though it is so closely linked with the Roman tradition Rome was not its creator, but rather the agent by which it was transmitted to the West from its original home in the Hellenic world. The classical tradition is, in fact, nothing else than Hellenism, and perhaps the greatest of all the services that Rome rendered to civilisation is to be found in her masterly adaptation of the classical tradition of Hellenism to the needs of the Western mind and the forms of Western speech, so that the Latin language became not only a perfect vehicle for the expression of thought but also an ark which carried the seed of Hellenic culture through the deluge of barbarism. And thus the great classical writers of the first century B.C., above all, Cicero, Virgil, Livy and Horace, have an importance in the history of Europe that far outweighs their intrinsic literary value, great as this is, for they are the fathers of the whole Western tradition of literature and the foundations of the edifice of European culture.

At the very moment when Rome had succeeded in extending her Empire over the Hellenistic world, the empire of the Greek classical tradition over the Western mind was assured by the Latin literature of the Augustan age, and the influence of Hellenism continued to increase and spread throughout the first two centuries of the Roman Empire. On the one hand, the first and second centuries A.D. witnessed a renaissance of the Hellenic tradition in its strictly classical form throughout the Greek world; and on the other, the Latin form of Hellenism, which had already reached its full development in the first century B.C., above all in the work of Cicero, was communicated to the Western provinces and became the foundation of their culture. Classical education was widely diffused throughout the Empire, and not only great cities like Rome and Antioch and Alexandria and Carthage, but provincial towns such as Madaba in Africa, Autun and Bordeaux in Gaul, Cordova in Spain, and Gaza and Beytus in Syria became the centres of an intense educational activity. Juvenal
writes of the universal mania for education which was extending even to the barbarians:—

Nunc totus Graecas nostrasque habet orbis Athenas,
Gallia caudicos docuit facunda Britannos,
De conducendo loquitur iam rhetore Thule.¹

This culture was indeed purely literary. Science had little place in it, except at Alexandria. The rhetorical ideal of education, inaugurated by Gorgias and the Sophists of the fifth century B.C. and developed in the schools of the Hellenistic world, was completely dominant, and the successful rhetorician was the idol of the educated public. But rhetoric had a much wider scope than anything which we understand by the name. It was the culmination of the whole cycle of liberal studies—arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music, grammar, rhetoric and dialectic—the so-called “artes liberales,” which were the fore-runners of the mediaeval Quadrivium and Trivium.² Even apart from this wide ideal of oratory, which was upheld by Cicero and Tacitus, the pure rhetorician, such as Quintilian or Aristotle, was far from being a mere pedant. He aimed at something wider than technical scholarship—at a broad literary culture which is nothing less than humanism. In fact, the humanist ideal of culture, which has dominated modern education since the Renaissance, owes its existence to a deliberate revival of the old rhetorical training. But even in the Middle Ages the latter survived to a far greater extent than is usually realised; indeed there is no period of European history in which its influence is not perceptible. The very type of the publicist—the man of letters who addresses himself to the educated public in general—a type which is almost unknown in other cultures, is a product of this tradition: Alcuin, John of Salisbury, Petrarch, Erasmus, Bodin, Grotius and Voltaire were all of them the successors and disciples of the ancient rhetoricians, and this is but one aspect of that classical tradition which has been one of the chief creative forces in European culture.

In the fourth century, however, the supremacy of the classical tradition seemed gravely threatened by the victory of the new religion. Christianity was founded on an oriental tradition which had nothing in common with Hellenism, and its spirit and ideals were sharply opposed to those of the pagan rhetorician and man of letters. The Christians acknowledged no debt to the classical tradition. They had their own classics
—the Christian Scriptures—which were so fundamentally different in form and spirit from pagan literature that there was at first no room for mutual comprehension. "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" writes Tertullian, "what concord is there between the Academy and the Church?" St. Paul himself expressly disavowed all claim to the graces of style and the wisdom of secular philosophy. "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For the Jews require signs, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Gentiles foolishness; but with them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." 8

Thus Christianity made its appeal not to the sophisticated and sterile mind of cultivated society, but to the fundamental needs of the human soul and to the religious experience of the common man. "Stand forth, O soul, and give thy witness," says Tertullian. "But I call thee not as when, fashioned in schools, trained in libraries, fed up in Attic academies and porticoes, thou belcheest forth thy wisdom. I address thee simple and rude and unlettered and untaught, such as they have thee who have thee only, that very thing, pure and entire, of the road, the street, the workshop." 4

