

Roman History

THE LEGENDARY PERIOD OF THE KINGS (753 - 510 B.C.)

Rome was said to have been founded by Latin colonists from Alba Longa, a nearby city in ancient Latium. The legendary date of the founding was 753 B.C.; it was ascribed to Romulus and Remus, the twin sons of the daughter of the king of Alba Longa. Later legend carried the ancestry of the Romans back to the Trojans and their leader Aeneas, whose son Ascanius, or Iulus, was the founder and first king of Alba Longa. The tales concerning Romulus's rule, notably the rape of the Sabine women and the war with the Sabines, point to an early infiltration of Sabine peoples or to a union of Latin and Sabine elements at the beginning. The three tribes that appear in the legend of Romulus as the parts of the new commonwealth suggest that Rome arose from the amalgamation of three stocks, thought to be Latin, Sabine, and Etruscan.

The seven kings of the regal period begin with Romulus, from 753 to 715 B.C.; Lucius Tarquinius Superbus, from 534 to 510 B.C., the seventh and last king, whose tyrannical rule was overthrown when his son ravished Lucretia, the wife of a kinsman. Tarquinius was banished, and attempts by Etruscan or Latin cities to reinstate him on the throne at Rome were unavailing.

Although the names, dates, and events of the regal period are considered as belonging to the realm of fiction and myth rather than to that of factual history, certain facts seem well attested: the existence of an early rule by kings; the growth of the city and its struggles with neighboring peoples; the conquest of Rome by Etruria and the establishment of a dynasty of Etruscan princes, symbolized by the rule of the Tarquins; the overthrow of this alien control; and the abolition of the kingship. The existence of certain social and political conditions may also be accepted, such as the division of the inhabitants, exclusive of slaves, from the beginning into two orders: the patricians, who alone possessed political rights and constituted the *populus*, or people; and their dependents, known as clients or the plebs, who had originally no political existence. The rex, or king, chosen by the Senate (*senatus*), or Council of Elders, from the ranks of the patricians, held office for life, called out the *populus* for war, and led the army in person; he was preceded by officers, known as lictors, who bore the fasces, the symbols of power and punishment, and was the supreme judge in all civil and criminal suits. The *senatus* gave its advice only when the king chose to consult it, but the elders (*patres*) possessed moral authority, inasmuch as their tenure was for life. Originally only patricians could bear arms in defense of the state. At some stage in the regal period an important military reform occurred, usually designated as the Servian reform of the constitution, because it was ascribed to Servius Tullius. As the plebs could by this time acquire property and wealth, it was decided that all property holders, both patrician and plebeian, must serve in the army, and each took a rank in accordance with his wealth. This arrangement, although initially military, paved the way for the political struggle between the patricians and the plebs in the early centuries of the Republic.

THE REPUBLIC

Conquest of Italy (510 - 264 B.C.)

On the overthrow of Tarquinius Superbus a republic was established. In place of the king, two chief executives were chosen annually by the whole body of citizens. These were known as praetors, or leaders, but later received the title of consuls. The participation of a colleague in the exercise of supreme power and the limitation of the tenure to one year prevented the chief magistrate from becoming autocratic. The character of the Senate was altered by the enrollment of plebeian members, known as *conscripti*, and hence the official designation of the senators thereafter was *patres conscripti* (conscript fathers). As yet, only patricians were eligible for the magistracies, and the discontent of the plebs led to a violent struggle between the two orders and the gradual removal of the social and political disabilities under which the plebs had labored.

In 494 B.C. a secession of plebeian soldiers led to the institution of the *tribuni plebis*, who were elected annually as protectors of the plebs; they had the power to veto the acts of patrician magistrates, and thus served as the leaders of the plebs in the struggles with the patricians. The appointment of the decemvirate, a commission of ten men, in 451 B.C. resulted in the drawing up of a famous code of laws. In 445 B.C., marriages between patricians and members of the plebs were declared legally valid. By laws, passed in 367 B.C., it was provided that one of the two consuls should thenceforth be plebeian. The other magistracies were gradually opened to the plebs: in 356 B.C. the dictatorship, an extraordinary magistracy, the incumbent of which was appointed in times of danger; in 350 B.C., the censorship; in 337 B.C., the praetorship; and in 300 B.C., the pontifical and augural colleges.

