

of the Pacific occurred also. And the nomads, during this time, came into contact with settled groups. Thus the first exchanges, the first trade, occurred. These primitive exchanges were fostered by the invention of writing and coining. People realized that trading goods was not always easy, especially when the trade was very important.

An important invention, then, was writing. Unfortunately, the exchanges did not always happen peacefully. Many times groups were envious of other groups and tried to rob that group of goods by fighting. This is the sad part of history. However, in both ways, through peaceful exchanges and through the fighting, groups of people got together, mixed their products and their culture and formed new civilizations. Each group had different qualities. The agricultural groups had become more refined and intelligent while the nomadic groups were physically stronger, more disciplined. They could make great physical efforts more easily. Thus, often the nomads were the victors in battle. But the acquisitions of such nomadic victories unconsciously had a cumulative effect such that not even one cultural conquest was lost. If one group had developed certain forms of art, when the savages overcame this group, they adopted the cultural characteristics of those art forms. This mixture of several cultures happens continually, creating new cultures.

What is the result of all these transformations, these exchanges between peoples? They are a grand series of wars, creations, researches after new ways. They reflect the love of adventure. Think what man has faced to satisfy his "gourmet." To eat well. To have and satisfy his vanity. His thirst for power. To satisfy his desire to discover something new. Think of all that men have endured in order to find gold. All that the Europeans did to procure spices: cinammon, pepper, tea from India; and silk from China. Men continue the search: for new oil resources, for uranium mines. We are threatened by great wars that threaten mankind. But fortunately, progress has many good results as well as those bad ones.

Everything that is made unites in a long chain, each link of which is like a stair-step that rises towards something more perfect, even though sometimes it seems that we have begun to regress or that we have stopped.

#### **GREAT CIVILIZATIONS: Second Presentation**

We have seen the man of the old Stone Age and the new. Now we go together with man towards the age of the great civilizations. To the Age of Metals: bronze, copper, and iron. We can immediately notice that, starting from the Neolithic age, the influence of psychic factors is more important than the physical factors. The physical type from Homo sapiens stays basically the same, but what changes is the mode of human thought. Institutions, countries, states, cities evolve.

We go into human history. Evolution goes on in the psychosphere. There are also changes in the biosphere, but these changes are due to man's interventions, his interventions of the world of thought. It can be said that the Tree of Life, formed by an infinite number of branches, closes at the top with the synthesis of Homo sapiens. We have begun at one cell: we arrive at man. But this synthesis did not happen at the same time everywhere. Where there are regions with better conditions, it is more readily possible for men to form groups: great unions. Therefore, it is not possible to establish with accuracy the beginnings of civilization, of human history. We are sure that it was the agricultural revolution that started this process. Important remains have been found in the area of Jericho. . .signs of the agricultural revolution which must have been established about 7000- 8000 B.C. Those people knew irrigation, trade. They cultivated and harvested grains.

There are regions with better conditions for human groups to form; regions such as archipelagos, vast plains where rivers flow, land close to the sea, and mild climatic areas. In these privileged areas one can distinguish the beginning of



## Great Civilizations. . .Second Presentation. . .

We know nothing for sure: it is all legend. But sometimes scholars look for truth in myths and legends. We have the story of the continent that sunk: Atlantis. The last discoveries made in Greece lead to other conclusions. It seems that there was a terrible explosion, one that made an island sink into the Aegean Sea, the island of San Torino, an island which completely disappeared. The remains of the island show a very advanced civilization previous to that of Crete. The explosion was a result of an earthquake together with the birth of an exploding volcano; and a whole civilization was buried. Such an explosion sends tidal waves for long distances as a result of the trembling of the earth, and scientists have learned much from such phenomena. It is believed that volcanic ash may have covered part of Crete because suddenly that civilization declines. And there is no evidence of invasion. This was an extraordinary civilization with air-conditioned homes. Remains are found very much like those of Pompeii. Some of the survivors may have escaped to Greece, where they brought their culture to an agrarian people.

The civilizations we know have their origin in the remote past. We abandon now the legends and go to the consideration of the five areas of the great civilizations. (We should list them in order of importance to our own civilization.)

