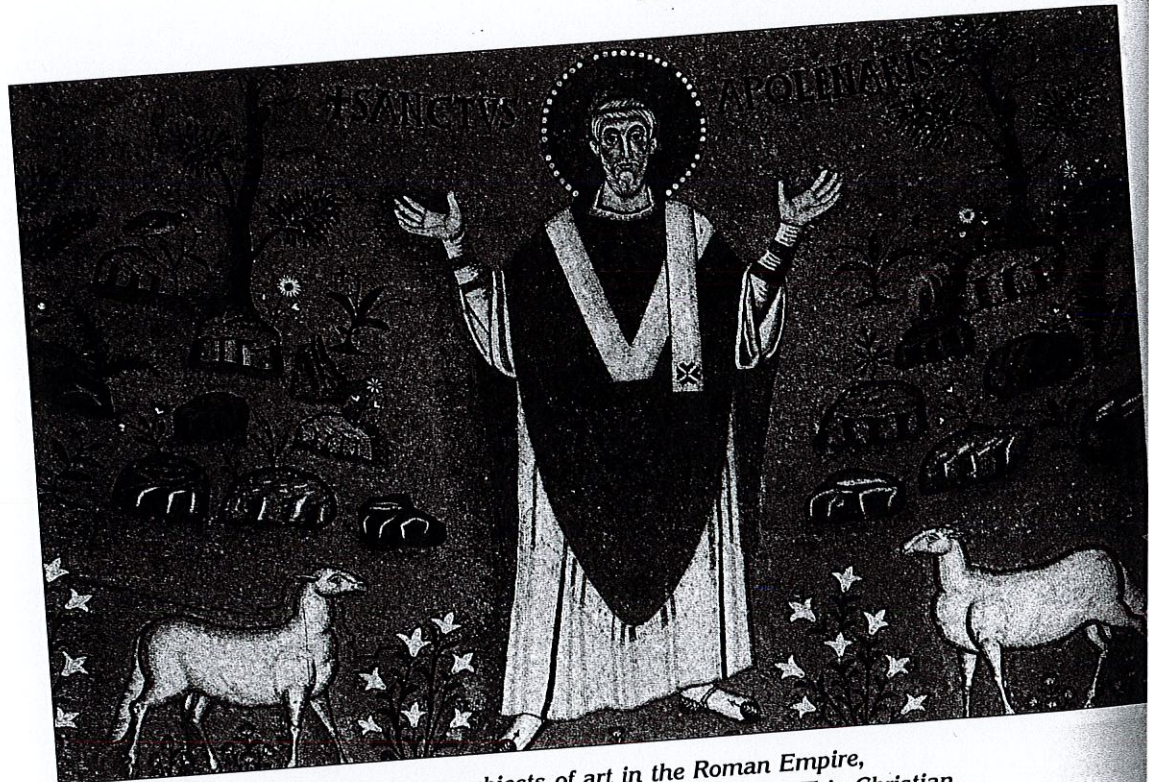


# The Roman Heritage (509 B.C.—476 A.D.)

# 6

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

- 1 Greco-Roman Civilization
- 2 Rise of Christianity
- 3 Breakdown of Unity in the Empire
- 4 Collapse of the Empire



*Christian themes became common subjects of art in the Roman Empire, especially after Christianity was recognized as the official religion. This Christian mosaic shows Saint Apollinare as a shepherd, perhaps a reminder of Christ's command to his disciples to care for his sheep.*

As Constantine marched on Rome in 312 A.D., he knew his forces were badly outnumbered. For six years, he had fought many rivals for control of the western part of the Roman Empire. Although he was now master of most of Italy, he had to fight yet another battle for the city of Rome.

About noon on the day before the crucial battle, Constantine looked up into the sky. Suddenly he saw a cross of light above the sun with these words, "Conquer by this." Eusebius (u SEE bee uhs), a Christian bishop and friend of Constantine, later described the scene. "At this sight, [Constantine] was struck with amazement, and his whole army also witnessed this miracle. And while he



continued to ponder its meaning, night suddenly came on; then in his sleep the Christ appeared to him with the same sign and commanded him to make a likeness of the sign that he had seen in the heavens and to use it as a safeguard against his enemies."

At dawn, Constantine called in artisans and described the sign in his dream. They shaped "a long spear, overlaid with gold" into a cross. Above the cross was a "wreath of gold and precious stones" around the first two letters of Christ's name. Constantine ordered his soldiers to inscribe the same two letters on their shields.

Carrying the jeweled cross into battle, Constantine's army triumphed, and Constantine became emperor of Rome. A year later, in 313 A.D., he proclaimed freedom of worship for everyone in the Roman Empire, including Christians. Before his death in 337 A.D., he was baptized a Christian, opening the way for Christianity to become the official religion of the empire.

Christianity was only part of the heritage Rome passed on to the peoples of its empire. Through Rome, Western Europe was introduced to the learning of ancient Greece. Rome also made its own contributions, especially in government, law, and engineering. Yet even while Roman civilization flourished, forces were weakening the ties that bound the empire together. ■

## 1 Greco-Roman Civilization

### READ TO UNDERSTAND

- ☐ How Greek culture influenced Rome.
- ☐ What contributions Romans made in science, technology, and law.
- ☐ Vocabulary: mosaic, aqueduct.

"Greece has conquered her rude conqueror," observed the Roman poet Horace early in the Pax Romana. Everywhere Horace looked, he saw evidence of Greek influence. Romans studied Greek art and architecture as well as theories of government. Romans who traveled to Athens or to Alexandria in Egypt absorbed the ideas of Hellenistic civilization.

Romans absorbed much of Greek culture but also kept their own traditions. The result was a blend of Greek and Roman traditions. Through conquest, Romans spread Greco-Roman civilization to every corner of their empire.

### Art and Architecture

When the Romans conquered Greece, they shipped home thousands of Greek statues. Roman sculptors did a brisk business copying Greek works, and talented Greek artists found rich patrons in Rome. In time, however, Roman sculptors developed their own style. Greek sculptors, you will recall, idealized the human form, using athletes as models of perfection. Romans created more realistic portraits.

Roman artists produced beautiful paintings to decorate walls of homes. Although few Roman paintings have survived, landscapes and scenes based on the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* were preserved in Pompeii (pahm PAY), a city buried by the eruption of a volcano in 79 A.D. Romans also designed magnificent mosaics, which are pictures formed of chips of colored stone.

