

# The Roman Empire - a short History

The Wisdom of Divine Prearrangement

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## Introduction

This phrase, “the wisdom of divine prearrangement”, is quoted from the book *The Life and Epis-*

*cles of St. Paul* written by the Christian historians Conybeare and Howson. This book is one of the most widely studied biographies of the Apostle Paul. (I say “studied” because the book is not

casually read.) “Divine pre-arrangements” refer to God’s activity in guiding the development of the world’s government and society in order to make perfect preparation for the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ and for the formation and growth of the early Christian Church. The Lord’s bringing about of the “fullness of time” included the introduction and spread of the (koinei) Greek language and the completion and maturity of the Roman Empire.

At the time of Christ, all parts of the civilized world were bound together in one empire; one common organization controlled the whole. Channels of communication were opened everywhere and new facilities for travel were provided. The Roman government and society were prepared by divine pre-arrangements to help the progress of that religion which it persecuted. The manner in which Rome provided aid to the spread of Christianity is well illustrated by some events in the life of the Apostle Paul.

Paul’s Roman citizenship rescued him in Macedonia. A Roman soldier rescued him from the mob at Ephesus. Roman soldiers saved his life when the mob in Jerusalem wanted to kill him in the temple area. Roman soldiers escorted Paul from Caesarea to Rome on the voyage in which they suffered shipwreck. Roman soldiers delivered Paul to the Roman garrison of the Praetorian Guard for his imprisonment. Paul led a Roman governor to Christ in Cyprus. He was protected by another governor in Achaia. And a third governor sent him from Jerusalem to Rome.

All the weight of terrible tyranny was going to fall on the new religion; but before this took place, Christianity had taken firm root and had begun to grow strong in close connection with all parts of the Roman Empire. And when the Roman supreme government itself became Christian, it stayed unified until, upon dividing up into the separate nations of the European continent, each fragment was closely tied to Christianity, at least in name, as part of the Holy Roman Empire.

## The Origins of Rome

While Greece was fighting the Persian wars and the Peloponnesian War, an obscure people was rising to power on the Italian peninsula. Rome had been settled about 1000 B.C. as people had migrated southward into Italy from north of the Alps. These people were known as the Etruscans, a race of peo-

ple who are still obscure in history owing largely to the fact that their language has never been deciphered. We know that they worshipped evil spirits, practiced magic and voodoo, and that they enjoyed gladiatorial combat. They were also competent engineers. The early Roman kings were probably Etruscan; and the Etruscan culture dominated Italy until 508 B.C., the year assigned to the beginning of the Roman Republic.

Over the centuries, the Romans showed little talent for scientific or philosophical thinking. Their literature and art are pale imitations of Greek literature and art. Most of the Roman culture is borrowed from the Greeks. But the Romans excelled in two areas, those of law and government. The Greeks had failed in these areas and had not been able to develop a unified political state. The Romans created and held together an integrated, well-balanced empire without equal in the ancient world.

Where the Greeks jealously guarded their citizenship, the Romans offered their citizenship to large segments of conquered peoples, thereby winning a measure of loyalty and gratitude from them. While Greece destroyed itself in destructive civil wars, the Romans carried Greek culture to every part of the Western world; and for a time they brought peace and prosperity to every corner of the Mediterranean.

## The Roman Republic: 508 to 30 B.C.

### Patricians and Plebeians

The revolution against the Etruscan domination was led by the Patricians in 508 B.C. The patricians (from the Latin word *pater*, “father”) were wealthy landowners and aristocrats, and the type of government they established reflected their leadership. All public offices were held by patricians.

The “common” people were called “plebeians”, a word that means “crude or coarse in manners or culture.” (First year cadets at the U.S. Military Academy are called “plebes.” A “plebiscite” is a vote by which the people of an entire country or district declare an opinion for or against an issue. Voltaire wanted war to be declared by plebiscite, that is, by the people who would be doing the fighting. He thought that this would end war.)

The Roman government was called “The Senate of the Roman People”; in Latin, *Senatus Populusque Romanus*, or SPQR, which is found on thousands of monuments in Italy. But the word *populus* originally referred only to upper classes. Plebeians could not serve in the Senate in the early days of the Republic.

The lowest rung on the social ladder, however, was reserved for slaves, who were bought and sold as property, even by the lower plebeians.

Many businessmen were plebeians by birth and were annoyed to be excluded from the Senate. The poorer masses resented their poverty, their continually increasing debt and taxation, and the unjust laws applied to them, such as the law which provided that a creditor could imprison a debtor or sell him as a slave. The plebeians demanded that the harsh laws be repealed and that land owned by the state and won through conquest be divided up among the people.

In 494 B.C., the Senate was engaged in fighting wars and tried to draft plebeians into the army. The plebs refused to serve until their demands were met; and since the Senate was afraid of invasion, they agreed to reduce or cancel the debts of the plebs and to give plebs the offices of two tribunes who would defend their rights in the Senate. In the same time period, high ranking officials who were trying to get elected or appointed to high office tried to curry favor with the plebs by offering land grants or by gifts of food during times of famine.

