HISTORY

THE HELLENISTIC WORLD

After the fall of Athens at the close of the Peloponnesian War, the military and political history of Greece was complicated but trivial. Sparta, Thebes, and Athens vied for supremacy and succeeded only in exhausting the emotional and material resources at their command. The weakness that ensued from this protracted struggle gave Philip II of Macedonia the opportunity to impose from outside and above that unity which the Greeks had been unable to achieve for themselves. After his victory at Chaeronea in 338 B.C., Philip planned to lead a league of Greek cities in an attack on Persia, but his life was cut short by an assassin's knife in 336 B.C. Both his crown and amibitions fell to his son Alexander, who proved himself capable of taking over the family business.

At age twenty, Alexander crushed a revolt led by Athens and Thebes and then led an army of 35,000 soldiers into Asia Minor. In quick succession he subdued Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. Returning from Egypt in 331 B.C., he penetrated to the center of Persian power in Mesopotamia, an invasion which culminated in the capture of Babylon, Susa, and Persepolis and the defeat of Darius III. In just four years Alexander had destroyed the greatest foe of the Greeks and taken that empire as his own.

Alexander's ambition drove him onward until he reached the rich river valleys of India, but his weary soldiers forced him to turn back--six years of fighting in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Khazakstan, and Pakistan had taken their toll. Returning across southern Persia to Babylon, Alexander paused to plan a conquest of the western Mediterranean. There he fell ill and died on June 10, 323 B.C., in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar.

During his meteoric career Alexander had had little time to plan the ruling of his vast conquests, but from the beginning he had insisted that the Greeks remain politically, economically, and culturally supreme within his empire. However, Alexander left no heir capable of capitalizing on the magic of his name, and a struggle for power ensued. In a war of succession Alexander's generals carved his conquests into kingdoms.

By 276 B.C. the empire was ruled by three great families, ruling three great kingdoms: the Antigonids of Macedon; the Ptolemies of Egypt, whose rule included Palestine, Cyrenaica, and Cyprus; and the Seleucids of Asia,

whose rule extended from Anatolia to Afghanistan. These divisions constituted the Hellenistic world which lasted for three centuries--from 323 to 31 B.C.

The Hellenistic Age was a time of great economic growth, and large cities began to blossom. Advances in trade and industry, coupled with typical Greek energy and resourcefulness, increased the exploitation of Near Eastern markets, and large scale trading and industrial ventures began to center in the great seaboard cities of the eastern Mediterranean. The Hellenistic monarchs, ruling in the style of Persian kings, created state monopolies for the exchange and production of many items. State financing and control also furthered trade by building canals and harbors, improving marketing facilities, establishing sound money systems, and eliminating artificial barriers to trade. This Hellenistic prosperity benefited only the upper and privileged classes, however, and conditions remained harsh for the impoverished and enslaved. Consequently, there was much unrest and social conflict. Greece itself suffered a decline as economic leadership moved eastward and southward to such cities as Alexandria and Antioch.

Alexandria, with a population of about a million people, became the great commercial and intellectual capital of the Hellenistic world. The city boasted a lighthouse acclaimed one of the wonders of the ancient world, a museum, a zoo, a magnificent royal palace, and a library that housed 700,000 works by 100 B.C. and became a center for poets, philologists, and scientists of the time.

The greatest contribution of the Hellenistic Age to modern man was undoubtedly the diffusion of Greek culture throughout the civilized world. Superficially the diffusion was a matter of dress, language, and technology; more profoundly, it was a matter of thinking analytically, and of "acting" Greek.

The Greek elements of Hellenistic culture should not conceal its profound difference from the culture of classical Greece, however; whereas classical Greece had been a world of tiny city-states with conciliar governments, Hellenistic culture was dominated by the big monarchies ruling from cosmopolitan centers. In the classical world of small economic and political units, private citizens had been of considerable importance, politics had been the major concern of the average man, and the arts and philosophy had been politically oriented. In the large Hellenistic world, private persons were usually of no importance; the average man concerned himself with private affairs and "lived unnoticed," as Epicurus advised, and so did philosophy and art. Faced with an impersonal bureaucracy and an expanding *kosmos*, the individual sought salvation in self-contained activity. For people in the twentieth century, the atmosphere of the Hellenistic Age should not be unfamiliar.