- 1) Civilizations of the New World (Americas).
- 2) Civilizations of Australia and the South Pacific.
- 3) Civilizations of Asia. (Southern Asia and nearby islands)
- 4) Civilizations of India and the Far East.
- 5) Mediterranean civilizations.
- 6) Nomadic civilizations of the Eurasian Steppes. (called barbaric civilizations by the Greek and Romans.

NOTE: 2) and 3) are considered together as a geographical group.

### Civilizations of the New World

These civilizations are more recent than the others. But this does not mean those lands were not inhabited before or don't have a long history. Recently in Nevada stones (tools) were found maybe 20,000 years old. It is known that the civilizations of Central America had great progress from 3,000 B.C. Several major civilizations formed: the **Aztecs and the Mayans.** Then the civilization of the **Incas** of South America.

The first civilization was that of the Mayas. They had a famous priest class. They were great astronomers and mathematicians. There were a peaceful people; they wrote in hieroglyphics; they had an advanced calendar. Unfortunately, these people were in part conquered by the Aztecs, a crude and ferocious people, worshippers of a terrible god who asked for human sacrifices (in mass). They were hated by the Mayas. In such a way that when the Spaniards arrived, the Mayan people did not get together with the Aztecs to protect themselves. The Mayas believed that the Spaniards were people sent by the gods to save them. But the Spaniards were as cruel, if not worse, than the Aztecs. The Spanish destroyed great numbers of the masterpieces of gold made by the Mayas. They took the gold, melted it into bars (ingots), and took them by ship to Spain. But the ship sank. The people in America cultivated potatoes and yams and pineapple. They knew how to sculpt in metals and were excellent clockmakers. They built streets and canals (aqueducts) for water. The conquest of Spain was made in 1519 with Cortez, and finished in 1532 with another terrible general: Pizarro.

### Pacific and Australian Civilizations

The study of these civilizations is scarce. We don't know many of the important things that happened here. The most developed civilizations were on the Polynesian Islands. The Polynesians reached this area at the beginning of the Aneolithic Age. On these islands have been found huge stone blocks called Megalithic monuments, but it has not been discovered how they were transported there. Easter Island in the South Pacific, is the site of a number of ancient massive sculptured heads. One group had the name of the Aku-Aku.

### India and the Orient



## Great Civilizations. . .Second Presentation. . .

We have the Chinese civilization, the Han dynasty, which flourished before 1700 B.C. along the Huang Ho River. Along this river several important civilizations existed in sequence, but all traces of them have disappeared. The Shang dynasty from 1700 - 1000 B.C. which lasted 600 years. These were a strong people who loved to hunt, had great banquets, cultivated silk, and furs. Their skill with bronze has never been surpassed. They influenced the next civilization: Chou, which in turn influenced the next, Ch'in. It was during the dynasty of Ch'in that the great Chinese philosophies were developed: Confucius and Mencio. And from this dynasty China takes its name.

China was united as an empire and the great wall was built. The Chinese civilization spread to Japna, Mongolia, Korea, Vietnam. Today the Japanese sit on the floor as the ancient Japanese custom; and the Chinese sit on chairs. We do not know when the printing press was discovered by the Chinese nor the date of the compass. We do know that the Europeans imported the compass from China. The great mistake of China was isolating itself from contact with others. (by means of their wall) Thus its influence was not felt in Western Civilization for a long time. A Venetian traveler, Marco Polo, in the 13th Century (very late), discovered the richness and power of the old empire. Before him, nothing of China was known in Europe. From that time on, inventions of China were imported: printing, the raising of silk worms, tea, gun powder. China was forced to open its doors to commerce. But its spiritual integrity was preserved.