## The Constitution of the Republic

At the time of the revolution against the Etruscans, the king was replaced by two consuls, one to act as a check on the other. Consuls were elected for one-year terms and handled the administration of justice and military defense. The consuls, in turn, appointed the Senate, composed of 300 heads of patrician families, who served for life. The Senate advised the consuls on legislation and public policy.

The Assembly was formed to represent the plebeian class, and gradually became the highest lawmaking body, at least in theory. But in practice the Assembly had little power because the Senate held veto power over the acts of the Assembly and controlled the expenditure of public funds. From 508 B.C. until the outbreak of the First Punic War in 264 B.C., the plebeian class was constantly struggling to limit the power of the patricians and to win greater privileges and rights for themselves.

At first the laws of the Empire were not published, and the plebeians were kept in the dark about the laws. In 450 B.C. they forced the publication of the Law of the Twelve Tables; and while the laws were weighted heavily in favor of the patricians, at least now the plebs knew what the laws were and could better protect themselves against the arbitrary acts of the patrician magistrates.

In 362 B.C., the first plebeian was elected consul; and plebs began to occupy more public offices. And since all officeholders automatically became members of the Senate, the Senate began to have more plebs.

In 339 B.C., the laws against intermarriage between patricians and plebs were repealed, and plebs were declared eligible for all offices. In 287 B.C., the Hortensian Law (named for Quintus Hortensius) was enacted which stripped the Senate of its veto power over the Assembly.

The Twelve Tables remained the law of Rome for 900 years. Until the time of Cicero, every school-boy had to memorize them.

## The Roman Army

From the very beginning the Romans were land hungry and intent upon expanding their territories. At the beginning of the 5th Century BC, Rome conquered two neighboring tribes. In 390 BC, the city’s imperial career of conquest was nearly ended when barbarian tribes of Gauls invaded Latium and sacked Rome. The republic was saved by paying a ransom of 1,000 pounds of gold. After this, the republic never lost a war. As with Persia, the success of the political institutions of Rome lay in its ability to wage war and to put down revolts. The Roman army was the most successful military organization in history.

In Rome, the citizens and the army were one and the same. The army, assembled in its legions and centuries, was the Assembly, the chief lawmaking body of the state.

The Roman Legion was a mixed unit of brigade strength, approximately 4,000 to 6,000 men, 300 to 500 cavalry, along with various auxiliary groups. Two legions made up a consul’s army. Each legion was divided into centuries, at times 100 or 200 men. Each legion had its ensign (guidon). Honor forbade its falling into enemy hands; and officers sometimes

threw the ensign into the ranks of the enemy to stir the soldiers into a desperate recovery.

In battle, the front ranks of the infantry used javelins when ten to twenty paces from the enemy — these were short wooden lances with metal points. On the wings, the archers and slingers attacked with arrows and stones. In hand-to-hand combat the soldiers used the *machaira*, the famous Roman short sword (cf. military tactics of Dionysius of Syracuse, about. 400 BC).

## The Conquest of Italy

Rome was always surrounded by fierce enemies. At first, the republic was just a weak city-state, with an area of about 350 square miles. The surrounding enemy towns organized themselves into the Latin League, for the purpose of conquering the tiny republic. The Romans won the battle of Lake Regillus in 496 BC, aided, they said, by the gods Castor and Pollux who had left Mt. Olympus to fight on their side. A treaty was signed which admitted Rome into the Latin League; and Rome quickly became the leader and master of central Italy.

In 405 BC, Rome and another city-state, Etruria, entered into a conflict over control of the Tiber River. After several wars and skirmishes, in 351 BC southern Italy was annexed to Rome. One full generation had been involved in the 14 wars in southern Italy. During this period, tribes from Gaul and Germany had infiltrated down through the Alps and had settled as far south as the Po River. These people are described as tall, handsome, relishing war, but fighting with little armor. These are the Gauls who besieged Rome and were paid off with 1,000 pounds of gold.

In about 300 BC, the Romans finally managed to put together a semblance of order among the tribes; and the united tribes pushed the Gauls back behind the Po River. Rome was now master of Italy and the seas from Gaul to Greece.

Still not satisfied, Rome gave the Greeks the choice between entering into an alliance or fighting it out. Some of the city-states in Greece accepted Roman domination, but others held out. The holdouts enlisted the aid of Pyrrhus, an Italian king who was not a Roman. He was made general of the Greek resistance forces. In 280 BC, Pyrrhus defeated the Romans at Heraclea; but he lost so many soldiers in the battles that he was unable to follow up his

victory. It is from this historical event that we get the term “Pyrrhic victory”.

Pyrrhus released 2,000 Roman prisoners of war and offered peace. The Senate was about to make terms, but Appius Claudius persuaded the Senate not to make peace with a foreign army on Italian soil. The 2,000 prisoners were sent back to Pyrrhus, and the war was resumed. Pyrrhus won another victory in Italy, then he became disgusted by the laziness and cowardice of his allies. He sailed to Sicily at the time the Carthaginians were besieging Syracuse, so he was not welcomed there either. He sailed back to Italy a few months later, and lost a battle to the Romans at Regentum. This was the first victory of the Roman maniples over the Greek phalanxes and began a new chapter in the history of military tactics.