In the meantime, a fourth great power had appeared in the West. By 268 B.C. Rome had won control of all Italy south of the Po Valley. But the courts of Macedonia, Syria, and Egypt paid little attention to the events in Italy, a land as far away from the Greek world as China was

from America in the nineteenth century.

ROME

The Beginnings

Neolithic tribes were living on the Italian peninsula when a western wing of the Indo-Europeans who had migrated to Greece filtered into the Po Valley. These early settlers brought copper and bronze tools, while later migrants introduced weapons of iron. One group, the Latins, settled in the Latium, the lower Tiber River Valley. By the ninth century (c. 850 B.C.) a people known as the Etruscans migrated to the west coast and settled chiefly in the Latium plain, now called Tuscany. Much concerning the Etruscans is unclear; some scholars believe that they came from Asia Minor, probably from Lydia; others, pointing to the lack of "Asiatic" influences in their art, believe them to be indigenous to the area. More complete information must wait, however, until the written language of the Etruscans finds it translator. Whatever their origin, it is clear that these people possessed a highly developed civilization, superior to that of the earlier Indo-European settlers, and this advantage allowed them to spread out of Tuscany to Umbria in the east and toward the Greek settlements in the south. (As noted in an earlier unit, the Greeks had begun colonization about 750 B.C. and were of continuing influence in the central and western Mediterranean.) The Phoenicians, too, settled in the central Mediterranean, but their colonies were mainly in northern Africa, with their chief center at Carthage. The Phoenician colonies became more important and independent with the failing fortunes of the homeland further east. These three peoples--the Etruscans, the Greeks, and the Carthaginians--were to play important roles in the development of Rome as that small city-state of farmers sought its identity and destiny.

According to legend, Rome was founded by the twins Romulus and Remus in 753 B.C., but scholars believe that settlements in the "place of seven hills" were made as early as 1000 B.C. By the eighth century the Forum (meeting place, market) had been established as the center of a number of settlements, and shortly after 600 B.C. these settlements were joined together into a single city-state. Whether this joining together was a voluntary movement dictated by the needs of common defense etc. or a unity imposed from above is unclear. What is clear, however, is that the government was dominated by the Etruscans, and Rome was ruled by a king, referred to as the *imperium*, who held absolute power over the people. Advice to the king was provided by a senate (from the Latin *senatus*, meaning "aged") and an assembly of freemen; both appear to have had little power. The population itself was divided into patricians (landholders who claimed descent from the leading families of Rome's earlier times) and plebeians (freemen without property and patrician lineage). It is interesting to note that the poorest citizens were called *proletarii* (from *proles*, "offspring") because they could give

the state nothing but the strength of their children. This seems significant when one glances at the long list of wars in which the Early and Middle Republics engaged; wars require armies, and armies require men to feed the maw of the military machine.

The Early Republic (509-265 B.C.)

The Romans, chafing under Etruscan rule, moved to change the situation; 509 B.C. is the date usually given as the time of "King Tarquin's" overthrow, though scholars note that patrician revolution over a period of years may be what is indicated by this semi-mythical event. With the advent of the republic, the king was replaced as head of the government by two consuls who were elected annually from the patrician class. The Senate, which consisted of about three hundred men also from the patrician class, grew in authority as it became the seat of policy making.

The dominant motif of the Early Republic was the effort made by the plebeians to secure their place economically and politically. Two bodies replaced the popular assembly: the *Comitia Centuriata,* made up of property owners qualified to serve in the army; and the *Comitia Tributa,* an instrument of the plebs. To enlarge and guarantee the fundamental rights of the plebeians, a series of concessions were made, under some duress. Around 443-42 B.C. the Twelve Tables were drawn up which cast the law into written form, thus making statutory what had been merely customary. Such concessions were won from a reluctant Senate by the plebeians who threatened to secede from the state. Such a move would have made Rome vulnerable to invasion, and the Roman senators decided it was better for the state to be conquered by its citizens than by its enemies in Italy. Thus began the career of the commonwealth of people, consuls, and Senate. As a result of such compromise, elective offices were opened to plebeians, the *Comitia Tributa* obtained the right to pass laws without the approval of the Senate, plebeians were allowed to serve in the Senate, and the law of forbidding intermarriage between patricians and plebeians was repealed. The general effect was a strengthening of Rome's social fabric, and this internal cohesion allowed for adventures beyond the walls of Rome.