In India civilizations developed along the Hindus River. Each had a great influence on the next. It is believed that the beginnings of these civilizations are about 5,000 - 4000 B.C. It is thought that perhaps these people came from the ancient group of Sumerians. By 2500 B.C. two important cities already existed: Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa. The first was built along the Hindus; the second along a tributary of that river called Rabi. Harappa was a city with wide streets, with sewers, drainage, and many other advancements. At about 1500 B.C. these great centers of civilization began to decline. This decline was due to the invasion of an Asiatic people: This new group flourishes in the general area of the previously great cities; but the greatness of the Hindus civilizations declines significantly. These civilizations give us important philosophies. They introduced great religious and philosophical forms, diverse and often contrary. But this great people of thinkers were lost in the metaphysics: they lacked practical applications of their thought. Indian thinking gives light to religious forms of other civilizations, but it becomes detached from real life and thus those ideas contributed do not participate actively in the history of the construction of the earth. (???) The history of India is a mystery still because its language has not yet been deciphered.

The great civilizations of India, China, America and that of the Polynesian islands developed greatly, but they were isolated from the rest of the world.

### Civilizations of the Middle East

The civilizations of the Middle East were in direct contact with European civilizations. About 5,000 years ago, in a big rich sunny plain crossed by the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, a new style of life started. From the small villages they passed to great cities. We do not know for sure WHO inhabited those villages at the dawn of civilization; but we do know that at about 4,000 B.C., to the southern part of the Gulf of Persia, a population formed of small men settled, their origin unknown. They were called the Sumerians. They dressed in short goatskin skirts, and their hair was completely shaved. They lived in a simple way. They lived in huts of straw and mud. They knew how to work in clay and metals and ebony, a precious deep black wood. Their deities were the forces of nature. They wrote in cuneiform, which has been deciphered. They knew how to work with and smelt metals, they knew the wheel, the plow, they knew how to calculate in arithmetic and geometry, they were architects and painters. They had a concept of money. Their state was governed by a large number of laws; and their government was a complicated bureaucracy. Their religion was rich in literary devices: parts of the Old Testament are very similar to Sumerian myths. One myth is



The Sumerians were weakened by wars and were finally conquered in 1500 B.C. by the Babylonians. This, then, was a civilization of long duration. We know that their beginnings can be dated at 4000 B.C.; but there is a possibility that the civilization had begun as early as 5000 B.C.

Another people developed at about 3100 B.C.---these were the Egyptians. And they, too, may have begun developing long before this date. They had a long period of splendor, and they produced a civilization which lasted the longest period of time. To a degree it greatly influenced the European civilizations. Egypt was located in an excellent position, with the benefit of the great river Nile. The Egyptians knew how to accumulate the knowledge of peoples preceding them. They were great colonizers, with very creative minds. One important discovery of the Egyptians was a great system of irrigation constituted of long channels bringing the Nile overflow to far distant lands. They began the irrigation of fields; and the system was later adopted by both the Assyrians and the Babylonians. The Egyptians paid men to fight their wars. They also had slaves for the heavy work. It is estimated that to construct the pyramid tomb for the pharaoh Cheops and his wife, 2,300,000 blocks of stone were used, each one weighing more than two tons. It was a work of 20 years during which 100,000 men worked. But the work was so hard that they could only work for a period of three months at a time. So 4,000 men worked at once; and this long work continued in order to build the tomb. There is a long and detailed account of Egyptian history. Now we can only give a brief account, as we have done for the other civilizations.

NOTE: In this study of history we emphasize the meeting and mixing of peoples. These meetings form always vaster groups, the beginnings of the human community. The mixing itself is a slow process. But civilization is a product of the union of peoples. So, with the children, we study the origin, the geographical position, the movements of the various peoples and their relationship with other groups. Thus we are trying to make history not just the story of an isolated group, but the history of the union of diverse groups. Materials needed: A Map of the world, adequately large to locate clearly in red the geographical positions of the various civilizations discussed. (land in white and water blue, thus showing a simply picture of the civilizations). AND A Time Line showing the origins of the Great Civilizations feeding into the next civilizations and progressing into the development of the geographical development of the countries of Recent History.