The total conquest of Italy was followed by immediate expansion of Roman control to colonies. Colonies served the purpose of relieving unemployment, reduced population pressure, and quieted class strife. The colonies served as garrisons in remote places and were an extended line of defense for Rome. The colonies provided outposts and outlets for Roman trade, and additional food was raised for the capital. The peninsula was multi-lingual, but the Latin language spread as Italy was forged into a united state.

While Rome was consolidating her gains, a great power, older and richer than Rome, was closing the Romans off from the western Mediterranean areas of Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, Africa, and Spain. This power was Carthage, the ancient Phoenician civilization, and they were harassing Roman shipping from Tyre and Sidon to the Guadalquivir River.

The city of Carthage was near the modern Tunis. The Latins had given the name “Africa” to the region around Carthage and Utica, and they called the population there “Poeni”, the Phoenicians. The Phoenicians had originated on the eastern Mediterranean coast, around Tyre and Sidon, and were Semites - sons of Shem. (Tyre had been besieged by Shalmanezzer, Nebuchadnezzar, and Alexander). They were similar in features to the Jews, and their language had many similarities to Hebrew. They were very wealthy and lived well, adopting the Greek style of dress and building modern and expensive homes and temples.

Greek and Roman historians did not have much praise for the Carthaginians, considering them mercenary and dishonest. (But the historian Plutarch was a Greek, and the historian Polybius was a

friend of Scipio Africanus, who burned Carthage; so there may have been some bias in this reporting.)

The Phoenicians migrated to North Africa under pressure from the great empires of Asia, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Greeks. They were great trading people, sailing immense cargo galley ships from Asia to Britain. They did not stop at the pillars of Hercules (Gibraltar) but sailed as far as 2,500 miles down the coast of Africa. The rich merchants provided funds for a large army and navy which transformed Carthage from a trading post into a great empire.

Carthage was expanding right to the borders of Rome (the western half of Sicily). This expansion added to its wealth the gold of Spain as well as its iron, copper, and silver. The income of Carthage at its peak was twelve times that of Athens. The gods of Carthage were Baal-Haman to whom child sacrifices were offered. Their religions had the worst features of the Canaanite worship. God eventually allowed great devastation to be brought upon Carthage at the hands of the Romans.

## The First Punic War (264 B.C.)

The First Punic War was fought at sea, where the Carthaginians had the advantage of being great seamen. The wealthy citizens of Rome, however, put together an army of 60,000 men and 200 ships with their own money. The dry land soldiers practiced long and hard to learn how to row the huge quinquiremes (five ranks of oars on each wide) and to conduct combat aboard ship. The Carthaginians were resting in the successes of Hamilcar Barca and did no building up of their forces. The Roman armada, sailing secretly, defeated the Carthaginian fleet at the Aegadian Islands off the west coast of Sicily. Carthage was forced to sue for peace and paid a heavy money payment to Rome.

## Interbellum

Rome was near bankruptcy, in spite of the payments from Carthage. Currency was debased more than 90%. Carthage, meanwhile, was set up to be destroyed by its own greed, and its internal striving and civil wars gave Rome time to gather strength.

The rulers of Carthage withheld for some time the pay of the mercenaries which served under Hamil-

car Barca. The soldiers poured into the city demanding money. Carthage's subject people, taxed beyond endurance during the war, joined the uprising. The women of Libya sold their jewelry to finance revolution. Twenty thousand mercenaries and rebels laid siege to Carthage, which had few soldiers to defend it. The rich merchants appealed to Hamilcar; and he organized and trained an army of 10,000 and raised the siege of Carthage.

The defeated mercenaries and rebels retreated into the mountains. They broke the legs and cut off the hands of 700 prisoners, then threw them into a mass grave and buried them alive. But Hamilcar maneuvered 40,000 rebels into a box canyon and slowly starved them until they tried to fight their way out and were cut to pieces.

When this internal conflict was over, Carthage discovered that Rome had occupied Sardinia, a Carthaginian island. When Carthage protested, Rome declared war. In no position to fight, Carthage bought peace with an indemnity of 1200 talents of gold and gave the islands of Sardinia and Corsica to Rome.

During the last quarter of the Third Century B.C. (c. 225 B.C.), Hamilcar Barca took a small Carthaginian army into Spain to set up a foothold in Europe. He recaptured some of the cities he had lost before, he built up an army of Spanish citizens, and he began what became a vigorous push for Carthage into new territories. Rome tolerated this conquest of Spain partly because of having been distracted by class strife at home and her own expansionist activities in the Adriatic Sea and trying to clear that area of pirates. Also, Rome was at war with the Gauls (again) so could not concentrate on Spain.