The growth of Rome from a small settlement to the dominant power in the Mediterranean is a remarkable story. Polybius (c. 200-118 B.C.) put it best when he said:

> *There is, I trust, no one so sluggish and dull as not to be curious how . . . the whole inhabited world in less than 53 years fell completely under the control of Rome . . .*

In the early competition for control in Italy, the Greeks defeated the Etruscans (475 B.C.) and the Carthaginians, and it appeared for a while that the Greek colonists would be masters. But fighting among themselves prevented this, and control of central Italy fell to the Latin League (a group of settlements of Latin-speaking peoples in Latium exclusive of Rome). Rome first concluded an alliance with the League in

496 B.C. (traditional date) and sought to turn this relation to its own advantage. Despite a setback in 390 when the Gauls plundered Rome, the city expanded its control over Latium until it was able in 338 (the same year that saw the fall of Greece to Macedonia) to dissolve the Latin League and establish a federation of Latin colonies loyal to Rome. The conquered allies were consoled in their loss by their inclusion in Rome's expansion; able to fight for the Romans, they could hope to recoup their losses through war booty and, thus, were made partners in crime. And Rome, unlike the Greek cities which were poor and democratic, could afford to take the citizens as well as the lands of defeated rivals; the Roman government, itself an oligarchy, supported local aristocrats, made them dependent on its support, and allied them to its own ruling class through intermarriage. If, despite such strategems, rebellions broke out, Rome had no hesitation in inflicting terrible punishments. By following a wise policy vis-a-vis conquered peoples and using its efficient and highly maneuverable legions, Rome controlled Italy by 265 B.C., which marks the end of the Early Republic.

The Middle Republic (265-133 B.C.)

The consolidation of Italy was the signal for expansion abroad, and Rome faced the task of establishing its position with the other powers in the Mediterranean. In 264 B.C. Rome came into conflict with Carthage over the control of Sicily, thus beginning the series of Punic Wars that ended in 146 B.C. with the total destruction of Carthage.

At the beginning of conflict Carthage was more populous and wealthier than Rome, controlling considerable territory in North Africa, Spain, Sardinia, Corsica, and Sicily. The Carthaginian navy controlled the western Mediterranean and protected the city's sphere of influence. To confront this formidable enemy in the First Punic War (264-241 B.C.), Rome was required to build a large fleet, much of which was lost in ensuing battle. But the tenacity of the Romans, buttressed by a refinement in new military skills, forced Carthage to sue for peace. As a result, Rome annexed Sicily, Sardina, and Corsica and gained naval supremacy in the western Mediterranean

The Second Punic War (218-202 B.C.) was precipitated by the great general Hannibal, who was governor of Carthaginian Spain. In 218 B.C. he began an expedition that was to take him across the Pyrenees and the Alps into Italy. On three occasions he met a larger Roman army and in each instance defeated it, but he could not rally the Italians and Greeks to his cause. For their part, the Romans carried the war to the Carthaginians in Africa and found in Scipio a leader who was a match for Hannibal. In 202 B.C. at Zama, Hannibal, who had been recalled from Italy, met the Roman forces under Scipio. The Carthaginians were defeated and sued for peace. They were forced to surrender Spain to Rome, destroy their navy, and become saddled with a heavy fine to be paid over the next fifty years.

So little did the Carthaginian enterprise exhaust Rome that it was able to undertake military activity in the East, where the successors to

Alexander's Hellenistic empire were engaged in endless warfare. Philip V of Macedonia had assisted the Carthaginians against Rome, and his power in the eastern Mediterranean posed a threat. The Second Macedonian War (200-196 B.C.) ended at Cynocephalae with the defeat of Philip and the confiscation of his Greek possessions. Succeeding wars reduced Macedonia to a Roman province in 146 B.C., the same year in which Rome burned Corinth as punishment for its attempted revolt. Egypt, weakened under Ptolemaic reign, allied itself with Rome when the Seluecid ruler, Antiochus III, threatened to seize Egypt's territories and subdue the independent state. In 190 B.C., when the Seleucids invaded Greece, the Roman legions defeated Antiochus, destroyed his navy, and imposed a punitive fine. The Greeks were freed from the Seleucid threat, but it was not long before their would-be liberators looked strangely like oppressors.