Now we move to a consideration of the Babylonians who also lived in Mesopotamia which means "the land between rivers." The Babylonians conquered the Sumerians. The Assyrians are present in this area, too; and for a long period of time, the Babylonians and the Assyrians juggle the power back and forth. Babylon is established as the capital of Babylonia; Nineveh of Assyria. The splendor of the city of Babylon is reknowned, surpassing all others of its time. Of particular fame are the "Hanging Gardens of Babylon." A great part of the Babylonian's history is told in the Old Testament. People from many parts of the world lived here, ruled by the Semitic people who were distinguished by long beards. Of all these peoples, the Sumerians were easily distinguished by their lack of hair or beards. The center of the Babylonian life was the temple. The richest and most powerful members of the society were the priests. The greatest king was Hammurabi. He left a code of laws written in clay tablets called "Hammurabi's Code." Complete libraries have been discovered formed of these tablets. At this time Babylon has 7,000,000 people. The city is surrounded by a wall so thick that a chariot pulled by four horses can be driven around on top of it. This wall is 50 miles long and has more than 100 doors. The most beautiful entrance has a door with six bronze towers and opens onto a wide street which goes to the royal palace and the temple. Along the street are statues of bears and lions. (Lion of Nineveh--- such statues can be seen in the museum of London.)

We have passed 2000 B.C. These peoples have lived a long time. During the years 2000 B.C. - 1900 B.C., we can say that our period of great civilizations takes on an international character. During this period there are numerous meetings between different peoples. We have the decline of the Indian civilizations. The meetings



Civilization moves towards Crete, then Greece, then Italy, that part inhabited by the Etruscans. The people that left the area of the East Mediterranean were adventurers, and great navigators. Among them were the Canaanites, a people of Semitic origin who were later called, by the Greeks, the Phoenicians. This name came from the color of robes which they wore: "phoenix" meaning in Greek "red-purple." This people founded cities along the Mediterranean, reaching the African coast where they founded the city of Carthage. In their ships they reached the islands of England. They invented and diffused an alphabet of 22 characters (all consonants.) They were great merchants and/or pirates. The splendor of their city Carthage is told by the prophet Ezekiel. The origin of this people is Afro-Asiatic. The Hittites were Indo-Europeans. The majority of peoples in this whole area of the Mediterranean were of Semitic origin which means "descendants of Sem, son of Noah."

The Hebrews are a simple people with a great religious faith that occupy for a time an area of land on the Mediterranean. They are a monotheistic people, and their only cultural book is the Bible. But this book provides a historical narration of this "Chosen People" of God; and it also tells the history of all those peoples with whom the Hebrews were in touch. In the Bible we have historical accounts, and also the psalms of David and the proverbs, attributed to Solomon. In this book, the Hebrew people left a heritage of literary value and one full of wisdom.

While the monumental civilizations of Afro-Asiatic and Semitic origins developed, peoples of other origin started to develop. This is the group of Aryans: Europeans.

"The peoples who came to occupy the marshy lands of Europe as soon as they were sufficiently dry for habitation came in successive waves from Central Asia, some by way of the Caucasus and the Mediterranean coasts, and others by a more northern route, having left their Aryan cradle-land probably because it was drying up to an uncomfortable extent about 20,000 B.C., for the Gobi Desert is thought now to occupy that part of the earth's surface. . ."

To Educate the Human Potential, p. 85

Some of these peoples, whose migration was probably from Central Asia and Southern Russia, moved towards the south, giving origin to the first great European kingdoms in Asia Minor. Who are these people of Indo-European origin? The Hittites, the Persians, the Lydians, the Phrygians. Groups of Aryans moved towards India and destroyed part of that civilization. Again this is approximately the year 2000 B.C., a time when meetings among many different groups is occurring.

In 1400 B.C. the Hittites become powerful, conquering Syria and part of Egypt. They are the first people to fight with horses. We have the legendary kings: Midas of Phrygia and Creesus of Lydia.