These political changes gave rise to a new aristocracy, composed of patrician and wealthy plebeian families, and admission to the Senate became almost the hereditary privilege of these families. The Senate, which had originally possessed little administrative power, became a powerful governing body, dealing with matters of war and peace, foreign alliances, the founding of colonies, and the handling of the state finances. The rise of this new *nobilitas* brought to an end the struggles between the two orders, but the position of the poorer plebeian families was not improved, and the marked contrast between the rich and the poor led to struggles in the later Republic between the aristocratic party and the popular party.

The external history of Rome during this period was chiefly military. Rome had acquired the leadership of Latium before the close of the regal period. Assisted by their allies, the Romans fought wars against the Etruscans. The military policy of Rome became more aggressive in the 60 years between 449 and 390 B.C.. The capture and burning of Rome by the Gauls in 390 B.C. were disasters, but their effect was temporary. The capture of the Etruscan city of Veii in 396 B.C. spelled the beginning of the end for Etruscan independence. Other Etruscan cities hastened to make peace, and by the middle of the 4th century B.C. all southern Etruria was kept in check by Roman garrisons and denationalized by an influx of Roman colonists.

Victories over the Latins, gave the Romans control of central Italy and brought them into conflict with the Samnites of southern Italy, who were defeated in a series of three wars, extending from 343 to 290 B.C.. A revolt of the Latins and Volscians was put down, and in 338 B.C. the Latin League, a long-established confederation of the cities of Latium, was dissolved. A powerful coalition was at this time formed against Rome, consisting of Etruscans, Umbrians, and Gauls in the north, and of Lucanians, Bruttii, and Samnites in the south; this coalition endangered the power of Rome, but the northern confederacy was defeated in 283 B.C. and the southern states soon after. The Greek colony of Tarentum, incurring the hostility of Rome, invited Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, to cross over from Greece and aid the Greek cities of southern Italy against Rome. His campaigns in Italy and on the island of Sicily from 280 to 276 B.C. were unsuccessful and he returned to Greece. During the next ten years the Romans completed their subjugation of southern Italy and thus gained control of the entire peninsula as far north as the Arno and Rubicon rivers.

A World Power (264 - 133 B.C.)

In 264 B.C., Rome engaged with Carthage in a struggle for the control of the Mediterranean Sea. Carthage at this time was the foremost maritime power in the world, ruling as absolutely in the central and western Mediterranean as did Rome on the Italian Peninsula.

Punic Wars

The First Punic War was waged mainly for the possession of Sicily and was marked by the emergence of Rome as a naval power. Having gained the support of Hiero II, king of Syracuse, the Romans took Agrigentum, and at Mylae in 260 B.C., with their first naval armament, they defeated a Carthaginian fleet. The transfer of the war to Africa resulted in the defeat and capture of the Roman general Marcus Atilius Regulus. After several naval disasters, the Romans won a naval victory in 242 B.C.; the war ended in the following year with the cession to the Romans of the Carthaginian part of Sicily, which was made into a Roman province; this was Rome's first foreign possession. Sardinia and Corsica were taken from Carthage and annexed as provinces soon after.

Finding Rome an equal match at sea, Carthage prepared for a resumption of hostilities by acquiring a foothold in Spain. Under the leadership of the general Hamilcar, who conceived the project of making Spain a military base, Carthage occupied the peninsula as far as the Tago (Tagus) River; Hamilcar's son-in-law Hasdrubal continued the work of subjugation until his death in 221 B.C.; and finally Hamilcar's son Hannibal extended the conquests of Carthage up to the Iberus (now Ebro) River. The Second Punic War began in 218 B.C.. Hannibal crossed the Alps with an enormous force, descending on Italy from the north, and defeated the Romans in a series of battles; he then continued to ravage most of southern Italy for years. He was recalled to Africa to face Scipio Africanus, who had invaded Carthage. Scipio decisively defeated Hannibal at Zama in 202 B.C., and Carthage was compelled to give up its navy, cede Spain and its Mediterranean

islands, and pay a huge indemnity. Rome was thus left in complete control of the western Mediterranean.