In fact the early Christians were for the most part men of little education and culture. In the cities they belonged mainly to the lower and lower middle classes, while in the country they were often drawn from a peasantry which was almost unaffected by classical culture and which preserved its native Syriac or Coptic or Punic speech. In these circumstances it was but natural that the official representatives of the classical tradition should look on Christianity as the enemy of culture and, like the Emperor Julian or Porphyrj, should identify the cause of Hellenism with that of the old religion. The "golden mediocrity" of the classical scholar could have little sympathy with the fanaticism of the martyrs and the desert monks, who condemned everything that made life delightful and proclaimed the approaching doom of all secular civilisation. Maximus of Madara, the pagan rhetorician who corresponded with St. Augustine, speaks of Christianity as a resurgence of oriental barbarism which sought to replace the worship of the gracious figures of the classical deities by the cult of executed criminals with horrid Punic names. 8
Nevertheless, though it was ignored by the leaders of culture, there was going on all the time a process of assimilation by which the Church was preparing for the reception of the classical tradition and for the formation of a new Christian culture. As early as the second century, educated converts such as Justin Martyr and Athenagoras were beginning to address the cultivated public in their own language, and attempting to show that the doctrines of Christianity were in harmony with the rational ideals of ancient philosophy. The most remarkable of these attempts is the Octavius of Minucius Felix, a Ciceroian dialogue which is purely classical both in form and spirit. It is true that the greatest of the Latin apologists—Tertullian—wrote in a very different spirit, but even he, for all his neglect of the classical tradition, was a rhetorician to his very marrow, and appropriated the methods of the Roman barrister to the service of the new religion.

The tendency which is already visible in the Apologists to assimilate Hellenic thought and culture reaches its highest development in the school of Alexandria in the third century. Origen and his predecessor Clement were the first to conceive the mediaeval ideal of a hierarchy of sciences culminating in Christian theology. As the Greeks had treated the arts and sciences as a propaedeutic to rhetoric and philosophy, so Origen proposed to make philosophy itself a propaedeutic to theology—"that what the sons of the philosophers say about geometry and music and grammar and rhetoric and astronomy—that they are the handmaidens of philosophy—we may say of philosophy itself in relation to theology," he taught, writes his disciple, Gregory Thaumaturgus, "that we should philosophise and collate with all our powers every one of the writings of the ancients, whether philosophers or poets, excepting and rejecting nothing," save the writings of the atheists, "but giving a fair hearing to all." The result of this programme was a far-reaching synthesis of Christianity and Hellenic thought which had a profound influence in the whole subsequent development of theology, but which from the first provoked considerable opposition on the ground that it was inconsistent with traditional orthodoxy, as indeed in some respects it certainly was. It is, however, important to note that this opposition to Origen did not necessarily imply any hostility to Hellenic culture as distinct from Hellenic philosophy. There were Hellenists in both camps; in fact Origen's chief opponent, Methodius of Olympus, went further
than Origen himself in his allegiance to the classical tradi-
tion.9

This, by the beginning of the fourth century, classical cul-
ture had gained a sure foothold within the Church, and the
establishment of the Christian Empire was actually followed
by a considerable literary revival. The leaders of this move-
ment—the great rhetoricians of the fourth century, Hermogenes,
Themistius and Libanius—were themselves pagans, but they
found no lack of pupils and imitators among the Christians;
indeed even from a purely literary point of view the Christian
writers of the period often surpassed their teachers. The Fa-
thers of the fourth century, alike in the East and the West,
were essentially Christian rhetoricians who shared the culture
and traditions of their pagan rivals, but whose art was no
longer an endless elaboration of the worn-out themes of the
lecture-room, but had become the instrument of a new spirit-
ual force. Three centuries earlier Tacitus had pointed out that
rhetoric had become empty and unreal, because it no longer
fulfilled a vital function in political life. “Great oratory, like
fire, needs fuel to feed it and movement to fan it; it brightens
as it burns.”9 Through the Church, rhetoric had recovered this
vital relation to social life: in place of the old ecclesia of the
Greek city it had found the new ecclesia of the Christian peo-
ple. Once more the most profound issues were debated with
passionate earnestness before an audience drawn from every
class; as when St. John Chrysostom delivered his great
hominilies to the people of Antioch, while the fate of the city
was hanging in the balance. Even the most abstruse theologi-
cal questions were a matter of burning interest to the man
in the street, and the man who could speak or write of them
with eloquence and skill was assured of an almost world-wide
influence.