The Persians, in 550 B.C. under Cyrus the Great took over the Median Kingdom and then continued westward to conquer Lydia and Chaldea. Cyrus's son, Cambyses (530 - 521 B.C. added the Egyptian Empire to the Persian. At this point, the empire of the Persians was the largest of all those of the ancient world. The Persians developed a religion of one God; the great prophet of the Persian religion was Zoroaster or Zarathustra. This God gave people a choice between good and bad, truth and falsity. Their kings dedicated themselves to truth; and were kings of a great generosity. "Darius had much generosity, and he set the captive Jews whom he found in Babylon free to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple which Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed." (To Educate the Human Potential, see Darius, pp. 100 - 102)

At a certain point these great empires started to decline. People in a small village began to revolt against the Persian control. This small village was inhabited by a poor people called the Athenians who lived on the other side of the Aegean Sea. Darius laughed at such a rebellion, but he asked to be reminded frequently of the name Athenian. (see pp. 101)



## Great Civilizations. . .Second Presentation. . .

way of the Balkans. Many important cities such as Mycenae were established on the mainland. But while the people from Crete were peaceful, loved art, wealth and luxury; those from Mycenae loved war and their cities looked like fortresses. But Crete, through cooperative relationships with the mainland, set up the basis of Greek civilization. Their history is told in Homer's The Illiad and The Odyssey. Homer called the first Greeks "Acheans." For a time it was believed that these books told only legends. After World War I, it was proved that all that was told in the books corresponds to reality: the ruins of Troy were discovered and the treasures of Agamemnon were found.

All this happened 1,000 years before Greece's Golden Age that saw the greatest men that history can remember: in art, sculpture, theatre, mathematics, sport and philosophy. A wise man called Socrates walked along the streets of Athens asked the citizens questions, obliging them to think: "Can a gold statue save you from dangers? Why don't you think with your own heads?" Of course this kind of thinking was not acceptable to the rulers (the priests.) Socrates was accused of corrupting the youth and was condemned to die by drinking poison. His friends prepared for his escape, but he refused to run away. He spent his last days discussing philosophy with his friends and calmly drank the poison brought by a guard. When asked where he wished to be buried, he said that they would have to catch him before they could bury him, but they could do what they liked with his body. (Human Potential, p. 106)

Another important Greek was Plato, one of the greatest philosophers in history. Erathosthenes disclosed that the world was a sphere and calculated earth measurements. Aristotle speculated and experimented in natural science. Aeschylus and Euripides were models of the Shakespearean drama. And Archimedes discovered, among other things, the principles of weight in water.

Herodotus, called the "Father of History," was a Greek who had heard many fantastic tales about the unknown world, but refused to believe them. He set out in a boat alone, against all warnings; and returned seventeen years later to report the wonders of Babylon and the Persian empire. He wrote the first history book about his travels. (Human Potential, pp. 77-79)

The Greek's power was enclosed in their cities. Their only ideal was freedom. With this ideal they defeated the great Persian armies. At a certain point, the Greeks had to bow to a Macedonian king who claimed, however, pure Greek descent. This was Phillip of Macedon, Alexander the Great's father. Phillip had the wisdom to give his son over to the tutelage of Aristotle. Phillip prepared a great Greek army to conquer Persia. But he was killed at 40, and his son Alexander took the throne. He immediately guided his army against Persia. He was more interested in knowing the world than conquering it. He took with him specialists in all fields, engineers for drawing maps, and men who studied the fauna and flora. He wrote constantly to Aristotle, describing all that he saw and sending flora and fauna back from the different areas where his armies traveled. He was considered a god by his soldiers and he had success wherever he went. In Egypt he was welcomed as the son of a god. In this triumphant march he reached India. But his soldiers were tired and asked him to turn back. He reluctantly agreed, but chose to take an inland route home in order to further explore. And on that trip, he took a tropical fever and died. . .very young. Among other cities, he founded Alexandria in Egypt where Erathosthenes founded the great university. After his death, the empire broke up. But his expedition was the first of its kind, equalled only by that of Julius Caesar 250 years later. At the end of this expedition and expansion of Greek civilization, we can say that the Aneolithic (metals) period saw, with the advent of progress in agriculture, an explosion of human technique and technology. The Greek civilization marks the explosion of the power of the human spirit.