Hamilcar was killed leading a charge against a Spanish tribe, so he was succeeded in command by his son-in-law Hasdrubal ("He whose help is Baal") who governed wisely for the eight years from 229 to 221 BC, winning cooperation of Spaniards and building the fabulous silver mines near the city of New Carthage, the Spanish city now named Cartagena. In the Carthaginian high command were also Hamilcar's sons Hasdrubal (same name as the son-in-law), Mago, and Hannibal ("The grace of Baal"). Hasdrubal was assassinated in 221 BC, and Hannibal was elected by the army to be commander.

In 225 BC, an army of Gauls swept down the Italian peninsula toward Rome. They had 50,000 foot soldiers and 20,000 horse. The Roman legions met the invaders near Telamon, killing 40,000 and tak-

ing 10,000 prisoners. They marched on to subjugate ('put under the yoke') Cisalpine Gaul ("Gaul on the near side of the Alps"). Protective Roman colonies were placed at Placentia and Cremona. This was a great victory for Rome, but it had some bad side effects - now the Gauls wanted to get back at Rome more than ever. And Hannibal saw a great opportunity to enter Gaul from Spain (across the Pyrenees), raise an army of Gallic allies, cross the Alps and crush Italy.

## Hannibal

[ from *The Story of Civilization*, Vol. III, Caesar and Christ, by Will Durant ]

Hannibal was now twenty-eight years old...and had received a soldier's training through nineteen years in camp. He had disciplined his body to hardship, his appetite to moderation, his tongue to silence, his thought to objectivity. He was "the first to enter the battle, and the last to abandon the field", according to Livy...The Romans accused him of avarice, cruelty, and treachery, for he honored no scruples in seizing supplies for his troops, punished disloyalty severely...Yet we find him often merciful, always chivalrous. The Romans could not readily forgive him for winning battles with his brains rather than with the lives of his men...Hannibal led his troops north...and then struck eastward into the Alps. Celtic tribes had crossed those ranges before him...but he had difficulty getting his elephants through narrow or precipitous passages. After a climb of nine days, he reached the summit and found it covered with snow...His army of 59,000 was reduced to 26,000 by the time he reached the plains of Italy, so great were the hardships. Fortunately, he was welcomed as a liberator by the Cisalpine Gauls, who joined him as allies. The Roman settlers fled southward across the Po River.

Rome mobilized all its resources and called upon all the states in Italy to defend the land. The Romans raised an army of 300,000 foot, 14,000 horse, and 456,000 reserves. Hannibal won two battles in North Italy, but he knew he was still outnumbered 10 to 1. He failed to persuade the Italian states to join him, and his Gallic "allies" were losing heart. The Romans attacked Hannibal at Cannae with 80,000 infantry, and 6000 cavalry. Hannibal had 19,000 Carthaginian and Spanish veterans, 16,000 unreliable Gauls, and 10,000 horse. He placed the Gauls at his center, expecting them to give way, which they did. When the Romans followed them

into the pocket, his veterans closed in on the Roman flanks and the cavalry attacked from behind. The Romans lost all chance of maneuvering, and 44,000 fell in one day's battle, including eighty senators who had enlisted as soldiers. This battle ended the days of Roman reliance upon infantry and set the lines of military tactics for two thousand years.

Hannibal's defeat of the Roman legions at Cannae shattered Rome's hold on the southern Italian states. Several joined Hannibal, and Carthage sent some reinforcements and supplied. For a month, the city of Rome was hysterical in terror. The class war ceased, and all citizens rushed to the aid of the state. Every male who could carry weapons was enlisted and served voluntarily without pay. Rome settled in for a defense against the Lion of Carthage.

But Hannibal did not come! His 40,000 were too small a force against a city to whose defense would come many armies on a moment's notice. If he took Rome, how could he hold it? Hannibal decided to wait until Carthage, Greece (Macedon), and Syracuse could unite with him in an offensive that would retake Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, and Illyria. He released all but a few of the Roman captives and took his troops to winter in Capua.

After a winter of relaxation and pleasure in one of the vice capitals of the world, Hannibal's soldiers were never again the invincible troops which had borne so much hardship. During the next five years Hannibal led them to some minor successes, using Capua as his HQ. The Romans besieged this city with 200,000 legionnaires, and Hannibal was forced to retire to the south of Italy.

Meanwhile, a Roman army had been sent to Spain to keep Hasdrubal, Hannibal's brother, occupied. Hasdrubal was defeated at the Ebro River, but the Romans lost their gains when their leaders were killed. Hasdrubal's main force escaped, crossed the Pyrenees into Gaul and the Alps into Italy. He sent a message to Hannibal with his plans for reinforcing him, but the message was intercepted by the Romans. Despite his excellent generalship, Hasdrubal was defeated by the Romans before he could reach Hannibal. Hasdrubal went to his death in combat rather than face imprisonment and disgrace by the Romans.