The last significant event of the period was the final war with Carthage. Charging that Carthage had violated the peace of 201 B.C., the Romans completely destroyed their old enemy. The defenders of Carthage were sold into slavery and the city burned. The brutalizing effects of empire building come visibly to the fore in this instance, for the Romans did not rest content until the very land of Carthage was plowed under and the soil sown with salt.

By 133 B.C. Rome had taken over most of Asia Minor and was ruler of the ancient world. But the unsettling and often cruel effects of empire were not confined solely to the conquered, for serious economic and social problems at home accompanied the great expansion of territory and extension of power abroad. Indeed, success in empire-building had set forces in motion which caused the degeneration of the Roman republic itself.

It is often said that war accelerates social change, and events in Rome appear to bear this out. To begin with, the wars abroad revealed a fundamental disparity of interest among patricians, senators of plebeian origins, the newly-rich class of war contractors, and small farmers. In 167 B.C. direct taxation of Roman citizens was ended as a result of the accumulated treasure drawn from the provinces. But the distribution of this wealth was changing: an increasing opulence in the life style of the nobility and the equestrian contractors existed side by side with the loss of small plebeian farmers and the augmentation of the urban poor.

Wealthy classes, especially the senators who were forbidden to engage in commercial enterprise, began to invest in land, and inflation resulted. Small farmers, driven from the land by sky-rocketing costs and the lure of senatorial offers to buy, flocked to the city and found only unemployment and mob activity since Rome was more parasitic than productive, deriving its wealth from the rape of the provinces.

Supplying the necessities of war was (and is) a lucrative enterprise, and such activity created a rich class of war contractors. What was most significant about this new group was that, unlike the patricians and the plebs, it had neither the tradition of having its own assembly nor the sense of social responsibility that came with that tradition. As a result,

there was a dramatic increase in the promotion of private interests at the expense of public welfare.

The plebeian peasant was the backbone of the free people. And he was going under! Every small farmer who migrated was a free voice lost to the assembly or a new addition to the swelling mob of the city. The growth of unrest and social tension could not be stemmed by expelling Greek philosophers who promulgated "new" doctrines; the causes of anomie were economic and systemic. And the Senate, which had the power to make policy, did not possess sufficient insight or charity to see how heavy its hand was on Roman and Italian farmers.

As a result of social unrest at home and the burden of empire abroad, Rome entered the last period of the republic ill-equipped to emerge from the ordeal with its original virtues intact.

The Late Republic: A Century of Revolution (133-31 B.C.)

Failure to deal effectively with its problems immersed Rome in the worst of civilized diseases--class war. The opposing factions at this time were the *optimates* ("the best"), representing the established order; and the *populares* (the poor and middle class), often led by strong leaders from the patrician ranks.

In 133 B.C. Tiberius Gracchus, a grandson of Scipio, was elected tribune. He saw the need for reform and proposed that public land (then being leased to senators for gratuitous fees) be redistributed in small parcels for the landless populace of Rome. His proposal merely renewed one part of a law of 367 B.C. that had limited rentals of public lands to about three hundred acres. Such a move, he thought, would stem the tide into the city and re-invigorate the class of small farmers. In this sense, the proposal was conservative; it looked back in time and sought to recapture an earlier strength. Gracchus, because of his ideas and his manner of action, alienated the Senate, and the latter, alleging a conspiracy, murdered Gracchus and three hundred of his supporters. For the first time, Romans resolved a political question by murdering opponents, and we can thus identify another portion of our inheritance.

Eleven years later Tiberius' brother, Gaius, picked up the cause of the people. He also sought land reform, as well as ways to provide cheap grain for the masses. In addition, Gaius Gracchus sought to establish colonies for the resettlement of impoverished Romans and to extend political privileges to all Italian allies. In his pursuit of a broad program of popular appeal, the younger Gracchus ran afoul of the Senate, and he was killed in 121 B.C. (The slaughter of over 3,000 of his followers gives the event the appearance of a small civil war.) The fate of the Gracchi illustrates the confluence of the problems of the Middle Republic and prophesies the failure of the Late Republic.

