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THE EVOLUTION OF WESTERN SOCIETY



Volume I
From the
Ancient World
through the
Late Middle Ages

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through the Late
Middle Ages**

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Dedication: *To Patricia, Mark and Bryan.*—L.A.

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Preface

The editors have long been convinced of the virtue of introducing students of history to the use of source material at an early stage in their college experience. We have attempted to preserve that spirit of "readings in Western civilization" which has served generations of students so well. At the same time, we feel that each generation has to reexamine its own needs in this area as in every other. If historical interpretations tend to differ according to the objective circumstances of any given time, then the nature of a book such as this must correspond to the needs of students and teachers in the late 1970s and 1980s if it is to be effective. We feel obliged to deal frankly with our readers and explain what is new in this book. We hope that the novel aspects of the book will need no justification after students have begun to inquire into historical areas of knowledge and experience that were formerly unknown to them.

As in most books of readings in Western civilization, many of our documents concern political, social, and economic history. We feel that growing interest in intellectual history justifies giving a bit more space than is usual to documents that can be construed as belonging to the realm of intellectual or cultural history.

We have chosen many of our earlier sources with the aim of demonstrating that social change and conflict typify many epochs of Western civilization, not just our own. The reader will find examples of this in many places. We have included certain documents that illustrate the history of science and technology.

We have attempted to make sensitive use of various literary forms. The artist and the poet, more than the social scientist, express compassion and understanding. As Wilfred Owen, a young poet tragically killed in World War I, put it: "I am not concerned with Poetry. . . . The Poetry is in the pity. All a poet can do today is warn. That is why true Poets must be truthful."

Suggestions for the Use of These Readings

The need for such a volume became clear to us while teaching basic history courses to undergraduates. Like many teachers, we feel that significant improvement in student performance occurs when the student takes an interest in his reading assignments. Interest occurs when the teacher encourages the student to develop a keen and critical sense of history while, at the same time, reexamining his own basic values. What is our philosophy of education? In part it is Socratic, as it makes use of critical and controversial questions, sprinkled generously, we hope, with good will. It is in part contemporary, for the thrust of recent theories of education is to encourage students to become something more than passive recipients of historical data.

These books of readings are designed for use with any of the standard Western civilization textbooks. The volumes may, of course, be used separately, depending upon the scope and length of the course. Instructors using secondary paperback material instead of a text may find these three volumes useful for introducing students to parallel source readings.

During the past twenty-five years selected problems in history presenting clashing historical views have achieved a great deal of popularity in the classroom. We ourselves have edited several such volumes. Series produced by various publishers contain such "problem studies." But we believe that it is somewhat dangerous to put sophisticated and truncated historical interpretations in the hands of undergraduates when these students have no means of testing the interpretations. All they have to go by is a text which is itself another secondary source. We have thus found it practical to use these historical problems in conjunction with documents such as those provided in the present three volumes. One might, for example, assign a problem study on the Crusades in correlation with assignments from this volume.

Our organization should be taken as a suggestion rather than as a command. It can be juggled about. We have kept our introductions down to a minimum, but we have tried to say something in them and even make suggestions that may enrich a reading of the documents. Where relevant we have used cross-references. We have organized the documents in such a way as to encourage discussion. However these sources are used, we feel that the student will gain from them in direct proportion to the amount of imaginative concentration he devotes to them.

Selecting and putting these documents together has been a rich experience for us. We hope that reading and using these sources may prove

equally enlightening and enriching to the students and instructors who avail themselves of them.

Many of our students, friends, and colleagues have made valuable suggestions. We have often taken advantage of their insights and generous words of mature advice. We have shared our thoughts about source books in Western civilization with faculty in some seventy colleges and universities in every part of the nation. Their response to our survey has been most heartening. If we have omitted names in this expression of gratitude, it is because total fairness would have dictated the listing of the thousands of students we have taught over the past decade. We do, however, gratefully acknowledge the aid we have received from students at M.I.T., Wellesley College, Iowa State University, and the University of South Carolina over the past ten years.

We would like to acknowledge the valuable assistance of Dr. Robert Walsh, who aided in the preparation of this volume.

L. A.
R. E. H.

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PART ONE
FROM THE
ORIGINS OF
WESTERN
CIVILIZATION
THROUGH THE
TRIUMPH OF
CHRISTIANITY

The word *civilization* originates from the Latin *civitas*, meaning an urban center of human life. Historically, at least, civilization implies a settled rather than a nomadic existence. Some recognizable political structure and an orderly process of agricultural sustenance are further hallmarks of the earliest known civilizations.

Thousands of years before Homer sang of the epochal fall of Troy, ancient river civilizations flourished along the Nile and the Tigris and Euphrates. In Egypt and Mesopotamia we find centralized monarchies, priestly castes jealously guarding written lore, sophisticated yet brutal codes of law, careful land measurements, and elaborate myths of creation and destruction. Western civilization owes much to these ancient cultures. The culture of Egypt influenced that of ancient Greece, and the Semitic Phoenician alphabet left its mark upon the earliest Hellenic forms of writing—only two examples of such influence. The sources illustrating the various Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultures should be studied in their own right, but also with an eye to possible debts incurred by Aegean, Carthaginian, and Roman societies from the early second millenium B.C. through the days of Cleopatra almost two thousand years later.