In 205 B.C. a new Roman army was raised, sailed for Africa, and attacked Carthage. The Carthaginians appealed to Hannibal to come to their aid. Imagine the feelings of this half-blind warrior, driven into a corner of Italy by an endless stream

of enemies, seeing all his toil and hardship of fifteen years brought to nothing, and all his triumphs wasted. Half his troops refused to leave Italy with him. He landed near Carthage, hastily formed a new army, and went out to face Scipio Africanus at Zama, fifty miles south of Carthage (202 B.C.).

The two generals met in courteous interview, found agreement impossible, and joined battle. For the first time in his life, Hannibal was defeated. More than 20,000 Carthaginians were left dead on the field. Hannibal attacked Scipio in personal combat, wounding him. He attacked the leader of the Numidian cavalry, Masinissa, reformed his disorganized forces again and again, and led them in desperate countercharges. Seeing conditions hopeless, Hannibal fled to Carthage and advised the Senate there to sue for peace. Rome settled with Carthage on the following terms:

- Carthage was allowed to retain her African empire
- She was to surrender all war vessels except ten triremes
- She was not to make war against anyone outside Rome or within it without Rome's consent
- She was to pay Rome \$720,000 per year for fifty years

This Second Punic War changed the Mediterranean in a way that is still being felt in the Twentieth Century A.D.

- It gave Spain and all its wealth to Rome, providing funds for Roman conquest of Greece
- It reunited Italy under Rome's unquestioned mastery
- It threw open all routes and markets to Roman ships and goods
- It ravaged or injured half the farmland in Italy, destroyed 400 towns, killed 300,000 men, from which southern Italy has not quite recovered to this day.
- It weakened democracy by showing that a popular assembly cannot wisely choose generals or direct a war

- It began the transformation of Roman life and morals by hurting agriculture and helping trade, by taking men from the countryside and teaching them the violence of the battlefield, and by bringing new money to finance luxuries and imperialistic expansion.
- In short, the war with Carthage was a pivotal event for almost every phase of Roman history.

To Carthage it was the beginning of the end. Their government became so corrupt that the people again called for Hannibal to come out of retirement and save the nation. He was elected leader in 196 B.C. He punished corruption and virtually eliminated graft. He relieved the citizens of some of the most burdensome taxes.

To get rid of Hannibal, the rich merchants secretly sent word to Rome that Hannibal was plotting to renew the war. Scipio used all his influence to protect his friendly rival, but was overruled. The Roman Senate demanded the surrender of Hannibal. Hannibal fled the city, rode 150 miles to Thapsus, and took ship for Antioch. He found Antiochus III hesitating between war with Rome and peace; he advised war and became one of the king's staff. When the Romans defeated Antiochus at Magnesia (near Ephesus) in 189 B.C., they made it a condition of peace that Hannibal be turned over to them.

Hannibal escaped, first to Crete, then to Bithynia. The Romans hunted him down and surrounded his hiding place with soldiers. Hannibal said, "Let us relieve the Romans from the anxiety they have so long experienced, since they think it tries their patience too much to wait for an old man's death." He drank the poison he carried with him and died at the age of 67. A few months later, his conqueror and admirer, Scipio, followed him in death. In a final war with Carthage lasting from 151 to 146 B.C., Rome completely annihilated the Carthaginians and razed their cities to the ground, sowing them with salt.

## The Revolution, 145 to 30 B.C.

Had Rome been able to avoid further war, she might have been able to concentrate her forces on the solution of her domestic problems. The very size of the Empire, however, made it impossible to avoid foreign conflicts. In 111 B.C., Rome fought a major war with King Jugurtha of Numidia in North

Africa. This was followed by campaigns to punish the invading Gauls, and by a war to prevent Mithridates of Pontus from expanding his power into Asia Minor. In 104 B.C. Rome had to suppress a major slave revolt in Sicily.

The consul Marius recruited thousands of landless peasants for Rome's legions. Up to this point the legions had consisted of peasants who owned land, served their time in the army, and returned to their crops. But now the army consisted mostly of mercenaries who were loyal only to the generals who paid and fed them and led them to places where they could get booty.

Marius was the hero of the war against Jugurtha in Africa, so he was elected consul in 107 B.C. During the next 20 years, he served five separate terms. He was a poor statesman, but his large army easily overrode any opposition. He established the precedent of rule by military commanders.

In 91 B.C. Rome's Italian allies rose in revolt, charging that they were being exploited to benefit the Roman ruling class. Marius stopped the rebellion by conferring Roman citizenship on the allies, which gave them voice and vote in the Senate and Assembly. But the patrician aristocracy didn't like this move because it weakened their powers. So Sulla, the hero who defeated Mithridates in Pontus, having a stronger army, removed Marius from office by engaging him in civil wars which killed an estimated 500,000 Romans.

Sulla was the spokesman for the aristocracy and he curtailed the powers of the tribunes and restored the ancient powers of the Senate over the Assembly. In 82 B.C. Sulla was appointed dictator for life by the Assembly. The Roman constitution provided for the office of dictator during times of national emergency, but the dictator was supposed to be appointed for a fixed term and was to relinquish his powers upon the expiration of his term of office. Sulla retired in 79 B.C., not wanting to rule for life.