The war with Numidia, Rome's allied state in Africa, began in 112 B.C. and brought into prominence two men of conflicting opinions--Gaius Marius,

who despised the Senate; and Lucian Cornelius Sulla, a patrician who was determined to maintain senatorial privilege. Marius, the son of a peasant, solved the manpower problems of his army by enrolling proletarians for terms of sixteen years, after which he promised them bonuses and land. Because of his generous terms, Marius created an institution that was to be encountered several times in later Rome--an army more loyal to its leader than to Rome itself, and comprised of men who failed to meet the old property qualifications for military service. In 88 B.C. Mithradates, king of Pontus in Asia Minor, declared war on Rome while his masters were recovering from a full-scale uprising of the Italian allies (90-88 B.C.). The senatorial faction chose Sulla, a consul, to lead the army to the East, but the *Comitia Tributa* chose Marius. The jealousy of one general for another triggered Sulla's march on Rome, as Marius sought his opponent's dismissal. Marius escaped from Rome, returning with his army after Sulla had left for war. It had come to this: Roman consuls and generals used Roman armies in marches directed at Rome itself.

Sulla's return in 83 B.C. was that of an outlaw willing to take arms against his government. In this successful venture, he was aided by a young Italian, Gnaeus Pompeius. Sulla was able to strike a conservative bargain with the Senate, especially with those members who wished to keep the tribunes of the people out of power. Senatorial power increased, and Sulla was named to the ancient emergency office of dictator, a post he resigned in 79 B.C.

But the Senate was unable to cope with the domestic problems and the foreign entanglements, and the people looked for a strong man to lead them, someone to "bring them together," so to speak. Pompey, who had been of aid to Sulla, was elected consul in 70 B.C. and enhanced his reputation by repealing the strictures placed by Sulla upon the equestrians and men of lower ranks. Pompey was joined in the consular office by Crassus, and they in turn were joined by Julius Caesar. Thus was formed a triumvirate of powerful men--the greatest general, the richest Roman, and the greatest politician.

This somewhat uneasy balance came to an end in 53 B.C. when Crassus died, and the rule of three gave way to the ambitions of two. In the ensuing struggle Caesar brought his army from Gaul into Italy, and subdued Rome by 49 B.C. Pompey's forces were defeated at Pharsalus a year later, and a victorious Roman army looked over a battlefield where the dead were all Romans.

Caesar's dictatorship lasted until his assassination in 44 B.C. by a group of conservative conspirators who saw him as a threat to the old order. Indeed, Caesar had weakened the power of the Senate and added provincial representatives to its membership. He attempted to ameliorate the social situation by reducing the number of people on the dole through extensive public works and by providing the city with its first police force.

The problem of a successor to Caesar was not settled easily. Two candidates emerged as the main contenders: Mark Antony, an experienced

military commander and politician; and Octavian, Caesar's adopted son and heir. The two joined forces to punish the conspirators, and even the renowned orator and champion of the Senate, Cicero, was put to death. During Antony's exploits in Egypt the cautious alliance dissolved, and Octavian consolidated his position in Italy. An effective propaganda campaign gave Octavian the forces with which to confront his rival. In 31 B.C. Antony's fleet was routed at Actium, and Rome was united under one ruler. But at what price? Octavian was given the title of *Princeps* by a grateful Senate and hailed as the restorer of the *concordia ordinum* (the harmony of the classes), but the republic was dead--a victim of the revolution which ended the struggles of would-be dynasts reaching from the emergence of Sulla to the suicide of Antony (83-30 B.C.).

The Roman Empire: *Pax Romana*

The Augustan Age

Octavian, now known as Augustus, ruled from 28 B.C. to A.D. 14; and the changes he wrought in that time were momentous, shaping the future of Rome for centuries. Keeping the old constitutional forms as a sham, Augustus came to embody in his person the authority of the Senate, the consul, and the people. As Tacitus renders his severe judgment:

> *He seduced the army with bonuses, and civilians by his cheap food policy. He attracted universal support by his gift of peace. This he used to take over the tasks of the Senate, the magistrates, even the law. There was no opposition. Aristocrats made careers out of slavish obedience. They profited from the revolution. They came to prefer security in this regime more than the hazards of the old way.. . . .*

The Roman people in the first century B.C. chose stable government over liberty, at the end of a series of civil wars. They gave power to the general who won the last battle. They valued "law and order" more than an often illusive political freedom. In effect, they created an emperor.