The Romans now became more harsh in their treatment of the Italian communities under their domination, and the Greek cities of southern Italy, which had sided with Hannibal, were made colonies. Meanwhile Rome was extending its power northward. During 201-196 B.C. the Celts of the Po Valley were subjugated, and their territory was Latinized, but they themselves were declared incapable of acquiring Roman citizenship. The interior of Corsica and Sardinia was subdued, and Spain, where the wars were troublesome, was held by military occupation, a practice that gave rise to the first Roman standing armies.

Macedonian Wars

Fifty years after becoming the foremost power of the west by defeating the Carthaginians Rome had also become the mightiest state in the east, first by conquering Hannibal's ally Philip V, king of Macedonia; Philip's ambition to dominate the Aegean Sea drew Rome into the Second Macedonian War (200-197 B.C.), which ended with his defeat. Next came the liberation of Greece, which, with the alliance that followed, enabled Rome to proceed against Antiochus III, king of Syria, who was defeated by the Romans in 190 B.C. and obliged to surrender his possessions in Europe and Asia Minor. Western Greece, however, continued to give trouble, and Philip's son and successor, Perseus (212?-166? B.C.), fought the Romans in the Third (and final) Macedonian War, which terminated in the utter rout of his armies and his capture at Pydna in 168 B.C. by the general Lucius Aemilius Paullus (229?-160? B.C.). Macedonia was made a Roman province in 146 B.C., and in that year a revolt of the Achaean League in Greece resulted in the capture and destruction of Corinth.

Also in 146 B.C. came the end of the Third Punic War, which had begun three years earlier. Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus Africanus Minor captured and destroyed Carthage, thus bringing to an end the Carthaginian empire, whose territory became the Roman province of Africa. A series of Spanish campaigns ended with the capture of Numantia in 133 B.C.. In the same year Attalus III of Pergamum died and bequeathed his client kingdom to its protector, Rome; shortly after, this territory was formed into the province of Asia.

Thus in 131 years Rome had developed from a land power controlling only the Italian peninsula to a world empire. From Syria to Spain the Mediterranean was now dominated by Rome, but Roman authority was better established in the west than in the east. During this period the Romans made cultural advances. Brought into contact with the Greeks, they adopted much from the older civilization in art, literature, philosophy, and religion. Roman literature began in 240 B.C. with the translation and adaptation of Greek epic and dramatic poetry, and the various Greek schools of philosophy were formally introduced into Rome in 155 B.C..

Internal Conflict (133 - 27 B.C.)

With the establishment of external supremacy, Rome's internal troubles began. Several extremely wealthy plebeian families combined with the old patrician families to exclude all but themselves from the higher magistracies and the Senate; they were called Optimates. This aristocratic ruling class had become selfish, arrogant, and addicted to luxury, losing the high standards of morality and integrity of their forebears. The gradual extinction of the peasant farmers, caused by the growth of large estates, a system of slave labor, and the devastation of the country by war, led to the development of a city rabble incapable of elevated political sentiment. Conflicts between the aristocratic party and the popular party were inevitable. The attempts of the people's tribunes Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus and his brother Gaius Sempronius Gracchus to alleviate the economic distress and help the poorer citizens by agrarian and corn laws resulted in riots in which both brothers met their deaths, Tiberius in 133 B.C. and Gaius in 121 B.C..

The expansion of Rome's territory continued. In Africa the overthrow, in 106 B.C., of the king of Numidia, by the consul Gaius Marius with the assistance of Lucius Cornelius Sulla increased the military renown of the Republic, as did the defeat of the Cimbri and the Teutones in southern Gaul and northern Italy by Marius after his return from Africa.

The Italian communities, the allies of Rome, had felt their burdens increase as their privileges waned, and they demanded their share of the conquests they had helped to achieve. The tribune Marcus Livius Drusus attempted to conciliate the poor citizens by agrarian and corn laws and to satisfy the Italian armies by promise of Roman citizenship. He was assassinated in 91 B.C.. The following year the Italian armies rose in revolt, their purpose being to erect a new Italian state governed on the lines of the Roman constitution. This war, which lasted from 90 to 88 B.C., is known as the Social War, or the Marsian War. The Italians were finally defeated but were granted full citizenship by the Romans.