Four ancient traditions molded Western civilization during its formative centuries. The *Jewish* tradition, which should be studied here in the context of the neighboring Mesopotamian cultures, was most creative during the first millenium B.C. It saw the development of ethical monotheism and messianic expectation. These later molded the *Christian* tradition, which conquered the Roman Empire in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. Christianity was perhaps the major cultural and sociological factor in the history of Western civilization until the era of the French and Industrial revolutions, about 1760 to 1890. Indeed, cogent arguments can be advanced for including the present era in the seminal period of Christianity.

The other two crucial traditions that this part of our book deals with are often described with the phrase "classical civilization." The *Greeks* of the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. produced thinkers who asked questions that have shaped Western ways of thinking down to the present day. Hellenistic imperialism presents us with the spectacle of the young West marching eastward with Alexander of Macedon toward the end of the fourth century B.C. We should always be aware of such cultural and economic points of interest. From the Persians of 490 B.C. to the Crusaders of the Middle Ages and the Ottoman Turks of the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries, the East-West struggle and interchange runs through these volumes as a major theme. The student will readily discover the richness and relevance of the Hellenic or Greek tradition.

The *Romans* dominated much more than the Mediterranean world by the time of Augustus Caesar. They provided a universal framework within which Christianity could convert the Western world. Roman concepts of law lived on in medieval Europe, and the Latin language provided scholars of the Middle Ages with a common language. While we emphasize such debts and continuity as these in making our comments, every tradition represented here should be studied for itself, for its unique problems, contradictions, and contributions.

Four traditions intermingled in Rome. *Judaism* molded *Christianity* in its early hopes and forms, while the *Roman* artistic and intellectual debt to *Greece* was so great that the poet Horace wrote "Greece the captive took Rome her captor captive." Greek thought influenced Jewish attitudes after ca. 330 B.C., as well as the message of St. Paul around 55 A.D. Thus, while each of our elemental traditions had its unique qualities, it was the intermingling of all four traditions which created the essential bases of Western civilization.

There are many other points of interpretation that one might suggest to the reader, but as he reads these documents, the student will soon discover that the editor's help is no longer required.

*Chapter 1:
From the
Pharaohs to the
Prophets: The
Near Eastern
Origins of
Western
Civilization*

Hymn to the Nile

The Nile River has been the source of life, wealth, and civilization for both ancient and modern Egypt. Its annual overflow made possible the fertile soil that supported Egyptian agriculture millenia before Christ. Hence, to the Egyptian fellahin, or peasants, the Nile was more than a river. It was a force which "comes to keep Egypt alive," as we see in the Hymn to the Nile reprinted below. The Nile could bring abundance or famine to millions of Egyptians.

Hail to thee, O Nile, that issues from the earth and comes to keep Egypt alive! Hidden in his form of appearance, a darkness by day, to whom minstrels have sung. He that waters the meadows which Re created, in order to keep every kid alive. He that makes to drink the desert and the place distant from water: that is his dew coming down from heaven. . . .

The Lord of Fishes, He Who Makes the marsh-birds To Go Upstream. There are no birds which come down because of the hot winds. He who makes barley and brings emmer¹ into being, that he may make the temples festive. If he is sluggish, then nostrils are stopped up, and everybody is poor. If there be thus a cutting down in the food-offer of the gods, then a million men perish among mortals, covetousness is practised, the entire land is in a fury, and great and small are on the execution-block. But people are

From *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, ed. James B. Pritchard and tr. J. A. Wilson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), pp. 372b–73b. With omissions. Reprinted with permission.

¹Emmer: Wheat grown as stock feed.

different when he approaches. . . . When he rises, then the land is in jubilation . . .

The Bringer of Food, rich in provisions, creator of all good, lord of majesty, sweet of fragrance. What is in him is satisfaction. He who brings grass into being for the cattle and thus gives sacrifice to every god, whether he be in the underworld, heaven, or earth, him who is under his authority. He who takes in possession the Two Lands, fills the magazines, makes the granaries wide, and gives things to the poor.

He Who Makes every beloved Tree to Grow, without lack of them. He who brings a ship into being by his strength, without hewing in stone. The enduring image with the White Crown. He cannot be seen; he has no taxes; he has no levies; no one can read of the mystery; no one knows the place where he is; he cannot be found by the power of writing. He has no shrines: he has no portion. He has no service of his desire. But generations of thy children jubilate for thee, and men give thee greeting as a king, stable of laws, coming forth at his season and filling Upper and Lower Egypt. Whenever water is drunk, every eye is in him, who gives an excess of his good.

He Who Was Sorrowful Is Come Forth Gay. Every heart is gay. Sobek, the child of Neith, laughs, and the Ennead,² in which thou art, is exalted. Vomiting forth and making the field to drink. Anointing the whole land. Making one man rich and slaying another, but there is no coming to trial with him, who makes satisfaction without being thwarted, for whom no boundaries are made.

A Maker of Light when issuing from darkness, a fat for his cattle. His limits are all that is created. There is no district which can live without him. Men are clothed with flax from his meadows, for he made Hedj-hotep for his service. He made anointing with his unguents, being the associate of Ptah in his nature, bringing into being all service in him, all writings and divine words, his responsibility in Lower Egypt.

Entering Into the Underworld and Coming Forth Above, loving to come forth as a mystery. If thou art too heavy to rise, the people are few, and one begs for the water of the year. Then the rich man looks like him who is worried, and every man is seen to be carrying his weapons. There is no companion backing up a companion. There are no garments for clothing; there are no ornaments for the children of nobles. There is no listening at night, that one may answer with coolness. There is no anointing for anybody.

He Who Establishes Truth in the heart of men, for it is said: "Deceit

²Ennead: A group of nine gods.