Several new popular leaders who had private armies began fighting for control of the Roman government. In 73 B.C. Pompey brought the rebellion of Spartacus under control, and in 63 B.C. he conquered Syria and Palestine which brought additional revenue to Rome. He became a very strong and popular leader. During the same years, Julius Caesar was conquering Gaul as far away as Belgium. For a time, Pompey and Julius Caesar cooperated in trying to take over the government.

## Julius Caesar 100 to 44 B.C.

In 68 B.C., Julius Caesar was elected quaestor (governor) and assigned to serve in Spain; he was 32 years old. He led military expeditions against the native tribes, sacked towns, and collected enough plunder to pay off some of his enormous debts. At the same time, he won the gratitude of Spanish aristocrats by lowering interest charges on money loaned to them by Romans. He returned to Rome and in 65 B.C. was elected commissioner of public works. He spent the money he had stolen in Spain and had borrowed from other men (he owed Crassus \$2,880,000), mainly on new buildings and fancy decorations for the city. He also courted favor with the working class by setting up games and entertainment.

Sulla had removed the trophies of Marius from Rome, including banners, pictures, and spoils representing the features and victory scenes of the old radical. Caesar had these restored, and by that act alone he announced his rebel policy. All the old veterans were happy with him, but the conservatives protested and marked him as a man to be broken. In 63 B.C., Caesar was chosen *pontifex maximus*, the head of the Roman religion. In 61 B.C., he was appointed propraetor for Spain, but his creditors would not let him travel to Spain.

Crassus again came to his rescue, underwriting his obligations, hoping for spoil and political favors if Caesar were successful in Spain. Caesar again used his troops to steal the Spanish tribes blind, came back to Rome with enough money to pay all his debts and have great riches left over for the Treasury. The Senate voted him a triumph. They knew Caesar wanted to be elected consul; and they also knew the custom that dictated that one who is to be given a triumph must remain outside the city until the day of the triumph. They had planned for the elections to take place before the day of the triumph. But Caesar refused to accept the triumph and entered the city to campaign for his election.

Meanwhile, Pompey had just returned from the East with a powerful army and a succession of military and diplomatic achievements behind him. He conquered Bithynia, Pontus, and Syria. He accepted a huge bribe from the King of Egypt to quell a revolt there, then refused to do so, calling it illegal. He had pacified Palestine and made it a client state of Rome. He founded thirty-nine cities and had established law, order, and peace, acting with good judgment, statesmanship, and making huge



profits wherever he went. Pompey was made extremely wealthy, and he had an army that could make him dictator at a word. Yet he generously disbanded his troops, paid them well, and entered Rome with only his personal staff.

Pompey requested that state lands be given to his soldiers. The Senate refused; and they also refused to ratify his agreements with conquered kings. The effect was to break down the relationship between the Senate and the higher classes; and Pompey and the capitalists began to look for support elsewhere.

It was at this juncture (60 B.C.) that Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus formed the first triumvirate ("rule of three men") by which each pledged himself to oppose legislation unsatisfactory to any one of them. Pompey agreed to support Caesar for the consulship, and Caesar promised that if elected he would carry through the measures for which Pompey had been fighting. The hugely rich Crassus bankrolled these endeavors.

Caesar was elected consul and proposed the land distribution to soldiers and ratification of Pompey's agreements with the kings. The Senate turned him down at every juncture, so he offered these ideas to the Assembly, who voted in his favor. Pompey was impressed by Caesar's keeping his promises. The voters were kept in good humor with amusements and games.

## The Conquest of Gaul

Caesar had himself appointed governor of Cisalpine and Transalpine Gaul in 58 B.C., and he shortly took up his duties there. The Germans had moved across the Rhine River into Gaul for the past 20 years, settling in Flanders and other northern areas. During the same period, Helvetii, from Geneva, some 400,000 strong, were moving west through territory now governed by Caesar. The German tribes were in motion, the whole line of the Rhine was threatened, and Caesar's job was no less than to save Rome from invasion by establishing Gaul as a buffer zone.

Caesar equipped four extra legions at his own expense (illegally). Deputations from many Gallic tribes asked him for help, and he declared war against the Germans and Helvetii. He met the Helvetians near modern Autun, winning by a narrow margin. He gave them safe passage back to their homelands (in Switzerland). He fought the Germani, under Ariovistus, at Ostheim (10 miles west

of the Rhine, 160 miles south of Cologne), killing or capturing almost all of them.

Caesar began the reorganization of Gaul under Roman authority, but northern Gauls and Belgae united to attack in the area north of the Seine and Rhine rivers. They were defeated as were a succession of various rebelling tribes.

Caesar had to return to Northern Italy to replenish the legions and to work with Pompey and Crassus on political affairs. But the Germans began coming back across the Rhine. In 55 B.C., Caesar again defeated the Germans and drove them across the Rhine. Caesar invaded Britain, reached the Thames River, and exacted tribute from the tribes there.