The internal troubles continued; a conflict broke out between Marius, the spokesman and idol of the popular party, and Sulla, the leader of the aristocracy. A war with Mithridates VI, king of Pontus, threw the two leaders into rivalry as to which should command the expeditionary force. With the legions he had commanded in the Social War, Sulla marched on Rome from the south, for the first time bringing Roman legions into the city. The subsequent flight of Marius and the execution of the tribune Publius Sulpicius Rufus (circa 124-88 B.C.) left Sulla free to impose arbitrary measures, and, after the consular elections had confirmed him in his command, he set out against Mithridates in 87 B.C.. In Sulla's absence Lucius Cornelius Cinna, a leader of the popular party and a bitter opponent of Sulla, attempted to carry out the reforms originally proposed by Sulpicius, but he was driven from Rome. He rallied the legions in Campania around him and, joined by the veteran Marius, who had returned from Africa, entered Rome and was recognized as consul, as was Marius, the latter serving for the seventh time. Shortly thereafter, following a brutally vindictive massacre of senators and patricians, Marius died; Cinna remained in power until Sulla, returning from Asia with 40,000 troops in 83 B.C., defeated the popular party. As a result of the example set by Sulla, the Republican constitution was thenceforth at the

mercy of the strongest leader supported by the strongest troops. After suppressing his enemies by proscription, drawing up and posting in the Forum a list of important men declared to be public enemies and outlaws, Sulla ruled as dictator until his retirement to private life in 79 B.C.. In addition to proscription, Sulla employed confiscation of lands as a method of suppressing his political enemies. Confiscated lands were either given to the veterans of his legions, or abandoned to become wasteland; Rome's former rich agricultural economy began to decline, and thenceforth more and more of the city's food was imported, Africa becoming the major source of Rome's grain supply.

The Rise of Caesar

In 67 B.C. the statesman and general Pompey, who had fought the Marian party in Africa, Sicily, and Spain, cleared the Mediterranean of pirates and was then put in charge of the war against Mithridates. Meanwhile his rival Gaius Julius Caesar rose to prominence, and his political ability had full scope during the absence of Pompey. As leader of the popular party Caesar strengthened his hold on the people by avenging the injured names of Marius and Cinna, pleading for clemency to the children of the proscribed, and bringing to justice Sulla's corrupt followers.

In Marcus Licinius Crassus, a man of wealth, Caesar found a tractable auxiliary. Catiline's conspiracy in 63 B.C., exposed and defeated by the famous orator and statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero during his consulship, involved Caesar in the ill will in which the middle classes held popular adventurers. Pompey returned from the east and asked the Senate for the ratification of his measures in Asia and the bestowal of land on his legionaries. His demands met with determined opposition, until Caesar, posing as his friend, formed with him and Crassus the coalition known as the first triumvirate.

The triumvirate in 59 B.C. fulfilled its compact. Caesar obtained the consulship and the satisfaction of Pompey's demands, conciliated the equestrians, many of whom were wealthy members of the mercantile class, at the expense of the Senate, and had enacted an agrarian law enabling him to reward the troops. His crowning success, however, was his obtaining for five years the military command of Gaul, where he could gain glory by military conquests, and from which he could watch every political move in Italy.

The triumvirs renewed their alliance, and Caesar procured his command in Gaul for five years more. Pompey and Crassus were elected consuls for the year 55 B.C., and in the following year Pompey received as his province Spain, with Africa, while Crassus received Syria. The death of Crassus in 53 B.C. brought Pompey into direct conflict with Caesar. Rome, in the absence of efficient government, was in turmoil until the Senate induced Pompey to remain in Italy, entrusting his provinces to legates; it elected him sole consul for the year 52 B.C. and made him its champion against Caesar.