This, of course, is primarily true of the Greek-speaking
world, the world of Athanasius and Arios, of Basil and
Eunomius, of Cyril and Theodoret; but in the Latin West the
rhetorical tradition was equally powerful, though it was the
tradition of the Roman magistrate and orator rather than of
the Hellenic sophist and demagogue. No doubt the Hellenic
world still retained its cultural leadership. Eusebius of
Caesarea, St. Basil and the two Gregories, of Nyssa and
Nazianzus, possessed a wider and deeper culture, alike in lit-
crature and philosophy, than any of their Western contem-
poraries. They preserved the traditions of the school of
Origen, whereas the Western tradition inherited something of the legal and authoritative spirit of Tertullian and Cyprian. But in the fourth century the rise of the new Christian culture tended to draw East and West together once more. St. Ambrose was a diligent student of Greek literature, and owes infinitely more to the writings of the Greek Fathers than to Tertullian and Cyprian, whom he entirely ignores. St. Jerome acquired his theological learning in the East as the pupil of St. Gregory Nazianzen and Apollinaris of Laodicea, and the student of Origen and Eusebius.

Moreover, the tendency of the Church to come to terms with secular culture and to assimilate classical literature and thought manifests itself in the West no less than in the East. St. Ambrose adorns his sermons with quotations from Virgil and Horace, and takes Cicero as his model and guide in his most famous work, De Officiis Ministerum. The Ciceronian tradition forms an essential part of the new Christian culture and influences patristic literature from the time of Lactantius to that of Augustine. St. Jerome, it is true, speaks strongly of the dangers of pagan literature, and the famous vision in which he was condemned for being "a Ciceronian not a Christian" is often quoted as an example of the hostility of Christianity to classical culture. But the true significance of the episode is that Jerome's devotion to classical literature was so intense that it had become a spiritual temptation. Had he not reacted against it, he might have become a rhetorician and nothing more. And in that case the Middle Ages would have lost the greatest of their spiritual classics—the Latin Vulgate. For in his translation of the Bible Jerome makes no attempt to adhere to Ciceronian standards, but allows the primitive grandeur of the Hebrew original to reflect itself in his style, so that he enriched the Latin language with a new range of expression. But though he attempted to moderate his ardour, he never lost his passionate devotion to the greatest of the rhetoricians—"Tullius qui in arte eloquentiae romanae stetit rex oratorum et latinae linguae ilustrator." Rufinus relates, not without malice, that he would in his later years pay his copyists more highly for the transcription of Cicero's dialogues than for that of ecclesiastical works, and that he taught the children at Bethlehem to read Virgil and the poets. In fact, far from being an enemy to the classical tradition, Jerome is of all the Fathers the most steeped in pagan literature and the most deeply influenced by the rhetorical tradi-
tion. Even the intolerance and pugnacity which have scandalised so many modern critics do not spring from the fanat-
cism of a bigot, but from the irascibility of a scholar, and his
literary vendettas are often curiously similar to those of the
humanists of the Renaissance, who were themselves among
his warmest admirers.

The influence of Jerome was indeed second to none, not
even to that of Augustine, but it was the influence of a
scholar, not of a thinker or a theologian. In him the two great
spiritual traditions of the classics and the Bible meet together,
and from him they flow out again in a single stream to
fertilise the culture of the Middle Ages.

The influence of the classical tradition is even more clearly
discernible in the rise of a new Christian poetry; in the East,
however, save in the case of St. Gregory Nazianzen, the servile
imitation of classical models destroyed all spontaneity of
feeling and found its supreme expression in the attempt of
Apollinaris of Laodicea and his son to translate the Bible
into the forms and metres of classical poetry. In the West,
the same tendency produced the Biblical paraphrases of
Juvenecus and the ingenious but misguided attempts to com-
pose poems on Biblical subjects entirely made up of passages
from Virgil detached from their context. But the West pos-
sessed a far more living poetical tradition than the East, and
during the fourth and fifth centuries this tradition was fully
assimilated by the new Christian culture. Paulinus of Nola,
who found a kindred spirit in his English biographer, Henry
Vaughan, was a genuine Christian humanist, the spiritual an-
cestor of Vida and Mantuanus. He was not a great poet, but
he was a man of high culture and of noble and attractive char-
acter, and his influence did more even than that of Jerome or
Augustine to popularise the ideals of the new Christian cul-
ture among the educated classes in the Western provinces.