While Romans borrowed many ideas in architecture, they also made important advances. From the Etruscans and Greeks, they learned to use columns and arches. They improved on the arch by inventing the dome, a



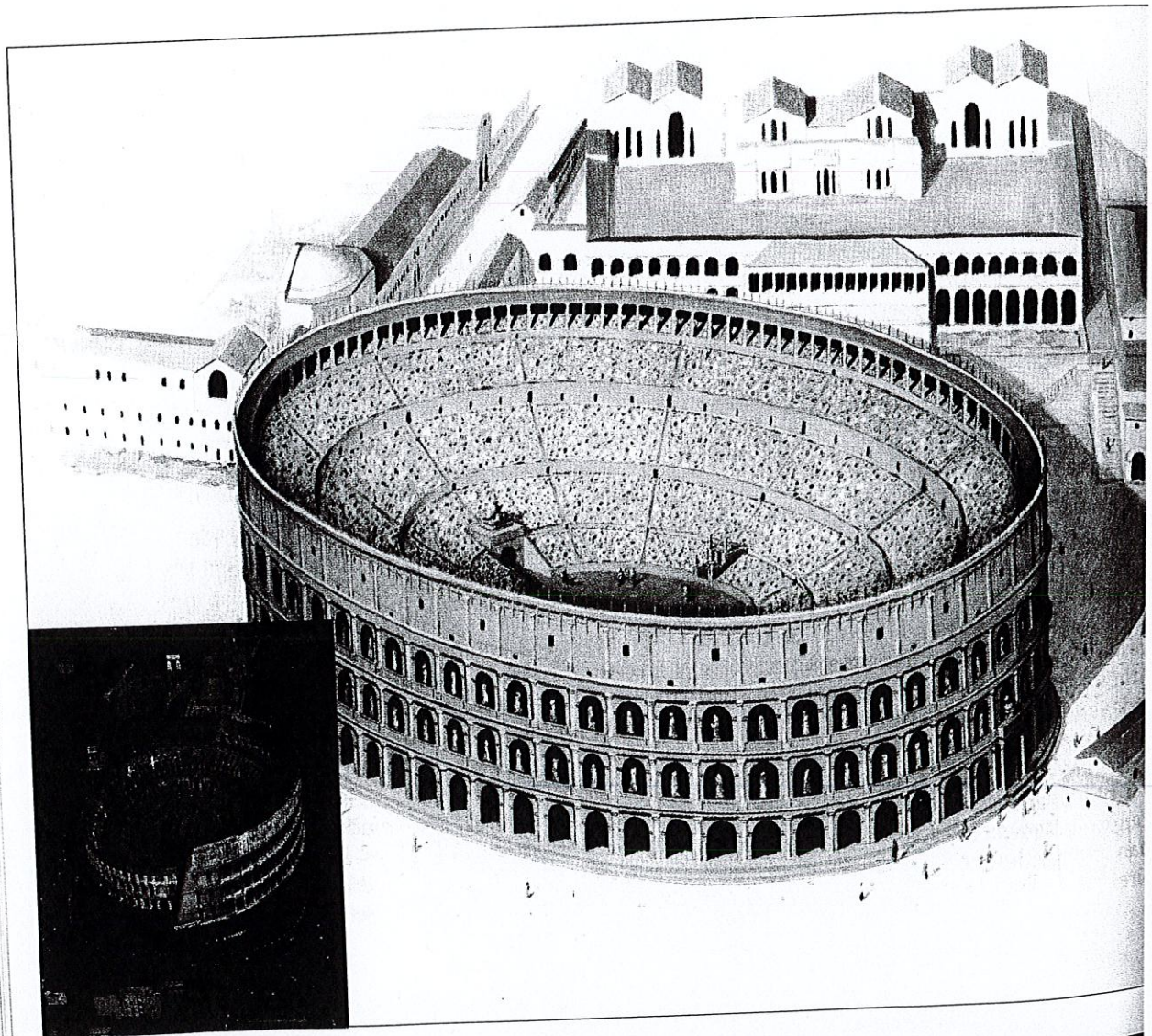
roof formed by rounded arches. The Romans also introduced new building materials such as concrete. New building techniques allowed architects to design massive structures. For example, the Colosseum had three stories of arches and columns.

Roman architecture was more ornate than the simple, elegant temples of classical Greece. Emperors erected solid, richly decorated monuments, such as huge stadiums, to symbolize Roman strength.

## Technology and Science

The Romans applied their technical knowledge to many practical concerns. They built strong bridges, supported by arches, to span turbulent rivers. Romans designed roads to last forever. They made them of heavy blocks set in layers of crushed stones and pebbles. Roman roads were still in use as recently as 100 years ago, and the stone foundations can be seen in parts of Europe today.

**THE ROMAN COLOSSEUM** In this recreation of the majestic Colosseum, artist Scott Gladden shows the amphitheater as it existed in ancient Rome. Made of concrete, the Colosseum was built so well that the arena could be flooded for mock naval battles without leaking. Rising rows of marble and wooden benches held up to 50,000 spectators. A 15-foot wall protected spectators during the brutal events. The ruins of the Colosseum, standing today, are shown at left.





Romans built **aqueducts** (AK wuh DUHKTS) to carry water from reservoirs in the country to the cities. Roman aqueducts, some of which still stand today, were canal-like stone structures that tunneled through mountains and spanned valleys.

In science and medicine, Romans collected masses of information in works similar to encyclopedias. Pliny (PLIHN ee) the Elder produced the 37-volume work *Natural History*, a storehouse of information on subjects ranging from astronomy to medicine, geography, and botany. Pliny's curiosity about natural events proved to be his downfall. In 79 A.D., he visited Pompeii to observe the erupting Mount Vesuvius (vuh SOO vee uhs) and was killed by poisonous gases from the volcano.

Scientific works produced during Roman times were studied for centuries. The Greek physician Galen (GAY luhn) wrote a medical encyclopedia that was used in Europe until the 1400s. The ideas of the astronomer Ptolemy were long thought to be true. Ptolemy taught that the earth was at the center of the universe and that the sun and planets revolved around it. Those theories were not disproved until the 1500s.

### Roman Literature

Roman writers adapted Greek literary forms such as lyric poetry and drama to the Latin language. Romans also developed new styles of writing that were influenced by Greek oratory, the art of persuading an audience.

Some statesmen, such as Caesar and Cicero, were fine writers. When Caesar was away on military campaigns, he kept his name before the public by writing *Commentaries on the Gallic Wars*. In this work, he skillfully combined a history of the wars with reminders of his own military successes. Cicero perfected a clear, logical style of writing that became a model for other writers. In essays on government, morality, and philosophy, he showed his admiration for the Roman Republic and for the Roman idea of justice.

**Poets.** Under the emperor Augustus, Roman literature flourished. Augustus supported writers, especially those who praised Roman achievements. The poet Horace was famous for his odes glorifying Rome and the Pax Romana.



*Many Roman women were well educated in history and literature. With slaves to do the housework, well-to-do women like the one pictured here had the leisure to take an active part in the intellectual and political life of Rome.*

The poet Virgil admired the early Republic. When Augustus commissioned him to write a poem celebrating the rise of Rome, Virgil composed the *Aeneid*. (See page 101.) Although the *Aeneid* imitated the heroic epics of Homer, it emphasized Roman justice, practical wisdom, and power:

You, O Roman, remember to rule the nations with might. This will be your genius—to impose the way of peace, to spare the conquered and crush the proud.

**Historians.** Rome produced many historians. Livy, who lived at the same time as Virgil, wrote the lengthy *History of Rome*. Unlike the Greek historian Thucydides, who tried to be impartial, Livy admitted that his goal was to glorify Rome. "I do honestly believe that no country has ever been greater or purer than ours or richer in good citizens and noble deeds," he claimed.

Another well-known historian, Tacitus (TAS uh tuhs), wrote the *Annals*, a history of Rome from the death of Augustus to 70 A.D. Unlike Livy, he was critical of Roman emperors. But he seemed resigned to the present. "I





*The tunes of strolling musicians, like the three shown in this mosaic, contributed to the din commonly heard in the streets of Rome. Other sounds rose from the shops of craftsmen, the shouting of peddlers, and the cries of beggars.*

may regard with admiration an earlier period," noted Tacitus, "but I accept the present, and while I pray for good emperors, I can endure whomever we may have."

