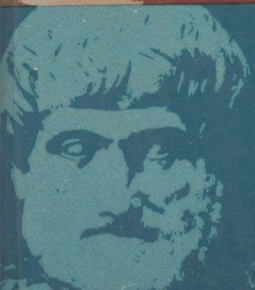




WESLEY D. CAMP



ROOTS OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

VOLUME I



FROM ANCIENT TIMES
TO 1715



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VOLUME I
FROM ANCIENT TIMES
TO 1715

Edited by
WESLEY D. CAMP
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Translations, unless otherwise indicated,
are by the editor.

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**ROOTS OF
WESTERN CIVILIZATION**

FROM ANCIENT TIMES
TO 1715

for Matthew Douglass

PREFACE

Man has no nature; what he has is history.

—Ortega y Gasset

Historical sources provide entree into the past that only a visit to places like Athens or Rome might rival. Students learn to discover and explore history as a foreign country. The raw materials of the past—rather than being simple, neat, and orderly, like a textbook—are rarely above dispute and always subject to interpretation. Whereas the smooth flow of a narrative may give the impression that history is somehow predetermined, the documents themselves offer students the kind of situation confronting an archaeologist at a dig, filled with bits and pieces of the past that seldom fit together. Once students begin to see how history is “made”—out of whole cloth, so to speak—they may come to question not only the textbook but even the polished lectures of the instructor. *Caveat magister!* Gertrude Stein, asked for her solution to the “German problem” after World War II, recommended that children speak back to their parents and contradict their teachers at least once a day.

To do so with authority, however, the child would need reliable sources, and, as the Renaissance humanist Lorenzo Valla demonstrated, even the best of them are not above suspicion. But they do provide a basis for rational argument and criticism, which are central activities in the intellectual process. Also, the student who learns to see history as a series of problems to be explored may find that many of today’s controversial questions can be illuminated by similar issues from the past. Such a student will be well on the way to becoming a mature and useful citizen.

“History, to be above dispute or evasion,” said Lord Acton, “must stand on documents, not on opinion.” Novice historians should learn this lesson early on. If they read Hammurabi’s code, the Epic of Gilgamesh, and the book of Genesis all in the first week of class, they may change their minds about the meaning of “history.”

Some students may be impressed with the literary quality of many of the sources: for example, Erasmus’s “Julius II Excluded from Heaven” or Mary Wollstonecraft’s “Rights of Woman.” Or the conflict between Antigone and Creon in Sophocles’ play, giving an immediacy to Greek civilization that few modern sources can convey. Once students find that history involves issues and

ideas as well as names and dates, when they discover that even its heroes make mistakes, then their enthusiasm is sufficient reward for the teacher.

We in the History Department of Adelphi University have long followed the above philosophy in teaching the "Introduction to Western Civilization" course. But when we found various source books inadequate for one reason or another, I offered to compile a new anthology following certain principles now incorporated in the present work:

¶ Organize documents and sources by themes into chapters corresponding to standard textbook divisions.

¶ Keep excerpts as short as feasible, in order to focus on central issues and hold the student's interest.

¶ Where possible, choose the more familiar source over the less familiar, capitalizing on the student's shock of recognition: for example, the Bible, Aristotle, Galileo, Marx, Freud, Hitler.

¶ Make each chapter short enough to be covered in one assignment.

¶ Offer as wide a range of viewpoints as possible; the 250-odd documents in these volumes also provide some latitude of choice on the part of instructors and students.

¶ Write brief, provocative headnotes and introductions in order to arouse the student's curiosity while at the same time providing the necessary background information.

¶ Choose documents covering a broad spectrum of cultural phenomena: religion, art, literature, science, philosophy, mythology, as well as records of social, political, and economic life.

¶ Select a diversity of sources: monuments, chronicles, and biographies; satires, poems, and plays; letters, diaries, and speeches; essays and tracts, laws and decrees, architecture and sculpture, painting and photography.

¶ Carefully edit all sources, using ellipses and brackets [. . .] to eliminate extraneous material, for example, unkeyed names, parenthetical remarks.

¶ Revise or retranslate inadequate versions; the editor doubles as professional translator. For translations from the Russian, I thank my colleague Professor Devlin, who also compiled and edited the chapter "Lenin and the Russian Revolution."

Similarly, I thank my other colleagues in the Adelphi History Department who graciously adopted these readings in preliminary form for use in their classes and gave me the benefit of their own and their students' criticisms. I am also deeply indebted to Professor Frank L. Kidner of San Francisco State University and to Professor Howard R. Holtzer of California State University, Dominguez Hills, both of whom read an earlier version of this anthology and made many excellent criticisms and suggestions, from which I have greatly profited. The errors and shortcomings that remain are, of course, entirely my own.