But the greatest of the Christian poets was Paulinus' Span-
ish contemporary, Prudentius, whom Bentley termed "the
Christian Virgil and Horace." Of all the Christian writers,
Prudentius shows the fullest appreciation of the classical tra-
dition in both its literary and its social aspects. He yields to
none of the pagan poets in his civic patriotism and his devo-
tion to the great name of Rome. He does not look on Rome
with the eyes of Tertullian and Augustine as a mere mani-
festation of human pride and ambition. Like Dante, he sees in
the Empire a providential preparation for the unity of man-
kind in Christ. The Fabii and the Scipios were the uncon-
scious instruments of the divine purpose, and the martyrs
gave their lives for Rome no less than the legionaries. The
last words of St. Lawrence in the Peristephanon are a prayer
for Rome, "O Christ, grant to thy Romans that the city by
which Thou hast granted to the rest to be of one mind in
religion should itself become Christian... May it teach
lands far apart to come together in one grace; may Romulus
become faithful and Numa himself believe." Now this
prayer had been fulfilled; the Rome of the consuls and the
Rome of the martyrs had become one. "To-day the lights of
the Senate kiss the threshold of the temple of the apostles.
The Pontiff who wore the sacred fillets bears on his brow the
mark of the cross, and the Vestal Claudia kneels before the
altar of St. Laurence." 15

In the poems of Prudentius and in those of Paulinus of
Nola we see how the cult of the martyrs, which had its origins
in the protest of the Christian mind against the anti-spiritual
claims of the secular power, had become transformed into a
social institution and a manifestation of civic piety. To Pru-
dentius, the old local patriotism of the city-state finds a new
justification through the cult of the local saints. He shows us
the cities of Spain presenting themselves before the judg-
ment-seat of God, each bearing the relics of its native martyrs.
The saint has become the representative and guardian of the
city and imparts to it a share in his glory.

Sterne te totam generosa sanctis
Civitas mecum tumulis; deinde
Mox resurgentes animas et arbus
Tota sequeris. 16

The reconciliation between Christianity and the classical
tradition in the fourth and fifth centuries, which finds expres-
sion in the patriotic culture and the new Christian poetry, had
a profound influence on the formation of the European mind.
The modern is apt to regard the whole rhetorical tradition as
empty pedantry, and to dismiss Cicero himself as a pompous
bore. But, as I have already pointed out, it is to the rhetori-
cian and his educational work that we owe the survival of
classical literature and the whole tradition of humanism.
Without them European culture would not only have been
poorer, it would have been fundamentally different. There
would have been no tradition of secular learning, no secular
literature, save that of the minstrel and the saga-writer. The higher culture would have been entirely religious, as it has tended to be in the oriental world outside China. The survival of classical literature and the rhetorical tradition not only made possible the rise of the modern European literatures; they also formed the European habit of mind, and rendered possible that rational and critical attitude to life and nature which is peculiar to Western civilisation. The coexistence of these two spiritual and literary traditions—that of the Church and the Bible on the one hand, and that of Hellenism and the classics on the other—has left a profound mark on our culture, and their mutual influence and interpenetration has enriched the Western mind in a way that no single tradition, however great, could have done by itself.

It is true that this rhetorical and literary habit of mind has its defects, and it is perhaps partially responsible for that artificiality which is one of the greatest weaknesses of our civilisation. Moreover, the coexistence of two intellectual traditions of disparate origin has tended to produce a certain dualism and disharmony in European culture that is absent in civilisations of a simpler or more uniform type. Nor can it be said that the rhetorical tradition was a complete embodiment of the intellectual achievement of the ancient world. It was a partial and one-sided development, which represents one aspect of the Hellenic genius, but fails to do justice to its scientific and metaphysical achievements. The true responsibility for the failure of mediaeval culture to preserve the inheritance of Greek science rests not on the Church, but on the rhetoricians. The scientific tradition of the Greek world had become separated from the literary tradition of the rhetoricians during the Hellenistic period, and consequently it was never assimilated by the Latin West as was the literary side of Greek culture. The only Latin contributions to science were the encyclopaedias of cultivated amateurs like Varro and Pliny and the technical works of engineers and surveyors (geometers). All the real scientific work of the age was due to Greeks, such as Galen and Claudius Ptolemaeus (Ptolemy) in the second century A.D., who were the last creative minds in ancient science; but it is significant that although Galen lived and worked at Rome, his writings were never translated into Latin until the Middle Ages.