### **Roman Law**

To deal with the practical problems of government, Romans developed a system of law, today considered one of their greatest achievements. Roman law established a common standard of justice for the entire empire. Under Roman law, an accused person was considered innocent until proven guilty. Judges were supposed to base their decisions only on evidence presented in court. They also

followed standard procedures to guarantee a fair hearing for both sides in a dispute.

Roman law evolved during the Republic and was suited to the needs of a simple farming society. The Twelve Tables of Law, for example, had applied only to Roman citizens. (See page 103.) As Rome expanded, two systems of law developed: civil law and the law of nations. Civil law dealt with claims of Roman citizens. The law of nations dealt with the claims of foreigners and took local customs into account. Eventually, the two codes were merged into a single law system that applied everywhere in the empire.

During the Pax Romana, punishments were less severe than they had been during the Republic. Furthermore, the law code pro-



vided some protection for slaves and women. It set limits on the absolute rights of fathers and husbands. Also, women and slaves were given the right to own property.

Roman law was the foundation for the law codes that developed in Europe and were carried to other parts of the world. Today, in many American courthouses, you can see statues of the Roman goddess of justice. She is blindfolded and holds a scale in each hand as a symbol of balanced judgment.

## SECTION 1 REVIEW

1. **Identify:** (a) Pliny the Elder, (b) Ptolemy, (c) Virgil, (d) Livy, (e) Tacitus.
2. **Define:** (a) mosaic, (b) aqueduct.
3. How did Roman sculpture differ from Greek sculpture?
4. What contributions did the Romans make to science and medicine?
5. What was Livy's opinion of Rome?
6. What two systems of law developed as Rome expanded?
7. **Critical Thinking** How did the Roman emphasis on practical ideas and inventions help unify and strengthen the empire?

## 2 Rise of Christianity

### READ TO UNDERSTAND

- How Rome treated the Jews in Palestine.
- What the teachings of early Christianity were.
- Why Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire.
- **Vocabulary:** messiah, parable, martyr, hierarchy, pope.

Wherever Jesus went, crowds followed. They brought the sick to him to be healed. And they took comfort in his words, "Blessed are the

poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." All the while, Jewish leaders and Roman officials looked on uneasily.

During the Pax Romana, a new religion, Christianity, spread across the Greco-Roman world. At first, Christianity was just one of the many religions practiced within the Roman Empire. But by 395 A.D., it had become the official religion of the empire. The success of Christianity was due in part to the religious climate of the Roman world.

### The Religious Climate

Roman emperors tolerated different religious practices. Officially, Romans were required to offer sacrifices to the emperor, who was thought to have divine power. These ceremonies had little religious meaning, however. They merely showed loyalty to Rome. As long as people performed the ritual, they could worship as they chose.

Many Romans continued to worship the old gods, such as Jupiter and Mars. Others turned to mystery religions like those in ancient Greece. (See page 88.) People who believed in mystery religions used magical signs and secret passwords hoping to win immortality. Mystery religions gave people in the huge impersonal Roman Empire a sense of belonging.

### Roman Rule in Palestine

The Hebrews, or Jews, were among the peoples in the Roman Empire whose religions were tolerated. Roman officials in Palestine respected the Hebrew belief in one God, and they excused Jews from worshipping the emperor. For example, the face of the emperor was not imprinted on coins issued in Palestine because Hebrew law forbade Jews to worship images.

Although Rome allowed Jews to follow traditional laws, many Jews resented foreign rule. Some believed that a **messiah**, a savior chosen by God, would lead them to freedom from Roman rule. The Zealots sought political freedom through armed resistance. But Rome responded to criticism and rebellion with severe punishment.



In 66 A.D., the Jews in Palestine rose in revolt. Rome sent an army to destroy Jerusalem. In 70 A.D., Rome abolished the Jewish state, which had existed since ancient times. The Jews were enslaved and dispersed throughout the empire. In their scattered communities, however, Jews preserved their ancient religion and culture.

### The Life and Teachings of Jesus

About 70 years before the Jewish uprising against Rome, Jesus, the founder of Christianity, was born in Bethlehem, a town in southern Palestine. Information about the life of Jesus comes from accounts written by his disciples after his death. These accounts, called the Gospels, or good news, make up the first four books of the New Testament of the Bible.

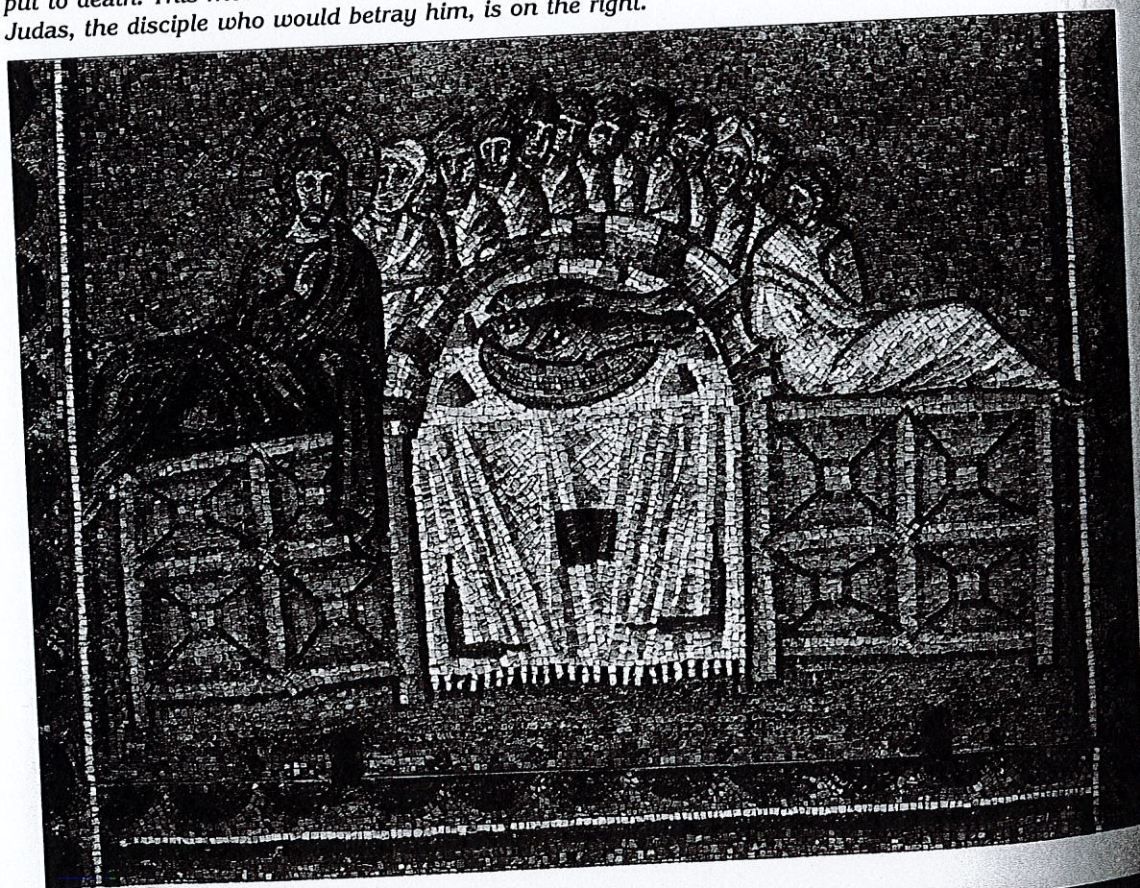
According to the Gospels, Jesus grew up in Nazareth, studied with priests in the synagogue, and learned the trade of a carpenter. As a young man, Jesus began preaching to the

poor. The Gospels say that Jesus performed miracles such as healing the sick. Many people who heard Jesus or witnessed the miracles believed he was the Messiah. The Greek word for messiah was Christos. Followers of Jesus eventually became known as Christians.