The Senate, wishing to terminate Caesar's military command and defeat his second stand for the

consulship in 49 B.C., demanded either Caesar's disbanding of his legions, and his presence in Rome at the time of the election, or his continued command and his renunciation of claims to the consulship. Negotiations failed to solve the deadlock, and in 49 B.C. Caesar with his legions boldly crossed the Rubicon River, the southern boundary of his province, and advanced on the city, thereby beginning the civil war that continued for five years. Pompey and the leading members of the aristocracy withdrew to Greece, allowing Caesar to enter Rome in triumph. Caesar's victory, unlike those of the other generals who had marched on Rome, was not followed by a reign of terror; neither proscriptions nor confiscations took place. A policy of economic and administrative reforms was put into effect, in an attempt to overcome corruption and restore prosperity to Rome. Continuing the war against Pompey, Caesar hurried to Spain, where he was victorious over the powerful armies of Pompey's legates. Returning to Rome, having meanwhile been appointed dictator in his absence, he almost immediately renounced that post and was elected consul. Early in 48 B.C. he crossed into Greece and dealt Pompey a crushing blow. Pompey was killed soon after, and Caesar was made dictator for life.

Caesar's assassination by Republican nobles on March 15, 44 B.C., was followed by Cicero's attempt to restore the old Republican constitution, but Mark Antony, who had been appointed consul with Caesar, now, at the head of 17 legions, combined forces with Lepidus and Caesar's grandnephew, the youthful Octavian, later Emperor Augustus, to form the second triumvirate. The triumvirs began operations by proscribing and assassinating their opponents, including Cicero. A stand made at Philippi by Brutus and Gaius Cassius, two of Caesar's assassins, was crushed by Octavian and Antony, and subsequently the triumvirs divided the control of the empire, Octavian taking Italy and the west, Antony the east, and Lepidus Africa. Antony, going to the east, was captivated by the charms of Cleopatra, queen of Egypt and formerly mistress of Caesar, and with her planned an eastern empire. Lepidus, summoned to Sicily by Octavian, attempted to seize Sicily for himself and was deprived of his province and his position in the triumvirate. This left Octavian, who had been sagaciously strengthening his position in the west, with only Antony as rival. After the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C. and the suicide of both Antony and Cleopatra, Octavian became, in 29 B.C., master of the east also and the undisputed ruler of the entire Roman Empire.

In spite of the series of disastrous civil wars, during the last years of the Republic a remarkable development of literary activity took place. This period, known as the Ciceronian period, extended from about 70 to 43 B.C. and forms the first part of the so-called Golden Age of Rome's literary development; the remainder of the Golden Age, extending from 43 B.C. to A.D. 14, is known as the Augustan period. Caesar and Cicero brought Latin prose to its peak of achievement. The poetry of the period is best represented by the work of Catullus and Lucretius.

THE EMPIRE

Octavian received the title of Augustus in 27 B.C. and began the new regime by an apparent restoration of the Republic, with himself as princeps, or chief citizen.

Augustus and the Julio-Claudian Emperors (27 B.C. - A.D. 68)

The Republican constitution was retained, although until 23 B.C. as princeps Augustus held the real authority, which thereafter was vested in the tribunician power and the military imperium, or final authority of command. The Senate retained control of Rome, Italy, and the older, more peaceful provinces; the frontier provinces, where legions were necessarily quartered, were governed by legates appointed and controlled by Augustus alone. The corruption and extortion that had existed in Roman provincial administration during the last century of the Republic was no longer tolerated, and the provinces benefitted.

The last years of the Republic were marked by three types of chaos: social, economic, and political. Octavian's policies were designed to restore stability in all three areas. Augustus introduced numerous social reforms, especially those calculated to restore the ancient morality of the Roman people and the integrity of marriage; he attempted to combat the licentiousness of the times and sought to restore the ancient religious festivals. Augustus regulated marriage: he outlawed polygamy and incest, set minimum ages, gave tax incentives encouraging people to have children, and discouraged abortion, homosexuality, and divorce. He adorned the city with temples, basilicas, and porticoes, transforming it from a city of brick to a city of marble; he ordered a comprehensive census of the empire. To the Romans an era of peace and prosperity seemed to have dawned, and the Augustan period represents the culmination of the Golden Age of literature, with the achievements of Virgil, Horace, Ovid, and Livy. During the reign of Augustus, in a remote corner of the empire, Jesus was born, largely unnoticed at the time. The organizing and calming influence of Augustus continued with his successor, Tiberius.