The splendor of the Greek civilization reached 1,000 B.C. During this period, there were many migrations. The Greeks came to the Italian peninsula where they



## Great Civilizations. . . Second Presentation. . .

It can be said that Rome owes its origin to the Etruscan civilization. The Romans take their civilization to all parts of the world. Thus all the Western world owes something to the Etruscans, a vivacious, happy and intelligent people. They loved art, luxury. But they were an anarchistic people with no concept of a state. They were highly individualistic and ready to sacrifice their lives for their own people. Along with the Etruscans, other peoples reach Italy. There are many waves of migrations. The Lydians come from Yugoslavia and settle on the northeast coast of Italy. Another group, the Latins reached Italy on the western coast by ship. In 750 B.C. they founded the basis of what would later be Rome. The Romans didn't contribute to the human spirit as the Greeks did. Their civilization was based on two characteristics: 1) to safeguard the human right and 2) to maintain the individual independent from the governmental power. This presented a big responsibility to the people, one of order, of duty and discipline. All this is transmitted through their code of laws that guided not only Western, but Eastern countries long after the empire was gone. The Romans were also great technicians: they built aqueducts, theatres, ports and cities. They were intelligent, but they did not possess the genius of the Greeks. But their contributions were important: they spread all over the world what the Greeks had learned. Roman expansion was enormous and it lasts five centuries.

While the civilizations around the Middle East rose and declined, nomad groups of people were spreading in the Northern forests. There were forests spreading all over Europe to China. The Greeks and the Romans called these people barbarians. According to them, these people were living outside of civilization. For many centuries, these groups came in contact with more civilized groups of the south through trade and battle. In this way, they absorbed the culture of the civilizations. Barbarian groups were many in number. The Aryans, ancestors of the Indo-Europeans, first came down into Iran and India. German tribes spread all over northern Europe, originating groups of Scandinavians: Vandals, Goths, Visigoths. Towards the west, there originated the Franks, the Saxons, and the Lombards. These tribes moved out in all directions, originating many different groups of different names. In 200 B.C. China overcame the Huns, thus pushing them westward. This tribe sent away by the Chinese spread all over Europe, invading Europe in terrible ways. They were ferocious warriors. And as they drew closer to Europe, they brought along all the other tribes they found along the way: peoples such as the Slavs. These tribes were typical inhabitants of plains and forests. Among these tribes, the two greatest groups were the Celts and the Hittites. All of these tribes wandered in the forests of Europe. We know of these groups through the works of Herodotus.

Between 600 and 100 B.C. the Hittites reached their peak of wealth through trade with the East and the Greeks. For a short time they occupied Mesopotamia, and then were absorbed by other groups around 0 (B.C.-A.D.) The Celts moved towards Wales, Scotland and Ireland. They were able to keep the traditions of these peoples intact. They pushed onward towards the Iberian peninsula. Paris takes its name from one of these tribes, the Parigi. The Celts were called the "Pitti" by the Romans because they painted their faces. The Celts enthusiastically accepted the Romans when they arrived in their area which is now Britain. And they went on keeping the Roman culture alive for centuries, after the invasions of the Vandals and the Goths. These Celts had a keen sense of independence and a fine sense of humor.

The origins of a civilization are always a mystery, deep in legend. Just as we cannot discover the links in animals life or between groups of men who lived at different times. First there is a small group that gradually expands, becomes richer and; when it reaches its highest point, it begins relaxing and enjoying its gains so that a new group comes along and, as it begins to expand and become powerful, conquers and absorbs the first. At every step there is something new, something better. Life always looks for something more perfect. In the material development through work; and in the spiritual, through a higher consciousness (art, culture and religion.) All peoples have contributed to this development. When the Egyptians conquer it seems that food has been discovered to all, but the process of how it



Great Civilizations. . .Second Presentation. . .

thought to the level of its recent development, giving the world their philosophy and science. All these peoples together were able to create from the raw material masterpieces of art that continue to inspire men. And so today many persons sacrifice their own lives for the welfare of mankind. It is enough to think of scientists, researchers, missionaries. Many have contributed to the progress of civilization.