The large crowds Jesus attracted when he preached worried both Jewish and Roman authorities. Some Jewish officials saw Jesus as a troublemaker bent on challenging traditional Hebrew laws. Others rejected Jesus' claim to be the Son of God. Denounced by his enemies, Jesus was arrested and taken before Pontius Pilate, a Roman official. Pilate saw Jesus as a threat to Rome's authority in Palestine. As a result, Jesus was condemned to die. He was executed according to Roman custom by crucifixion, or being nailed to a cross to die of exposure.

In his teachings, Jesus stressed love for God and compassion for other people. A person's chief duties, he said, were to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart" and to "love

*Jesus and his apostles met together for the Last Supper the night before he was put to death. This mosaic commemorates that event. Jesus is shown at the left. Judas, the disciple who would betray him, is on the right.*





thy neighbor as thyself." In **parables**, short stories with simple moral lessons, Jesus taught people how to show kindness to one another. He offered his followers a loving and forgiving God. He taught that earthly riches were unimportant and that people who were humble, merciful, and unselfish would be rewarded with eternal life.

The teachings of Jesus were rooted in Hebrew religious traditions. (See page 49.) For example, Jesus preached obedience to one God, to the Ten Commandments, and to the other laws of the Old Testament. Like the ancient Hebrew prophets, Jesus condemned injustice and criticized false pride. As a result, the Hebrew ethical world view became a fundamental part of Christianity.

### The Apostles and Paul

According to the New Testament, Jesus chose 12 disciples as Apostles to carry on his teachings. At first, the Apostles preached to the Jews of Palestine. The Apostle Peter traveled to Rome, where he converted Jews in the capital to Christianity. But Paul, the person most responsible for spreading the message of Jesus, was not one of the original Apostles.

Paul, a Greek-speaking Jew from Asia Minor, helped establish Christian communities in the eastern cities of the Roman Empire. For 30 years, he traveled tirelessly through Palestine and Syria to Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, and Rome. Like the Apostles, he sought converts among the Jews. But Paul also took Christianity on a new course when he decided to preach the Gospel to Gentiles, or non-Jews.

Paul played a key role in shaping Christian thought. As part of his missionary work, he wrote hundreds of letters to Christian communities. These letters, in which he explained Christian beliefs, are part of the New Testament. Paul taught that people who believed in Jesus need not fear death because Jesus promised everlasting life.

### Persecution and Toleration

Unlike other religions within the Roman Empire, Christianity aroused official persecution because Christians refused to worship the



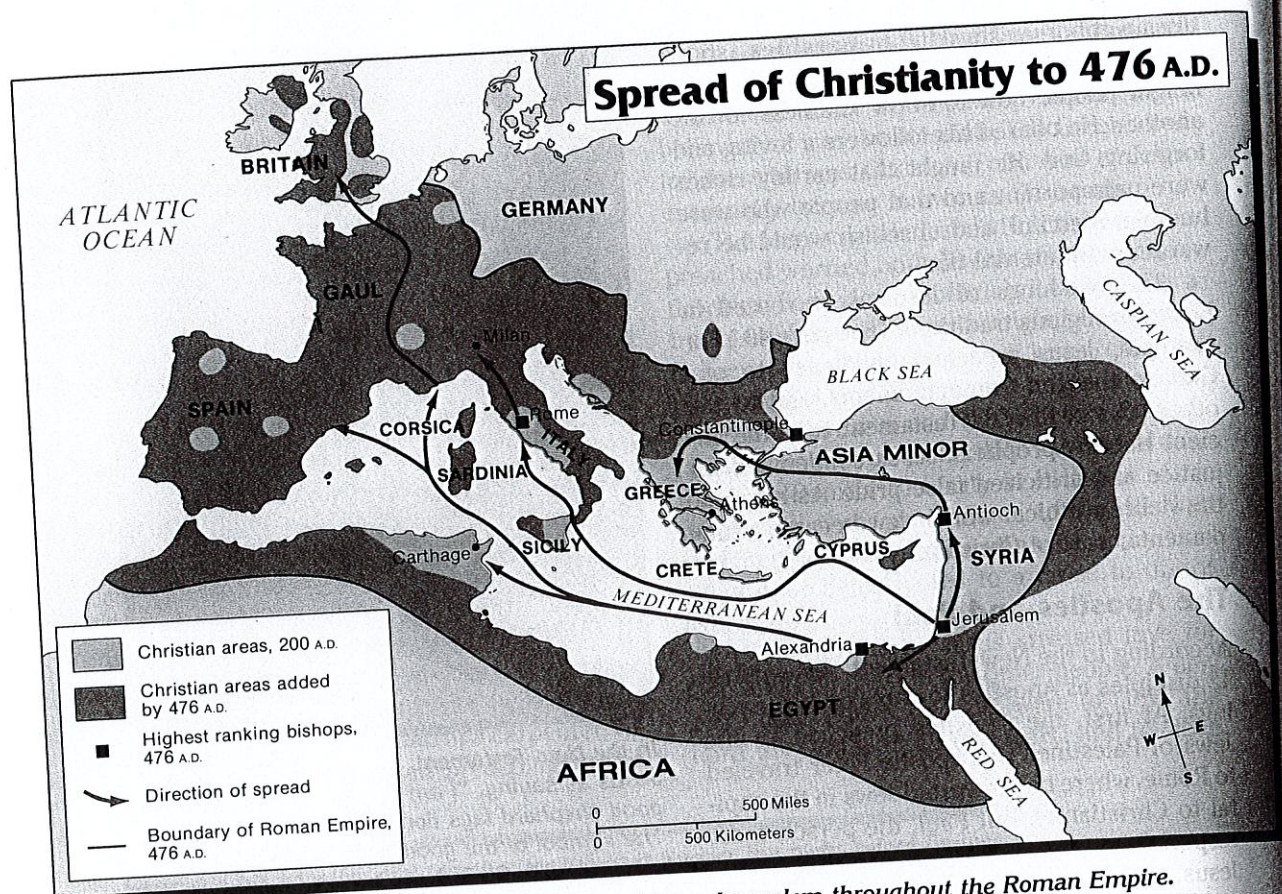
*In the New Testament, the apostle John quotes Jesus as saying, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep." The symbol of the good shepherd was often used in early Christian art.*

emperor. Roman authorities had excused Jews from emperor worship out of respect for their ancient traditions. But Roman authorities saw Christians as dangerous troublemakers who were winning converts throughout the empire.

Roman emperors tended to use Christians as scapegoats, especially when political or economic conditions were bad. Both Peter and Paul perished in Rome under the persecution of the emperor Nero.

Persecution strengthened rather than weakened the new religion. During periods of intense persecution, some Christians renounced their faith. But many others became **martyrs**, people who suffer or die for their beliefs. Christians believed that martyrs received God's special favor. "The blood of the martyrs," wrote one Roman, "is the seed of the Church." Many people were impressed by a faith that inspired such devotion in its followers, and they converted in great numbers.