Augustus' busy reign cannot be condensed to a few brief statements, but three points deserve mention. First, he created an efficient body of civil servants drawn from the middle class, whose loyalty belonged to him. By this action Augustus drew to himself much support which was useful in controlling the Senate at the same time that he streamlined the workings of a vastly extended government. Second, Augustus made himself protector of Roman tradition and above all of religion. In a stroke of genius, he drew upon the most deep-seated prejudices--the family, class distinctions, Roman history--and placed them firmly under his control; in essence, he utilized the most conservative of tools to effect a revolution! Third, Augustus managed to free himself from a reliance upon military forces. This he did by finding new supports in the Roman mob, a remodeled Senate, and the bourgeoisie. The fact remained, however,

that the army still existed and was far suprior to any citizen force that could be mustered against it. In reality, it remained the ultimate basis of the new emperor's power. By the same token, it was also a constant threat to it. For if the other supports should fail, the emperor would be forced to rely upon the army and, in so doing, would fall again under its control. After Augustus' death this happened again and again.

The Empire after Augustus

Augustus was succeeded by four of his descendents known as the Julio-Claudian dynasty. Augustus adopted a son, Tiberius, who became ruler in A.D. 14. With his death a new fact of Roman life came to light: with the change from the republic to the emperor came palace intrigue rather than political activity. Tiberius' son, Drusus, was poisoned by the leader of the Praetorian Guard, and Caligula succeeded to the throne. An illness early in his reign left him mentally unbalanced, and his actions became those of a madman. His reign proved intolerable, and he, too, was murdered by the Praetorian Guard. Caligula's uncle, Claudius, was proclaimed emperor in A.D. 41 and ruled wisely. He spent much time in the law courts insuring that justice was done and added Gauls and Greeks to important offices and the Senate. Unfortunately, Claudius also agreed to adopt his wife's son by a previous marriage, whereupon his wife poisoned Claudius, and her son, Nero, became emperor. Nero's reign (from A.D. 54 to 58) was marked by his zest for orgies and the persecution of Christians. Christians were suspect since they refused to recognize the emperor's divinity, held secret rituals, and remained socially separate. Nero's suicide in A.D. 68 led to strife concerning the succession, which was resolved by a forcible taking of the throne by Vespasian, the founder of the short-lived Flavian dynasty. His two sons, Titus and Domitian, were men of ability, but their disrespect for the Senate earned them powerful enemies. Titus' reign is marked by the seige of Jerusalem, the construction of the Colosseum at Rome, and the destruction of Pompeii by the eruption of Vesuvius. This natural catastrophe was a suitable prelude to Domitian's rule, which degenerated to a reign of terror. Predictably, he was assassinated in A.D. 96, and the Senate succeeded in installing a candidate of its own, Nerva.

The time from A.D. 96 to 180 is known as the rule of the "five good emperors," the Antonines. Under them the Roman Empire reached the zenith of its prosperity and power. Nerva secured his position by adopting as successor a successful frontier general, Trajan. This forceful, energetic ruler from Spain won the respect of the whole Roman world by his brilliant military exploits. The conquests of Dacia (western Rumania) and "Arabia" (roughly, east and south Transjordan and Sinai) yielded enormous booty, which financed bonuses to the army, gifts to the Roman mob, games, a building program, and roads. The last, especially, tied the empire together in intellectual, commercial, and military affairs.

Trajan was succeeded by Hadrian (A.D. 117-138), who set up frontier defenses, founded new towns, and furthered public works. His reforms included a stricter administration of provincial governors and humane

regulations for the treatment of slaves. Antonius (A.D. 138-161), by his excellence of character and intellect, earned the title of "Pius" from the Senate. And the last of the "good" emperors, Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 161-180), most closely approached Plato's ideal of the philosopher-king. To the task of rule he brought a deep sense of duty and a nobility of purpose. The reign of the Antonines might have continued had not Marcus' son, Commodus, been an egomaniac.

Commodus' accession was the beginning of almost constant conflict between the emperor and the Senate, and his murder in A.D. 192 led to a series of crises. Again, as so often in the past, events seem to point to the necessity of seeing the danger that inheres in the placing of power in the hands of one man. When such is the case, the balance of justice and stability within society comes to depend solely upon the personal characteristics of the ruler, not upon criteria of an objective, reliable nature. In the case of the Romans, the answer to bad rule became political assassination.