(The children must understand that human evolution is not finished; the task of man now is great.) Everything we can see in our exploration of history indicates that the level which ancient civilizations reached was very high. The cultures blended. Mankind is materially united, for it has received the benefit of many civilizations commonly shared. The patterns of behavior that have been created during the unfolding of civilizations are those which each group has transmitted from generation to generation. And these patterns are too deeply rooted in the individual and thus prevent psychic unity. The help we give as adults is an **understanding of evolution in its entirety.**

Art developed because man loves beauty; science because man looks for truth. Religion because man tries to know what he cannot understand. Thus he substitutes faith, he helps himself with faith. Man passes from magic to the first religious forms. Each religion brings something new, each one has an origin in something that came before. Some have disappeared; some are still alive. But all religions have the same subject: when man cannot understand, he believes.

We must try to understand each religion, to see the harmony in each. Each religion tries to raise man's spirit, each believes in the conquest of good over evil. Each one brings something new and better. All have left a deep trace in civilization. Nothing can be erased from history. . .no religion. If each one brings something new, let us think of the new things which each one has contributed.

Christianity: brings something new that the ancients did not have, that they could not yet possess. Christ opened our eyes to a new world whether man wants to see it or not. He made a new light shine in the darkness. Men are called to live in this world, to become an integral part of the world. To understand it, we must pass the individual point of view and go into the spirit of a collective mankind in which each individual conscience feels united to the persons who have lived, who live and who will live. Man who consciously works today knows that he will have an influence on beings of the present and the future. The novelty of Christianity lies here: in the global vision of mankind. Christian charity is the completion of all human beings in love. It is impossible to understand it without feelings for all of mankind. It is alive only when it is felt as a moral force that penetrates each of us and establishes behavior in a precise way. The novelty is: "To LOVE thy neighbor as thyself."



GREAT CIVILIZATIONS OF MESOAMERICA: Mayan and Aztec,.....Olmec and Toltec

We cannot consider any Mesoamerican group in isolation. As we have discovered in other centers where civilizations developed, each group influences and is influenced by the others. It is evident that Mexican influences guided the course of the Mayas history and that the Mayas influenced many other groups with whom they came in contact. The Aztecs, the Mayas, and the Toltecs all built pyramids to the gods of the sun and the moon; and those pyramids were all located according to astronomical lines of sight and erected under calendrical dictates. In each group the priests had great power, hieroglyphic writing was used, chocolate beans were used as money. The groups similarly ate maize, beans and squash as the primary diet. Of particular interest is the great similarity in the principal gods of the three groups. For all this god took the form of the plumed serpent: for the Aztecs and the Toltecs this god was called Quetzacoatl and for the Mayas the name was Kukulcan. Their pantheons included a rain god, and gods assigned to the four directions of the universe (cardinal points) and the center. They believed in a multitiered heaven and an underworld. And there are many other indications which show the close relationships of these groups.

We know that there were wavelike contacts among these peoples as they flowed against and over one another. But, in spite of the outstanding archeological research that has brought these civilizations to light in the last fifty years, there is still a lack of fixed points of reference. And so the question of the specific history of these peoples is still tentative and without clear sequence. There are many dates, but as yet no real history.

There are several interesting factors which have contributed to this clouded vision of the past that make the Mesoamerican civilizations unique. The American cultures were not river-based. This is also true of the Incas on the high plateau of Peru. Their unusual locations in dense jungle and torrid climatic conditions has made the work of archeologists particularly difficult; and it provokes questions, too, about the factors which gave rise to such high civilizations. We know that these groups did practice agriculture. But the Mayas, in particular, did this



of Archaeology remarks: "Though it is possible to have culture without techniques, there are no viable cultures without the plow." This factor makes an interesting page in the history of the Mayas.

Another factor which contributes to the difficulty of constructing a history of these peoples is that although their calendar was highly developed (it has, in fact, been called "The most accurate calendar in the world," that of the Mayas); there is a difficult step from the calendar that this people used to the actual chronology of events. The calendar of the Mayas starts at an arbitrary point which they called "4 Ahau, 8 Cumhu" but the community of archeologists and cryptologists have not yet agreed on just exactly when that point comes in terms of our own system of dating. Finally, we acknowledge the disaster of the Spanish conquest when the Central American cultures were virtually beheaded. Priests and soldiers alike took their turn in demolishing everything and erasing the important traces of the civilizations.