#### MAP STUDY

*Christianity gradually spread from Jerusalem throughout the Roman Empire. What areas were Christian by 200 A.D.? Why do you think these areas were the first to become Christian?*

As you have read, the emperor Constantine officially recognized Christianity. In 313 A.D., he introduced a policy of official toleration by the Edict of Milan. Later, in 395 A.D., Christianity achieved its greatest triumph when it was made the official religion of the Roman Empire.

### The Appeal of Christianity

From humble beginnings in Palestine, Christianity spread to the eastern cities of the Roman Empire and then throughout the entire Roman world. (See the map above.) It spread for several reasons.

The simple, direct message of Christianity appealed to many people. The poor and oppressed, especially, found hope in the God

who loved people regardless of their place in society. Equality, human dignity, and, above all, the promise of eternal life were comforting teachings. Many educated people who had rejected the Roman gods and the mystery religions turned to Christianity. To them, the Christian emphasis on a life of moderation and discipline echoed Greek and Roman philosophies.

The work of dedicated missionaries such as Paul was made easier by the unity of the Roman Empire and the ease of travel between cities. In the eastern Mediterranean, Greek was a common language, and many people lived in cities. Thus missionaries could reach many people at one time. Furthermore, many early Christians were women who brought other members of their families into the faith. In some Christian communities, women con-



ducted worship services and enjoyed equality with men.

As Christianity gained in strength, more people turned to it. Eventually, Christians developed an efficient, dynamic church organization. The Christian Church maintained unity among its members and guaranteed the survival of the new faith.

### Church Organization

The Christian Church developed gradually during the first few centuries A.D. At first, bishops ranked as the highest officials. Each bishop administered the churches in a territory called a see. Below the bishops were priests, who conducted worship services and taught Christian beliefs. As the Church expanded, archbishops were appointed to oversee the bishops. An archbishop's territory was called a province. The type of organization in which officials are arranged according to rank is called a **hierarchy** (HĪ uh RAHR kee).

As the Church hierarchy emerged, women lost their influence in Church government. They could not become priests or conduct the Mass, the Christian worship service. But women continued to play a prominent role in spreading Christian teachings across the Roman world.

In time, the bishop of Rome acquired a dominant position in the Church by claiming that Peter, the chief Apostle, had made Rome the center of the Christian Church. The bishop of Rome eventually took the title **pope**, or father of the Church. Bishops in the eastern Mediterranean cities such as Constantinople, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Antioch opposed the pope's claim to be supreme ruler of the Church.

Together, the clergy, which included archbishops, bishops, and priests, helped keep Christianity alive in the early years of persecution. The clergy also maintained order and discipline in the Church. Bishops and archbishops met in councils to decide which ideas or practices the Church would accept. One of the most important of these was in 325 A.D. Church officials met in Nicaea (nĪ SEE uh) in Asia Minor, where they drew up the Nicene Creed, a statement of basic Christian beliefs.

## SECTION 2 REVIEW

1. **Identify:** (a) Gospels, (b) Peter, (c) Paul, (d) Gentiles, (e) Nicene Creed.
2. **Define:** (a) messiah, (b) parable, (c) martyr, (d) hierarchy, (e) pope.
3. How did Rome treat the Jews in Palestine?
4. Why did Roman authorities believe Jesus was dangerous?
5. What did Paul teach Christians?
6. List three reasons for the spread of Christianity.
7. **Critical Thinking** How did the Church hierarchy mirror the structure of the Roman government?

## 3 Breakdown of Unity in the Empire

### READ TO UNDERSTAND

- ☐ **Why the Pax Romana ended.**
- ☐ **How Diocletian and Constantine tried to strengthen the empire.**
- ☐ **Why reforms failed to stop the decline of Rome.**
- ☐ **Vocabulary:** coloni.

During the centuries that Christianity was struggling to survive, the Roman Empire was declining. After the death of Marcus Aurelius in 180 A.D., Rome plunged into civil wars and chaos. At one point, Roman soldiers auctioned the office of emperor to the highest bidder. But when he did not pay up, they murdered him. A more successful emperor, Septimus Severus, advised his son from his deathbed, "Make the soldiers rich and don't worry about the rest."

### End of the Pax Romana

The Romans never set up an effective way for one emperor to succeed another. Often, an emperor would name his son or an adopted



## BUILDERS AND SHAPERS Marcus Aurelius: Philosopher-King

"Nations flourish if philosophers rule, or if rulers are philosophers." No man had more reason to ponder these words of Plato than Marcus Aurelius, emperor of Rome from 161 A.D. to 180 A.D. Aurelius followed the Stoic philosophy and its belief in a disciplined, thoughtful life. In keeping with this philosophy, he accepted the call to become emperor because he felt it was his duty.

As emperor, Marcus Aurelius won the favor of the Roman masses. He lived simply and became known for being just. He made it easier for slaves to win their freedom. Revolted by the bloody combat between gladiators in the arena, he ordered their swords blunted so they would not kill one another.

Marcus Aurelius would have been happy to rule over a peaceful empire, but this was not to be. Soldiers returning home to Rome from war in the east brought back a deadly plague. Thousands died as the disease raged through the crowded city. In their panic, Romans blamed Christians for the disease. Thousands of Christians were burned alive or mutilated by lions and bears in the arena. Aurelius was appalled, but he did not stop the slaughter. According to Roman law, being a Christian was punishable by death. And he felt that it was his duty to uphold the law.

The emperor faced other grave problems as well. Egyptians rose up against Roman rule, and to the north, Germanic tribes raided

Roman settlements. Although he was in poor health and had little military experience, Marcus Aurelius dutifully led an army against the Germans. Without complaint, he endured the hardships of war. "Let it make no difference to you," he declared, "whether you are shivering or warm, sleepy or well-rested, or even dying, so long as you do your duty."

In 180 A.D., while in the field against the Germans, Marcus Aurelius died. News of the emperor's death saddened the Roman people. The philosopher-king had preserved the empire in the face of exceptional hardships. Those who came after him would not be able to do so.

1. Why did Marcus Aurelius allow the slaughter of the Christians?
2. **Critical Thinking** Do you think his interest in philosophy made Marcus Aurelius a better or worse ruler? Explain.



son as his heir, and the Senate would approve the new ruler. However, after the death of Marcus Aurelius, this system broke down, and the Pax Romana ended. Civil wars plagued Rome as generals competed for the throne. Between 234 A.D. and 284 A.D., at least 26 emperors ruled. Some held power for only a few months. All but one suffered violent deaths.

During the years of turmoil, the authority of Rome weakened. Law and order declined. And civil wars disrupted commerce in the cities. To raise money, emperors continued to devalue the coinage. (See page 115.) By making coins of copper with only a thin coating of

gold, they could issue more and more coins. Because the new coins were worth less than the old ones, prices and wages rose sharply. In this unstable atmosphere, businesses and cities declined further.

At the same time, invaders attacked the empire. Many farmers abandoned their land or turned their land over to wealthy nobles. The small farmers, or **coloni** (kuh LOH nī), continued to work the land, but the noble landowner paid the taxes and protected the coloni. In frontier regions, powerful nobles acquired vast holdings, which they governed almost independently of Rome.



## Reforms of Diocletian

In 284 A.D., legions in the east made the general Diocletian (dī uh KLEE shuhn) emperor. The new ruler introduced harsh new laws meant to strengthen the empire. Diocletian divided the Roman Empire in half and took control of the wealthier eastern provinces himself. He then appointed a co-emperor to rule the western provinces. The co-emperor was responsible to Diocletian.