With the establishment of the imperial system the history of Rome became largely identified with the reigns of individual emperors. The emperor Tiberius, who succeeded his stepfather Augustus in A.D. 14 and ruled until the year 37, was a capable administrator but the object of general dislike and suspicion. Under his reign, and under his designated governor Pontius Pilate, Jesus was executed. He relied on military power and in Rome had his Praetorian Guard, the only organized troops allowed legally in Rome, within ready call. During the reign of Tiberius, the systematic persecution of Christians began; they were imprisoned, tortured, and killed by the thousands. Jews also were being persecuted. He was followed by the insane and tyrannical Caligula, who reigned from 37 to 41; Claudius, whose rule (41-54) was distinguished by the conquest of Britain, and who continued the public works and administrative reforms instituted under Caesar and Augustus; and Nero, whose rule was at first moderate, as a result of the wise guidance and counsel of the philosopher Seneca. Nero's overthrow, which was caused by his later excesses, and his subsequent suicide in 68 marked the end of the line of Julio-Claudian emperors.

The Flavians and the Antonines (69 A.D. - 192 A.D.)

The brief reigns of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius were followed by that of Vespasian, who ruled

from 69 to 79. He and his sons, the emperors Titus and Domitian, are known as the Flavians. They revived the simpler court of the early imperial days and tried to restore the authority of the Senate and promote the welfare of the people. During the reign of Titus (79-81) occurred the famous eruption of Vesuvius that devastated an area south of Naples, destroying the towns of Herculaneum and Pompeii. Domitian, in whose reign (81-96) lived the best writers of the Silver Age of Latin literature, became a cruel and suspicious tyrant in his later years, and the period of terror associated with him ended with his murder.

The brief reign of Marcus Cocceius Nerva initiated a new era, known as that of the five good emperors, the others being Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius. Each emperor was chosen and then legally Adopted by his predecessor, being selected for his ability and his integrity. Trajan, emperor from 98 to 117, expanded the borders of the empire by the campaigns against the Dacians and the Parthians, and was noted for his excellent Administration. Under him the empire reached its greatest extent. The satirist Juvenal, the orator and writer Pliny the Younger, and the historian Tacitus all flourished during Trajan's reign. The 21 years of Hadrian's rule (117-38) were a period of peace and prosperity; giving up some of the Roman territories in the east, Hadrian consolidated the empire and stabilized its boundaries. The reign of his successor, Antoninus Pius (reigned 138-61), was likewise orderly and peaceful. That of the next emperor, the Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius (reigned 161-80), who was coruler with Lucius Aurelius Verus until the latter's death, was troubled by incursions by various migrating tribes into different parts of the empire. Marcus Aurelius was succeeded by his profligate son Commodus, who was considered one of the most sanguinary and licentious tyrants of history and was murdered in 192.

Decline and Fall (193 A.D. - 476 A.D.)

The brief reigns of Publius Helvius Pertinax and Didus Severus Julianus were followed by that of Lucius Septimius Severus; his short-lived dynasty included the emperors Caracalla, Heliogabalus, and Alexander Severus. Septimius was an able ruler, but Caracalla was noted for his brutality and Heliogabalus for his debauchery. Caracalla, who granted Roman citizenship to all freemen living in the Roman Empire, is said to have so decreed in order to impose on them the taxes to which only citizens were liable. Alexander Severus was noted for his wisdom and justice.

After the death of Severus, a period ensued during which confusion prevailed in Rome and throughout Italy. Of his twelve successors who ruled in the next 33 years, nearly all came to a violent death, usually at the hands of the soldiers who had established them on the throne. A temporary revival of peace and prosperity was brought about by the Illyrian emperors, natives of Dalmatia, namely, Claudius II, surnamed Gothicus, who in a short reign drove back the Goths; and Aurelian, who, ruling from 270 to 275, was victorious over both the Goths and the Germans and defeated and captured the queen of Palmyra, who had occupied Egypt and Asia Minor. For a brief period the unity of the empire was restored. Aurelian was followed by a rapid succession of historically unimportant emperors, before the accession of Diocletian, also an Illyrian, who ruled

from 284 to 305.