The scientific tradition still survived during the later Empire, but it was confined to the East and flourished mainly in
the schools of Alexandria and Athens, which were at this period almost monopolised by the Neoplatonists. It was the aim of the latter, from the fourth century onwards, to combine the whole body of Greek science in an organic unity based on their own metaphysical and theological doctrines. Above all, they aimed at the reconciliation of Aristotle with Plato and Ptolemy with Aristotle, and consequently their energies were directed not to original research but to interpreting and commenting the older authorities. Their curriculum was based on the works of Euclid and Nicomachus, Ptolemy and Geminos, Aristotle and Plato, but the importance of Aristotle steadily increased and reached its climax in the Alexandrian philosophers of the sixth century—Ammonius, Simplicius, Damascus and the Christian John Philoponus, all of whom show an extraordinarily wide knowledge of ancient science. This Aristotelian revival, which had begun as early as the beginning of the third century with the great commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias, was of the greatest importance for the future; but it did not reach the Latin West, save in a very rudimentary form through Boethius, until the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

But although the later scientific development of Greek culture failed to affect the West, later Greek philosophy, as represented by Neoplatonism, had a direct influence on the new Latin Christian culture. Up to this point, philosophy in the West had been represented mainly by the Stoic ethics embodied in the rhetorical tradition, above all in the writings of Cicero and Seneca. There had been no creative metaphysical thought and no original psychological observation. Now at the very close of the imperial epoch the Latin world produced in St. Augustine a profoundly original genius, in whose thought the new Christian culture found its highest philosophic expression. Augustine also was a rhetorician by profession, and it was from Cicero that his mind first received an impulse towards the study of philosophy. But the turning-point in his life was eleven years later, when he came under the influence of the writings of the Neoplatonists that had been translated into Latin by the converted rhetorician Marius Victorinus. By them he was first convinced of the objective existence of spiritual reality, and from them he derived the two fundamental principles which remained the poles of his philosophy—the idea of God as the source of being and intelligence, the Sun of the intelligible world; and the idea of the soul as a
spiritual nature which finds its beatitude in the participation of the Uncreated Light.

But Augustine was not contented with the intellectualism of Greek philosophy. He demanded not a speculative theory of truth, but its experimental possession. "The Platonists," he says, "indeed saw the Truth fixed, stable, un fading, in which are all the forms of all created things, but they saw it from afar...and therefore they could not find the way by which they might attain to so great and ineffable and beatific a possession."

This way he found only in Christianity—in the supernatural wisdom which not only shows man the truth, but gives him the means of attaining to its fruition. His philosophy acquired its final character from the experience of his own conversion, the realization of the intervention of a spiritual power which was strong enough to change his personality and to transform the notional order of intelligence into a vital order of charity. The spiritual evolution which began with the Hortensius of Cicero ends in the Confessions, and the sapientia of the Roman rhetorician finds its fulfillment in the contemplatio of the Christian mystic.

Thus the philosophy of Augustine differs from that of Origen, the greatest Christian thinker of the Greek world, in its intensely personal character. It remains Hellenic in its insistence on the existence of a rational order pervading the world, and in its sense of the goodness and beauty of all created being. But it was both Western and Christian in its moral preoccupations and by reason of the central position which it accords to the will.

The philosophy of Augustine is essentially a philosophy of spiritual experience, and as such it is the source of Western mysticism and of Western ethics, as well as of the Western tradition of philosophic idealism.