To restore government efficiency, Diocletian reorganized the civil service and made officials directly responsible to the emperor. He enlarged the army and trained new cavalry units to fight invaders. He also had new forts and roads built to reinforce the frontier defenses. For a time, these measures kept the peace.

Diocletian also tried to solve the economic problems of the empire. To slow the rapid rise in prices, he set limits on prices and wages. To make sure there were enough farm products and manufactured goods, he ordered people to remain in their jobs. A shoemaker or farmer, for example, could not change occupations. Neither could their children or grandchildren.

## The Reign of Constantine

When illness forced Diocletian to retire in 305 A.D., a long power struggle resulted. In 312 A.D., Constantine emerged victorious, as you have read. The new emperor reunited the eastern and western territories under his personal rule. But he took a significant step when he built a new capital at Byzantium, a Greek city on the Bosphorus. The new Roman capital came to be called Constantinople. Making Constantinople the capital symbolized the declining influence of the city of Rome and the growing importance of the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire.

Constantine had many reasons for building a new capital. He believed that Rome was full of its "pagan," or non-Christian, past. Constantine wanted the new capital to be a Christian city. Also, Constantinople was closer to the great commercial centers of the eastern Mediterranean. The trade and commerce of those cities supplied most of the empire's



*A portrait of the reigning emperor was stamped on Roman coins. This coin shows the profile of Diocletian.*

riches. Furthermore, the eastern frontiers were more secure from invaders than the western frontiers.

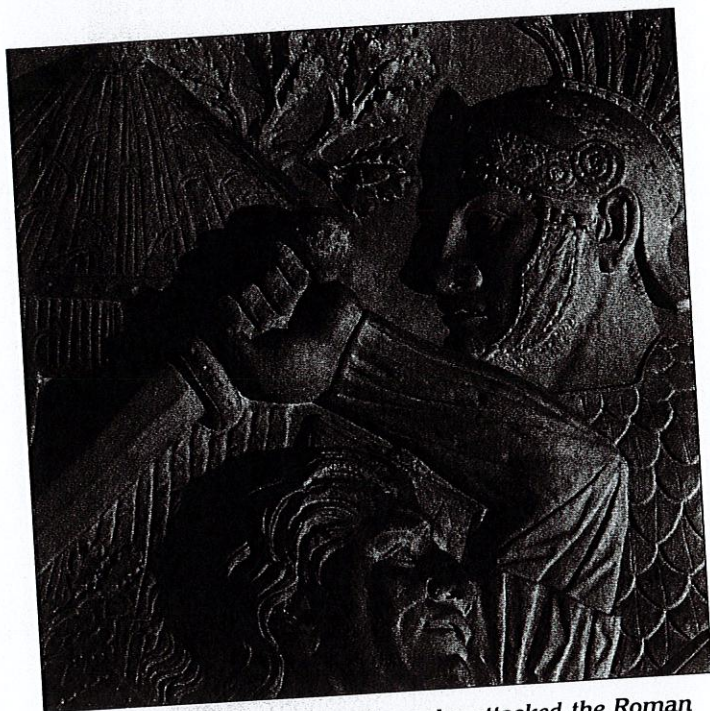
Constantine expanded the reforms of Diocletian. He ordered officials to enforce the harsh laws tying artisans to their trades and farmers to the land. But this had few positive results. Without the hope of getting ahead, people saw little reason to work hard.

The policies of Diocletian and Constantine did not halt the political and economic decay. Corruption and violence resurfaced after Constantine's death in 337 A.D. The empire was again divided. The Eastern Roman Empire flourished, but the Western Roman Empire was collapsing under internal stress and the pressure of invaders.

## SECTION 3 REVIEW

1. **Locate:** (a) Constantinople.
2. **Identify:** (a) Diocletian, (b) Constantine.
3. **Define:** coloni.
4. List two problems the Roman Empire faced after the death of Marcus Aurelius.
5. (a) How did Diocletian increase the military strength of the Roman Empire?  
(b) How did he fight rising prices?
6. **Critical Thinking** Which of the reforms undertaken by Diocletian and Constantine do you think were most effective? Which were least effective? Explain.





*The Germanic tribes who attacked the Roman Empire placed a high value on courage and strength. Young warriors, such as the one shown here fighting a helmeted Roman soldier, fought to the death for their chief.*

## 4 Collapse of the Empire

### READ TO UNDERSTAND

- ☐ How Germanic tribes were organized.
- ☐ Why Germanic tribes invaded the Roman Empire.
- ☐ What political, economic, and social problems led to the decline of Rome.

Diocletian and Constantine had struggled to restore Roman power. But invaders sweeping across the frontiers shattered forever the unity of the Roman Empire.

### The Germanic Tribes

During the Pax Romana, Roman armies had often fought Germanic tribes living north of the Danube River. The Germans included many different groups of seminomadic herd-

ers and farmers who had migrated from Scandinavia, the area of present-day Norway, Sweden, and Denmark.

The Roman historian Tacitus left one of the earliest descriptions of the Germanic tribes. Their military strength, courage, and strict morality impressed Tacitus.

An elected king ruled each tribe with the aid of a council of chiefs. Chiefs were chosen for their bravery by assemblies of free men. Each chief led a band of young warriors. In exchange for their services in battle, the chief supplied his warriors with a shield, a javelin, food, and shelter. "The chief fights for victory," Tacitus noted, while his "companions fight for their chief." Each chief administered justice in his region. Under the Germanic system, a person who was guilty of assault had to pay a fine to the injured person.

By the third century A.D., the pressure of a growing population forced the Germans to seek new land. Attracted by the wealth and the warmer climate of southern Europe, some crossed into the Roman Empire. Weakened by civil wars, frontier legions were hard pressed to hold back them back. Then, about 375 A.D., the Huns, a fierce nomadic people from Central Asia, attacked the Germanic tribes of Eastern Europe.

### Invasions of the Roman Empire

We do not know why the Huns burst out of Asia into Europe. Huns were superb riders and warriors who easily defeated the Ostrogoths, a Germanic tribe that lived north of the Black Sea.

Fearing a similar fate, a neighboring Germanic tribe, the Visigoths, looked for protection inside the Roman Empire. In 376 A.D., they received permission to cross the Danube River. Two years later, the Romans regretted their decision and sent an army against the Visigoths. But at the Battle of Adrianople, the Visigoths crushed the Roman legions. The Roman defeat signaled to all that Rome was no longer unbeatable.

After Adrianople, Germanic tribes flooded into the empire seeking safety from the Huns. As they came, they looted Roman cities. In 410 A.D., the Visigoth general Alaric (AL uh ribk)



invaded Italy and sacked Rome. Roman officials eventually bought peace by granting Alaric much of southern Gaul and Spain.

Meanwhile, the Huns conquered Eastern Europe, including the areas of present-day Romania, Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. Under their leader Attila, whom Christians called the "Scourge of God," they poured across the Rhine into Gaul. Rome then formed a hasty alliance with some Germanic tribes. At the Battle of Troyes (trwah) in 451 A.D., Rome and its allies stopped the Hun advance. Attila withdrew his forces. When he died soon after, the Hun empire collapsed.

Other invaders continued to threaten Rome. A Germanic tribe, the Vandals, moved through Gaul into Spain before settling in northern Africa. From Carthage, the Vandals

raided Italy. In 455 A.D., they sacked Rome. As Roman legions were withdrawn from the frontiers to defend cities in Italy, the Burgundians, the Franks, and later the Lombards moved into the western empire.