Wesley D. Camp
Garden City, New York

NOTE TO THE TEACHER

Our experience in the use of sources has convinced us that, rather than their being merely “supplemental,” they can be an integral or central feature of the course. First, however, it is necessary to insure that students *read* the sources, so we require them to submit brief “reaction papers”—one or two pages—before any topic is discussed. Volunteers are then asked to tell the class frankly what they thought of the various documents—what they liked, disliked, understood, or did not understand; also what they discovered that was not in the textbook or was at variance with it. Since not all students have the same reactions, arguments and discussions often ensue, leaving the instructor little to do except to act as moderator and make the final summation.

Later, the papers are read by the instructor or the graduate assistant or, preferably, both. Except for a check mark (✓) to indicate “assignment completed,” papers are not usually graded, although some instructors may wish to reward brevity-cum-insight with two checks. Overly ambitious students should be informed that lengthy papers gain nothing, since only the first two pages will be read, in any case.

For the instructor, reaction papers often provide valuable feedback, indicating where students may have missed the point or become confused. For the students, there are several advantages: In addition to their improved “stage presence” from giving reactions in class, the mere act of writing a paper a week helps to improve their English composition, even when grades are not assigned. Some teachers provide guidance in the form of marginal notations, for example, “Verbiage?” “Logic?” or even, “What is your source here?”

Students also report that their reading speed and comprehension increase as they learn to look for ideas to record in their reaction papers, rather than getting bogged down in details. Some students, of course, may need to be warned that mere summaries are not acceptable.

Finally, when students once discover that historical documents are not sacred but may be evaluated and criticized like any other, they are well along toward proving Carl Becker’s dictum: Every person his, or her, own historian.

W.D.C.

NOTE TO THE STUDENT

You are about to discover History! Like Columbus, who thought he was bound for India, you too may discover a whole new world. By the time you have finished reading the documents in this book, you should have acquired a new discipline as well. Does the word “discipline” scare you? It shouldn’t. Almost everything we do, except sleep, involves some kind of control, coordination, and concentration: for example, sports. And thinking may also be a sport; it requires training, practice, coaching, and testing under pressure. One way to begin real thinking is to ask some hard questions: How do I know what I know? What evidence do I have for my opinions? Are my sources reliable? How may I test them? Many questions are similar to those a good lawyer would use in the courtroom: Is this witness reliable? Does the witness have a bias? Does other evidence rebut this witness’s testimony?

Why should you read *original* sources? Why isn’t the textbook enough? Some of the advantages of a textbook, in fact, supply arguments for the reading of source documents. Textbooks are usually well written, noncontroversial, factual, and biased—biased, that is, in favor of our own contemporary, Western culture whose values we always have to question, as John Stuart Mill says, in order to keep from holding them as mere prejudices. When we read history directly from the sources, without a textbook or a historian to smooth out the rough spots, we discover some new insights into human behavior, such as the Crusaders’ killing 10,000 men, women, and children in Solomon’s Temple after the fall of Jerusalem in 1099; or Susan B. Anthony’s crusade for women’s rights supported by such men as J. S. Mill and J. B. Shaw.

But probably the chief advantage of reading original sources is for the better understanding and interpretation of the past—how its story is written and how it relates to life in the present. Historians themselves have to work from documents like these and also, of course, from such physical remains as monuments, buildings, art, and artifacts.

Not all documents are easy to read, but some can be very exciting. For instance, when you read Socrates’s own defense at his trial, you will get a heightened sense not only of an original folk hero but also of the life of Athens four centuries before the birth of Christ. Or when you read Cellini’s story of his difficulties in creating a masterpiece, you will understand more about the meaning of art and the function of the artist. Finally, when you study the documents in English history from the king’s charters to the Bill of Rights, you will see how far “we” had come before Washington and Jefferson were born.

W.D.C.

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CHAPTER 1

THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST: GOD, MORALITY, LAW

From Europe, the roots of Western Civilization extend south and east hundreds of miles into the region known as the Ancient Near East or, today, the Middle East. Three or four millenia before the birth of Christ, many tribes of nomadic peoples changed their old ways of life and settled down in the great river valleys of the Tigris, the Euphrates, and the Nile. There, instead of following herds of livestock, as in the past, they learned (or invented) agriculture. And they produced so much food that they created a surplus, which increased their total population and enabled many of their people to devote themselves to nonagricultural functions such as art, religion, and politics.

In the short space of a thousand years they invented written languages, complicated systems of government, art forms that are as vibrant as any that came later, and legal procedures and codes that are still followed in some parts of the world today. A dozen major civilizations rose and fell in the twenty-one centuries between the age of the pyramids in Egypt and the Classical Age of Athens (2600 to 500 B.C.). All of these civilizations contributed something to the greatness of Greece and the glory of Rome, though it would be well-nigh impossible to untangle the threads of these relationships.

Since we cannot deal with all the civilizations of the Ancient Near East, we have chosen documents from four—Egyptian, Sumerian, Babylonian, and Hebrew—as being particularly important, as well as interesting and exciting in their own right. Which of these documents impresses you as being the most humanitarian? Is ethnocentrism equally apparent in all four cultures? What do you learn about the daily lives of the people from each document?