In early 52 B.C., Caesar received word that the Gaul Vercingetorix was lining up nationalistic tribes in rebellion. Caesar's legions fought several battles against the Gauls (at Bourges, Orleans, etc.) which took a steady toll of his men and supplies. He found his fortunes at a low ebb. He staked everything on a siege of Alesia (modern Alise Ste. Reine), where Vercingetorix had 30,000 troops. Caesar surrounded the town with about as many soldiers. But he got word that there were at least 250,000 Gauls coming from the north to Vercingetorix' relief.

Caesar threw up walls in front of and behind his positions. For a week the Gauls threw themselves against the walls in vain charges. The outside attackers ran out of supplies and weapons just as the Romans had reached the end of their stores. The Gauls left the field, and the starving city sent Vercingetorix out to sue for peace. Caesar took him captive and placed him in a cage to display at his triumph in Rome. The fate of Gaul was decided, and the character of the French civilization was set. Territory twice the size of Italy was added to the Roman Empire, and 5,000,000 people became Rome's customers. Gaul provided a buffer against the Germans for four centuries.

## THE PRINCIPATE, 30 B.C. TO 192 A.D.

After the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C., Mark Antony (Caesar's chief lieutenant), Octavian (Caesar's 18 year old nephew), and Lepidus (governor of Spain), formed a triumvirate to avenge the death of Caesar and to continue his policies.

They hunted down the leaders of the Senate, including Cicero. While he had no part in the killing of Caesar, the triumvirs feared his oratorical and literary brilliance and wanted him out of the way. Three hundred senators and 2,000 equestrians (middle class government officials and merchants) were condemned to death. Brutus and Cassius, the actual leaders of the plot to kill Caesar, fled east to raise an army and fight the triumvirs for control of Rome.

Antony and Octavian defeated the legions of Brutus and Cassius at Philippi, and the Empire was divided between Lepidus (Africa), Antony (the East), and Octavian (Italy and the West). There was the inevitable power struggle among the triumvirs, and Octavian defeated Lepidus in Africa and took over.

Octavian could not attack Mark Antony directly because Antony had been a close associate of Caesar. But Antony fell under the control of Cleopatra. Octavian was then able to declare that Antony had become Cleopatra's puppet and that she was conspiring to overthrow the government of Rome for herself. The tactic worked. Rome and its Italian allies pledged support to Octavian, and Antony was defeated in the naval battle of Actium. Octavian was now master of the Mediterranean world.

Octavian was careful not to appear to be taking over. He resigned all his offices and returned the power of the state to the Senate and to the people of Rome. However, the Senate refused to allow Octavian to resign, instead naming him Augustus, a religious title indicating that its possessor has superhuman powers. As Augustus, Octavian commanded the Roman armies and navy, controlled public funds, and ruled the Roman provinces. But Octavian never assumed the title of Emperor (*imperator* = dictator). He called himself Princeps, or "first citizen" of the state, an equal among equals. Augustus and his successors actually exercised the powers of emperors, but they technically did not claim the title. Hence, the Roman state was known as the Principate until about 284 A.D.

Augustus (Octavian) restructured Roman government; and until about 180 A.D., the basic pattern of government was his. He introduced the following reforms which had great influence on the development of the Christian church over the first three centuries A.D.:

1. All provinces were placed under the control of the Princeps, who appointed military governors.

2. All provinces were divided into municipalities. All municipal officers were elected by the freeborn citizens of the city, the community enjoying complete autonomy. Imperial officials did not interfere in local matters. Usually, the communities were dominated by their wealthier citizens.
3. Imperial officers appointed to govern the provinces were salaried by Rome. Tax collectors, in particular, were given an annual salary rather than a percentage of the taxes collected. This was done to prevent them from abusing their powers in order to fatten their pockets, and it helped make them more dependent on Rome.
4. Augustus began extensive road building programs and empire-wide postal service. This made for better trade and commerce and for better communications and imperial administration.
5. In order to strengthen his hold on the provinces, Augustus had himself proclaimed a deity. He felt that foreign people would find it easier to obey the commands of a god than those of a conqueror. In Italy, he did not proclaim his divinity because he had a legal right to rule there anyway.
6. Under Augustus, Roman law began to reach maturity. Eminent judges issued *responsa prudentium*, the "answer of the wise", legal opinions on the issues brought before the judges. Gradually, these answers formed a body and philosophy of law and were accepted as precedent for the decision of similar cases. Roman law was based on statutes of the Senate, edicts of the Princeps, the "responsas", and certain ancient customs which had the force of law. The statutes, edicts, and responsas formed the *ius civile*, the written law of the Empire. The old customs formed the *ius gentium*, the unwritten common law.
7. Roman citizens had the right to appeal to the Princeps from the decisions of local courts, and they were immune from degrading corporal punishments. This raised the dignity of Roman citizenship and established the principle that all Roman citizens, irrespective of social class, were equal before the law.