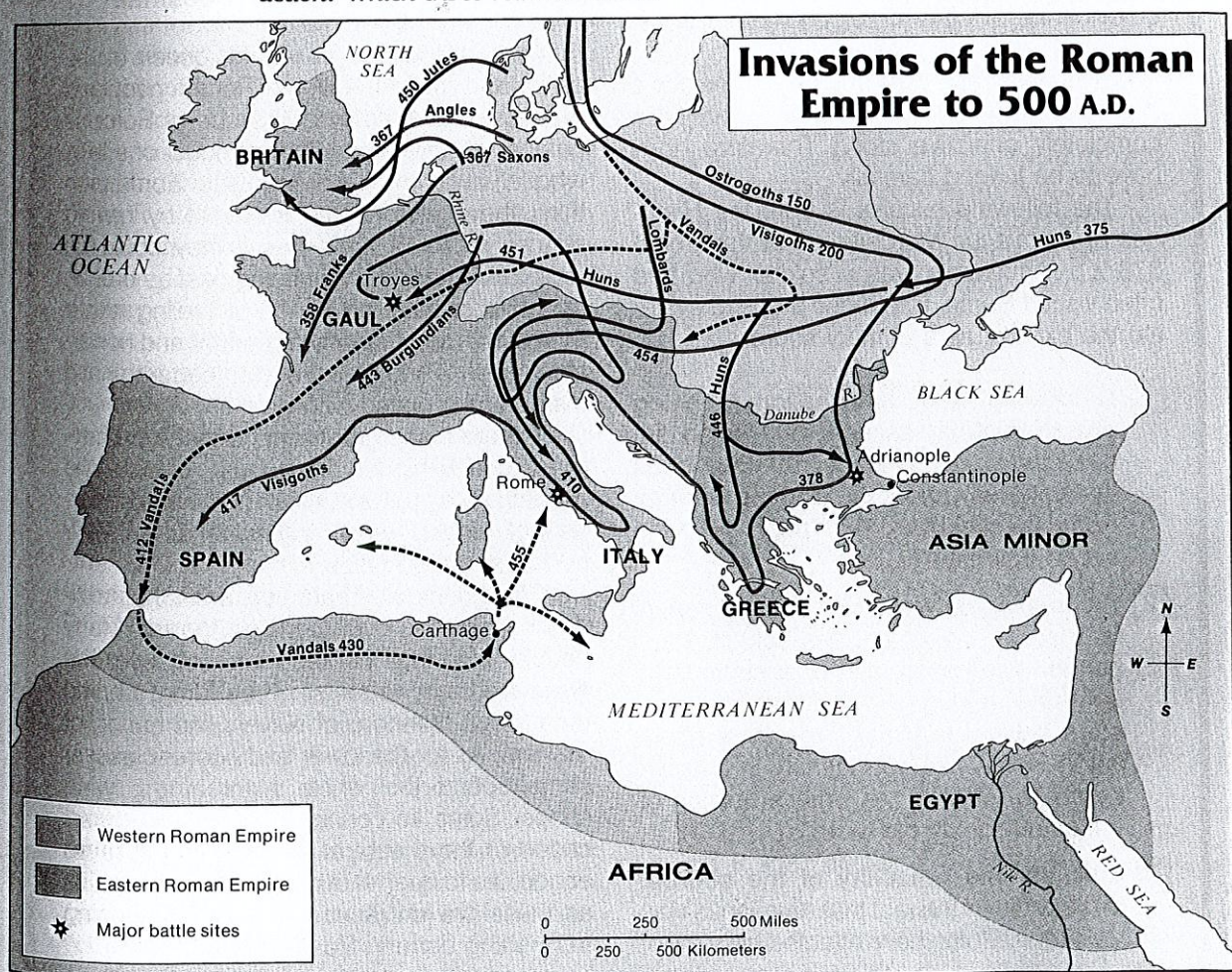
## The "Fall of Rome"

In 476 A.D., a minor Germanic chief, Odoacer (oh doh AY suhr), captured Rome and forced the emperor to give up the throne. Odoacer then proclaimed himself king of Italy. Many historians refer to this event as the "fall of Rome." Yet Rome did not collapse suddenly.

As you have read, the Roman Empire had faced severe problems for centuries. Moreover, Roman civilization did not simply disappear after 476 A.D. Although Germanic tribes

### MAP STUDY

*Diocletian hoped to strengthen the Roman Empire by dividing it into the Western Roman Empire and the Eastern Roman Empire. What was the actual result of his action? Which tribes reached Rome?*





conquered the western empire, the people of Gaul, for example, still considered themselves Romans. People continued to enforce Roman laws, and they spoke Latin, although local dialects developed. However, after 476 A.D., there was no emperor in the west. Without an em-

peror to serve as a rallying point, the unity of the Western Roman Empire ended.

The Eastern Roman Empire survived for 1,000 years after the "fall" of Rome. From Constantinople, emperors played one Germanic ruler off against another, hoping to control af-

## SKILL LESSON The Decline of Rome: Using a Primary Source

Written records provide us with useful information about historical events, everyday life, and the beliefs of different peoples. Historians use two types of written records: primary sources and secondary sources.

**Primary sources** are first-hand accounts based on the experiences of people who were involved in an event. Eyewitness accounts, government documents, treaties, and letters are primary sources. **Secondary sources** are second-hand accounts based on the writings or evidence of others. Textbooks and encyclopedias are secondary sources.

Some primary sources are written for a particular reason so the writer might not tell a completely objective story. Therefore, they have to be judged carefully.

The following excerpt is from the *Histories of Ammianus Marcellinus*, written about 378 A.D. Ammianus was a soldier who had often visited Rome. Use these steps to evaluate the excerpt as a primary source.

**1 Determine what information is being given.** (a) What aspects of Roman life does the writer describe? (b) What does the writer say about the clothing worn by Romans? (c) How did poor Romans spend their time?

**2 Distinguish between fact and opinion.** A **fact** is something that has actually happened. It can be proven or observed. An **opinion** is a judgment that reflects a person's beliefs. (a) What three facts about life in Rome can you identify in this excerpt? (b) What is the writer's opinion of the amusements of Romans?

**3 Evaluate the reliability of the source.** (a) How could the fact that Ammianus was a visitor to Rome have affected his view of

the capital? (b) What aspects of Roman life does Ammianus seem to ignore? (c) Would you consider this a reliable description of life in Rome? Why or why not?

**4 Use the source to draw conclusions about a historical development.** What generalizations about the decline of Rome can be made from this source?

### From the *Histories* by Marcellinus

Rome is still looked on as the queen of the earth, and the name of the Roman people is respected. But the magnificence of Rome is defaced by the thoughtless conduct of a few, who fall away into error and vice. Some men think they can become immortal by having statues made of them—as if they could be rewarded after death by being cast as bronze figures that have no sense or feeling rather than by striving to perform upright and honorable actions. And they are even eager to have their statues plated with gold.

Others place greater importance on having a couch higher than usual, or splendid clothing. They toil and sweat under a vast burden of cloaks which are fastened to their necks by many clasps.