A succession of emperors turned the position into an open military dictatorship which governed with almost no regard for the Senate or the traditional civilian order. And by A.D. 235 the balance of powers so carefully crafted by Augustus came to an end. At its height the *Pax Romana* (Roman Peace) applied to a vast area of 1,250,000 square miles and a population approaching 100,000,000. Peace freed the national income for extension of cultivated land and improvement of the standard of living throughout the empire, thereby providing a framework for the development of provincial life in the multitudes of small cities. These, as it turned out, were to endure long after the empire itself.

Rome Confronts Christianity

At the very time that the foundations of the Roman Empire were being laid by Augustus, events were taking place in distant Palestine that would influence not only the history of Rome but the development of Western civilization as well. The story of Jesus of Nazareth and his disciples is too well known to be recounted here. (For the teachings of Jesus and the early Church, the reader should consult the PHILOSOPHY-RELIGION section of this syllabus.) What shall concern us is how those teachings, and the people who followed them, affected the history of Rome, especially in the eyes of Roman "true believers" and those Romans who wished to preserve their state.

The men who called themselves "Christians" professed to worship a man who had been crucified by the Romans for attempted rebellion. Moreover, the quarrels between the Christians and the Jews were frequent occasions of civil disorder. It is easy to understand, therefore, why the members of the Christian brotherhood were often in trouble with the duly constituted authorities of Rome. When a fire broke out in Rome in A.D. 64, destroying much of the city, Nero's officials put the blame on the Christians. Since the Christians would not participate in the worship of the gods, especially the deified emperor, popular opinion stigmatized them

as "atheists," and popular imagination envisioned them as social deviants, radicals, and even worse. Because they professed to follow a higher ideal than that offered by the status quo in the Roman Empire and because they chose to remain separate from normal Roman social and economic activity, they were persecuted for their "indecent behavior." But persecutions remained a local affair as long as Christianity was uncommon and the empire prosperous.

By A.D. 249, however, Christians were everywhere in the empire, for the doctrines had been spread by "fanatics" fervent in their belief and willing to undergo any danger to strengthen the Church. And the empire was beset with troubles. It was not long before the connection between the thriving of Christianity and the throes of the empire was made. Why even the dullest mind could grasp it: the gods were angry with the "atheism" and "impiety" of the Christians, and the empire was being punished for its tolerant attitude. The emperor Decius began to set things right by stamping out Chrisianity, but the next year (A.D. 250) he was killed trying to stop an invasion of the Goths. This ended the persecution and probably persuaded many that the Christians were right; at least it convinced the Christians because "the deaths of the persecutors" became a favorite theme of their propaganda.

The persecutions were renewed by Valerian in A.D. 257, and two years later he was captured in battle with the Persians. His son, Gallienus, perhaps becoming more cautious, called off the persecutions and officially permitted the practice of Christianity. Again the persecutions were renewed in A.D. 303, but by this time Christian "impiety" had spread so far and Christian "atheists" were so numerous that persecution could be carried out only at great economic expense. This circumstance, coupled with the facts that his mother was a Christian and he believed himself to be under the protection of the Christians' god, probably influenced Constantine when he seized power in the West in A.D. 306. In any event, he allowed the persecutions to lapse. After eliminating his co-emperor in the East in 324, he seized the treasures and estates of most pagan temples; the treasures would help restore the supply of gold and silver currency. Constantine's patronage of the Christian Church continued, and it became one of the pillars upon which the power of the emperor came to rest.

The bishops of the Church were happy to accept the emperor's patronage and willing, in return, to carry out his directives. The mutual understanding and cooperation proved beneficial to both parties: for their part, bishops were authorized to draw on imperial funds for the repair and building of churches; Constantine, on the other hand, found the bishops willing to condemn those Christians who refused to perform military service. This new state Church was different in many ways from the old Roman cults. To begin with, it was an organized movement, as none of the pagan cults had been. It was also an intolerant movement, not only intolerant of those who worshiped other gods without the state's permission (of this, paganism had often been intolerant, as we have seen), but intolerant of anyone who worshiped any other god at all (remember Deuteronomy?), even of those who worshiped the Christian god "incorrectly."