## The City of Rome in Bible Times

Rome was founded on the Tiber river in 753 B.C. It soon spread to cover seven hills, which were : Capitoline, Palatine, Aventine, Caelian, Esquiline, Viminal, and Quirinal. The Roman Forum lay between the Palatine and Capitoline hills and was the center of Roman cultural, civic, and commercial activities.

The finest of Rome's temples, palaces, circuses, baths, monuments, amphitheaters, and imperial buildings were near the Forum. All Roman life centered in this area, and all roads in the empire radiated from the golden milestone located in the Forum. Paul, Peter, and Luke must have been in the forum often; and here Paul may have been tried for his life. The dust and dirt of centuries cover this area now; and earthquake, fire, and time have taken their toll.

There were excavations in Rome as early as the 16th century, with extensive archaeological work being done since then. In the late 19th century, the Pontifical Commission of Sacred Archaeology took up the work and have continued to oversee it until the present.

Ancient Rome was a sumptuous and magnificent city. There are many descriptions in history of its magnificence. The Forum measures 240 by 690 feet and was the scene of the trial and death of Julius Caesar and the oration of Mark Antony. The Colosseum, covering six acres, seated 60,000 spectators at gladiatorial contests in which Christians were thrown to wild beasts. The palaces of the emperor and the temple of Jupiter were on the Palatine Hill. More than 250,000 people could watch chariot races at the Circus Maximus.

Near the Forum can be seen the Arch of Titus (Vespasian) which has a sculptured relief of Titus and his legions carrying the sacred vessels from the Temple in Jerusalem after the siege of 70 A.D. Of course, this had not been built when the apostle Paul was alive. Also, the Arch of Constantine is in the area and tells of Constantine's proclamation of 316 A.D. in which he announced that Christianity was to be the official religion of the empire. During the excavation, in 1941, of Ostia, Rome's seaport at the mouth of the Tiber, an inscription was found indicating that in 14 A.D., during the reign of Tiberius, Rome had a population of over 4 million.

Of all the discoveries in and around Rome, the most

interesting to Christians and Jews are the Catacombs which lay along the roadways outside the city, but which are never farther than three miles from the old city walls. The origin of these Catacombs is one of the strangest phases of history. They started out as sand pits discovered and exploited by people who needed building materials. The material was actually a combination of volcanic ash and sand, melted enough to cause the particles to adhere to each other. This tufa stone comprised the earth's surface for miles around Rome and was excellent when used in masonry. Many subterranean channels were dug in "mining" this sand.

During the first century, there came tremendous conflict between the young Church and the Roman Empire. The marked characteristic of the empire was tolerance; and the most notable characteristics of the Christian church were its love and benevolence. So, you would think the two would have gotten along well together. They did not, however, because the Christians swore allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord of the lives, and everything else was expected to be subservient to Him. Of course the Romans did not like this.

Also, the church had high standards for moral conduct, and they called for conformity to these standards. They said, "If you expect to be saved, you must conform to Christ's way of life." This was resented. The church condemned the world and sought to save it, but from the world there came contempt and aversion, followed by persecution.

The Christians were also thought to be very unsocial people. They were considered strange, and were hated as enemies of society. They were simple and moral in their dress, they would not go to games and feasts, they condemned those who sold fodder for the animals which were to be sacrificed to pagan gods. The public began to dread them because they thought the gods would be angry and cause their crops to fail if too many people refused to make offerings. If crops failed, if the Tiber river overflowed, if plagues came, the cry was "Send the Christians to the lions!" Yet the Christians were kind to all who were in trouble, stayed and nursed the sick during the plague when others fled, and lived highly moral lives.

In order to test people's loyalty, the Roman government required that every one appear at certain public places and there burn a pinch of incense to the emperor. The Christians considered this emperor worship, and they wished to worship only Christ.

So government authorities began to seek them out and punish them with death. As a protective measure the Christians began to meet and work in secret. They sought refuge in the underground sand pits. With their tools they hollowed out rooms, chapels, and burying places. The Catacombs became their place of safe retreat. They came to live there, to worship there, and were buried there, by the tens of thousands.

The Catacombs were discovered, and excavations begun, in the 16th century. Since 1950 they have been excavated very extensively. Enough information has been gathered to fill many books. About six million people are buried in about sixty Catacombs, fifty-four of which are Christian, and six of which are Jewish. Each of these has an obscure entrance from which a stairway leads down to tunnels and galleries which branch off in all directions cre-

ating a network of tunnels and streets on as many as four levels connected by stairways. On each level is an immense maze of tunnels - so that in all there are about 587 miles of tunnels.

Along the walls of these passageways, or at dead ends, the Christians are buried in wall tombs. Each tomb is closed with tiles or with a marble slab on which the name, and perhaps a portrait, of the deceased appears. Often the walls and ceilings were decorated with paintings of Bible characters, or scenes such as Moses striking the rock, David, Daniel, Noah, or Jonah — in each case they represented a miraculous deliverance by God. In 1853, the archaeologist DeRossi found a marble slab with the engraving, “Marcus Antonius Rastutus made this sepulchre for himself and his own, who are confident in the Lord.”