An able administrator, Diocletian introduced many social, economic, and political reforms. He removed the political and economic privileges that Rome and Italy had enjoyed at the expense of the provinces. He sought to regulate rampant inflation by controlling the prices of provisions and many other necessities of life, and also the maximum wages for workers. To provide a more efficient administration, uniform throughout the empire, he initiated a new system of government by selecting a capable colleague, Maximian, who, like Diocletian, took the title of Augustus. He further reinforced this dual control by associating with him and Maximian two able generals, Galerius and Constantius, whom he proclaimed as Caesars, below the two Augusti in rank but with the right of succession to their posts. Diocletian himself had control of Thrace, Egypt, and Asia; to Maximian he gave Italy and Africa, to Constantius Gaul, Spain, and Britain, and to Galerius the Danubian provinces. This system created a stronger administrative machinery but increased the size of the already huge governmental bureaucracy, with the four imperial courts and their officials proving a financial burden on the resources of the empire.

Diocletian and Maximian abdicated in 305, leaving the new Augusti and Caesars involved in a conflict that resulted in civil wars, not ended until the accession of Constantine in 312. Constantine, who had previously become Caesar of the army in Britain, overcame all rivals and reunited the Western Empire under his rule. In 314 the defeat of Licinius, emperor in the East, made Constantine sole ruler of the Roman world. Christianity, which had risen during the reign of Augustus and spread during that of Tiberius and of later emperors, had triumphed over Diocletian's attempts to crush it by persecution, and the politic Constantine, adopting it as his own religion, made it also the official religion of the Roman Empire, an event of far-reaching significance. The persecution of Christians came to an end; historians estimate the total number of Christians killed in the hundreds of thousands, if not over a million; many more were imprisoned and tortured. The other important event of Constantine's reign was the establishment of a new seat of government at Byzantium, which was refounded as Nova Roma and subsequently called Constantinople. The death of Constantine in 337 was the signal for civil war among the rival Caesars, which continued until Constantine's only surviving son, Constantius II, succeeded in 353 in reuniting the empire under his rule. He was followed by Julian, known as the Apostate because of his renunciation of Christianity, who ruled from 361 to 363, and by Jovian, who ruled in 363-64. Thereafter the empire was again split in two. Theodosius I was Eastern emperor on the death of the Western emperor Valentinian II in 392. Three years later, when Theodosius died, the empire was divided between his two sons.

During the last 80 years of the Western Roman Empire the provinces, drained by taxes levied for the support of the army and the bureaucracy, were visited by internal war and by barbarian invasions. At first the policy of conciliating the invader with military commands and administrative offices succeeded. Gradually, however, the barbarians established in the east began to aim at conquest in the west, and Alaric I, king of the Visigoths, first occupied Illyricum, whence he ravaged Greece. In 410 he captured and sacked Rome, but died soon after. His

successor, Ataulf, drew off the Visigoths to Gaul, and in 419 a succeeding king received permission from Honorius to settle in Gaul, where he founded the Visigothic dynasty. Spain, already divided between the Vandals, the Suebi, and the Alans, was in like manner formally made over to those invaders by Honorius, whose authority at his death in 423 was nominal in the western part of the continent. His successor, Valentinian III, witnessed the conquest of Africa by the Vandals under their king Gaiseric and the seizure of Gaul and Italy by the Huns under their famous leader Attila. The Vandals, having taken Carthage, were recognized by Valentinian in their new African kingdom, and the Huns, the rulers of central and northern Europe, confronted the emperors of east and west alike as an independent power. Attila marched first on Gaul, but the Visigoths, being Christian and already half-Romanized, opposed him out of loyalty to the Romans; they signally defeated the Huns at Chalons in 451. The following year Attila invaded Lombardy but was unable to advance further. Two years later Valentinian, the last representative of the house of Theodosius in the west, was murdered. The 20 years after the death of Valentinian saw the accession and the overthrow of nine Roman emperors, but the real power was General Ricimer, the Suebe, called The Kingmaker. The last Western Roman emperor, Romulus Augustulus, was overthrown by the mercenary Herulian leader Odoacer, who was proclaimed king of Italy by his troops.