The whirlpool of banquets and other luxuries I shall pass over lest I go too far. Many people drive their horses recklessly over the flint-paved city streets. They drag behind them huge numbers of slaves, like bands of robbers. As for the lower and poorer classes, some spend the whole night in the wine shops. Some lie concealed in the shady arcades of the theaters. They play at dice so eagerly as to quarrel over them. Such pursuits as these prevent anything worth mentioning from being done in Rome.



fairs in the west. Thriving commerce and a strong civil service in the eastern empire enabled it to preserve Greco-Roman civilization. In Chapter 11, you will read more about the Byzantine Empire, as the Eastern Roman Empire was later called.

### Causes of the Decline

Why did Rome decline? Most historians agree that no single problem caused the decline of Rome. Instead, they point out that a combination of political, economic, and social problems gradually destroyed the strength of the Roman Empire.

**Political causes.** Roman citizens gradually felt less responsibility toward government. They expected the emperor to look after their needs. The vast size of the empire and widespread corruption made efficient government difficult even under good rulers. And many emperors were weak or evil rulers.

The division of the empire hurt the western empire because the best officials and generals served the eastern emperor. Just when the tide of invasions was strongest, Rome suffered from a lack of capable leaders. Furthermore, as Roman authority weakened, some wealthy landowners withdrew their support from Rome and set up independent states.

**Economic causes.** Governing the Roman Empire required huge amounts of money. Much of the empire's wealth came from the eastern provinces. Thus, the division of the empire deprived Rome of desperately needed revenues. Moreover, Roman armies were no longer bringing in loot from newly conquered territories. Civil wars and Germanic invasions hurt trade and agriculture, making tax collection difficult, if not impossible. Efforts to increase the money supply by devaluing the currency only increased inflation. The resulting high prices were a burden to most Romans.

In the cities, heavy taxes and high unemployment meant less prosperity. The idleness of the wealthy and the expense of providing free grain to the poor drained Roman resources.

**Social causes.** As historians at the time noted, the loyalty and civic pride that once unified Rome had gradually decayed. Because citizens evaded military service, soldiers had



*Although their art was less sophisticated than Roman art, Germanic artisans produced fine animal figures in metal. The horse and rider shown here may have been part of a pendant.*

to be recruited from people who had little loyalty to Rome. These soldiers lacked the discipline and patriotism of the armies of the Roman Republic, which had conquered the Mediterranean world. As a result, they were no match for the well-trained Germans, who were inspired by loyalty to their chiefs.

Many people no longer felt they had a stake in the empire. They did not care whether the ruler was Roman or Germanic. Devastating epidemics swept through the western provinces in the 300s, increasing the sense of hopelessness. Despite these tremendous pressures, the breakup of the Western Roman Empire was a slow process. The remarkable feature of the empire was that it lasted for so long.

### SECTION 4 REVIEW

1. **Locate:** (a) Adrianople, (b) Troyes.
2. **Identify:** (a) Huns, (b) Visigoths, (c) Attila, (d) Vandals.
3. What role did the chief play in Germanic tribes?
4. List two reasons why Germanic tribes moved into the Roman Empire.
5. How did the division of the Roman Empire hurt the western provinces?
6. **Critical Thinking** Which of the reasons for Rome's decline do you think was most important?



## CHAPTER 6 REVIEW

### Summary

1. **During the Pax Romana, Greco-Roman civilization flourished.** Romans adopted Greek ideas of art, architecture, and literature but made many contributions of their own, especially in practical areas such as engineering and technology. The Romans developed a system of law, based on standards of justice, that influenced later law codes in Europe.

2. **Christianity began in Palestine and spread throughout the Roman Empire.** Its teachings were rooted in Hebrew traditions and included love of God and compassion for other people. Despite persecution, Christian-

ity survived. By 395 A.D., it had become the official religion of the empire.

3. **Civil wars after 180 A.D. ended the Pax Romana.** They also disrupted the economy of the empire. Attempts by Diocletian and Constantine to revive Roman authority failed.

4. **In the 300s and 400s A.D., Germanic and Hun invaders crippled the Western Roman Empire.** The capture of the city of Rome in 476 A.D. marked the end of political unity in the west. Yet the Roman heritage survived in both Western Europe and the Eastern Roman Empire.

### Recalling Facts

Arrange the events in each of the following groups in the order in which they occurred.

- (a) The Pax Romana ends.  
(b) Odoacer captures Rome.  
(c) The Roman Empire is divided into an eastern and a western empire.
- (a) Diocletian introduces government and economic reforms.  
(b) Constantine builds a new capital in the east.  
(c) Christianity becomes the official religion of the Roman Empire.
- (a) Roman armies destroy Jerusalem.  
(b) Nicene Creed is adopted.  
(c) Jesus is born in Bethlehem.
- (a) Huns attack Germanic tribes in Eastern Europe.  
(b) Visigoths defeat Romans at the battle of Adrianople.  
(c) Vandals sack Rome.

### Chapter Checkup

- (a) How did Greek culture influence Roman civilization? (b) In what fields did Rome make its own contributions?

- (a) What were the main themes emphasized by Roman writers? (b) How did Livy's writing of history differ from that of the Greek historian Thucydides?

- Describe the system of law that developed under the Roman Empire.

- (a) In general, what was the Roman attitude toward the many different religions in the empire? (b) Why did Roman authorities persecute Christians?

- Explain how each of the following contributed to the spread of Christianity: (a) Paul; (b) Roman persecution; (c) the message of Christianity; (d) unity of the Roman Empire.

- (a) Describe the reforms of Diocletian and Constantine. (b) How were they successful? (c) How were they unsuccessful?

### Critical Thinking

- Relating Past to Present** (a) In your opinion, why did Rome borrow so much from Greek civilization? (b) What present-day example can you give of one culture strongly influencing another?

- Understanding the Roots of Democracy** (a) How is law in the United States today



similar to law in the Roman Empire?  
(b) How is it different? (c) How might you explain the similarities and differences?

**3. Analyzing** (a) How did the Pax Romana help the spread of Christianity? (b) How do you think the later decline of Rome's political power made Christianity appealing to more people?

**4. Understanding Economic Ideas** (a) Why did emperors who ruled after the end of the Pax Romana devalue the coinage? (b) What effect did that action have on the economy? (c) How did Diocletian and Constantine try to solve economic problems? (d) Why do you think their reforms did not work?

### Developing Basic Skills

**1. Using Visual Evidence** Study the mosaic on page 122. (a) How would you describe the mood of the musicians? (b) What might you conclude about life in Rome based on this mosaic? (c) Does the mosaic provide a complete picture? Why or why not?

**2. Map Reading** Use the map on page 131 and your reading in this chapter to answer these questions: (a) Which of the invaders of Rome came from Asia? (b) Describe the route taken by the Vandals through the Roman Empire. (c) Which part of the Roman Empire suffered most from the invasions? Which suffered the least? (d) How

do the routes taken by the invaders help explain the fall of the Western Roman Empire?

**3. Classifying** Make a chart with three columns. In column one, list political causes for Rome's decline. In column two, list economic causes. In column three, list social causes. Then answer the following questions: (a) What connections do you see between political and economic causes? (b) How did economic problems contribute to social problems? (c) What do you think was the most important cause of Rome's decline? Explain.

### Writing About History

#### Chronological Order

Events that are arranged in the order in which they happened are said to be in chronological order. You would use chronological order, for example, if you were describing the Germanic invasions of Rome or the development of early Christianity. Some words that may be used to show the way events are related in time are: *first, later, soon, immediately, then, as soon as, while, and next.*

**Practice:** Write a paragraph on one of the topics mentioned above. Organize your facts in chronological order, using some of the time words listed.