In the fifth and sixth centuries, the influence of Augustine became dominant throughout the Christian West. Orosius, Prosper of Aquitaine, Leo the Great, Fulgentius of Ruspe, were all of them Augustinians; and finally through St. Gregory the Great the Augustinian tradition in a simplified form became the intellectual patrimony of the mediaeval Church. But this theological tradition was accompanied by a growing alienation from classical culture. The very profundity of Augustinian thought tended to narrow the range of intellectual activity and to concentrate all attention on the two poles of
the spiritual life—God and the soul. This religious absolutism left no room either for pure literature or for pure science. For, to St. Augustine, the knowledge "wherein men desire nothing but to know" is an unprofitable curiosity that distracts the mind from its one true goal—the knowledge and the love of God. It is better for a man to know God than to number the stars or to seek out the hidden secrets of nature. "Surely unhappier is he who knoweth all these and knoweth not Thee, but happy whoso knoweth Thee, though he know not these. And whoso knoweth both Thee and them is not happier for them, but for Thee only." 19

This view was destined to dominate the clerical and monastic culture of the Latin West for many centuries. Nevertheless, so long as the West preserved the Roman-Byzantine tradition of an educated bureaucracy trained in the schools of rhetoric, there was no risk of classical culture being undervalued. Even the temporary recovery of secular culture that accompanied the Byzantine revival of the sixth century was not without its counterpart in the West. This is especially the case in Africa, where the court of the last Vandal kings was frequented—surprisingly enough—by the swarm of minor poets whose verses are preserved in the four-and-twenty books of the Salmasian anthology, and where the subsequent period produced the respectable epic of Corippus—the Johannes—perhaps the last genuine representative of the classical tradition in Latin poetry. So, too, in Italy under the rule of Theodorich the civil administration was still in the hands of highly cultivated officials like Boethius, Symmachus and Cassiodorus, and they did all that was in their power to preserve the inheritance of classical learning. Boethius was not only the last of the classics, he was also the first of the scholastics, a great educator, through whom the mediaeval West received its knowledge of Aristotelian logic and the rudiments of Greek mathematics. His tragic death put an end to the work of philosophical translation that he had planned, but in compensation it gave the world the De Consolatione Philosophiae—a masterpiece which, in spite of its deliberate reticence, is a perfect expression of the union of the Christian spirit with the classical tradition.

The same ideal inspired the work of Cassiodorus, who did even more than Boethius to build a bridge between the culture of the ancient world and that of the Middle Ages. In the first part of his life, as a minister of state in the service of the
Gothic régime, he devoted himself to the promotion of religious unity and the reconciliation of the Germanic invaders to Roman culture, while his later life was dedicated to the service of the Church and to the reconciliation of classical culture with the needs of the new ecclesiastical society and the ideals of the monastic life. It is as though he realised that the state could no longer serve as an organ of the higher culture and that the inheritance of classical civilisation could be saved only by being placed under the tutelage of the Church. In the last years of Gothic rule he planned, in co-operation with Pope Agapitus, to found a Christian school at Rome which should perform somewhat the same function for the West that the catechetical school of Alexandria had fulfilled in the East at an earlier period.

These plans were frustrated by the outbreak of the Gothic wars, which had a more disastrous effect on Italian culture than all the invasions of the previous century. But Cassiodorus refused to be discouraged. Though he was forced to abandon public life and to take refuge in the cloister, he found an opportunity for the realisation of his ideal in the monastery that he founded in his great Calabrian estates at Vivarium. Here he collected a library and drew up his two programmes of monastic studies—the Institutes of Divine and Secular Letters—which are one of the fundamental documents for the history of mediaeval culture. The first and most important of these works deals with religious learning and insists on the need for a high standard of scholarship in the study and reproduction of the Sacred Text; the second is an encyclopaedic compendium of the seven Liberal Arts, especially grammar, rhetoric and dialectic. It is the old curriculum of the later Empire adapted to the needs of the new religious society. As with Gregory Nazianzen and Augustine, the arts are regarded as an instrument of religious education, not as an end in themselves. But they are a necessary instrument, since the neglect of them involves the weakening and impoverishment of the theological culture that they serve. Even the study of the pagan poets and prose writers is regarded as legitimate and even necessary, since without them it was impossible to receive a complete training in the Liberal Arts.

Thus Vivarium was the starting-point of the tradition of monastic learning that was afterwards to become the glory of the Benedictine Order. Western monasticism entered into the heritage of the classical culture and saved it from the ruin
that overwhelmed the secular civilisation of the Latin West at the end of the sixth century. It is to the monastic libraries and scriptoria that we owe the preservation and translation of almost the entire body of Latin classical literature that we possess to-day. It is true that Italian monasticism was itself affected by this collapse, and Cassiodorus left no successors in his own land. His work was taken up and completed by the children of a new world—the Irish and Anglo-Saxon monks, who prepared the way for that revival of Christian classicism which finally emerged in the Carolingian period.