To cite a cultural historian, Oswald Spengler: "This is the only example of the violent sudden death of a culture. This culture did not wither away; it was not suppressed or inhibited. It was murdered in the full glory of its flowering, demolished like a sunflower wantonly beheaded by a passerby."

It is significant that the Mayas are still living. They number more than two million and have not changed a great deal physically, only slightly in their way of life and their clothing. Their culture, in fact, persisted as a unity until only four hundred years ago.

#### THE OLMECS

No primitive kinds of man, such as the Java man or Peking man, have ever been found, and none of the apelike primates from which man evolved in the Mesoamerican area. There are, in fact, no apes at all, living or fossil, in the Americas. Man is not native to the New World. Remote ancestors of the American Indians were varieties of the species of Homo sapiens. They settled in the New World as early as the last stage of the Pleistocene Era. approximately 9000 B.C. Driven by



the Bering Straits, and Alaska. Early emigrants may have left Siberia as much as 20,000 or even 40,000 years ago, before point-making had become established. But about 12,000 years ago came a dramatic change. Chief proofs of this are the beautifully made spearheads found sparingly in many parts of the United States and Mexico.

About 7000 B.C. when the glacier had retreated, the climate began to grow hot and arid. By 5000 B.C. the face of the land had changed dramatically. These changes were not felt strongly in the eastern parts of North America and on the Great Plains, where the Indian continued to live chiefly by big game hunting. But Indians in the west and in Mexico were forced to develop different ways of making a living. They hunted and trapped small desert animals and learned to make greater use of seeds and other vegetable foods that could be stored for consumption during the hungry months. Their desert-living technique, heavily dependent on seed gathering, was the base from which true agriculture gradually developed. And without established agriculture, there could have been no flowering of civilization in the New World.

By the year 3400 B.C. man has learned to cultivate corn or maize. It is during this time, about 2500 B.C., that the Maya ancestors arrived in the highlands. Implements such as choppers and scrapers and nut-crackers indicate their use of a variety of seeds and plants. By 2000 B.C. the magical crop, maize, was well established in most parts of Middle America and was moving across the Isthmus of Panama and on to South America.

The first major civilization of the New World was that of the Olmecs, an enigmatic people who inhabited the jungles along Mexico's Gulf Coast as far back as 1200 B.C. They developed a system of writing and exhibited a unity of art style revealed in massive scale public architecture and elaborate tombs and gigantic basalt sculptures. Some scholars speculate that they may have devised the Long Count calendar of the Mayas. This people was pervaded by a powerful religion which centered upon a rain god that was a creature combining the features of a jaguar with a weeping human infant. At about 1000 B.C. they established a ceremonial center called La Venta on an island. It was dominated by a 100-foot pyramid and lasted for at least 400



Much of the Olmec history is lost in the mists of fable, but vestiges of this group are found all over Mexico. The crude system of glyphs which they invented influenced all forms of writing used in Middle America, most being deduced directly from them. And in many ways, later civilizations were dependent on the Olmec achievement.

#### TEOTIHUACÁN (Ostoyahualco)

From developments begun at Ostoyahualco around the beginning of the Christian era (.0.), the great Teotihuacán civilization grew, one of the most splendid of ancient America. The first center had raised platforms for ritual use. Around them was a zone of residences where the priests lived as well as artisans and merchants. They huddled close to the sacred structures and their presence made Teotihuacán the first true city in Middle America. Its people must have been vigorous and their social-religious organization exceptionally powerful. At about 300 A.D. a second city of Teotihuacan was begun about thirty miles northeast of Mexico City. Through this city runs a broad avenue called the Avenue of the Dead, nearly two miles long and lined with low stone-faced structures. The center of this Teotihuacán is a pyramid complex consisting of the Pyramid of the Sun 700-feet square at the base and as high as a modern twenty-story building. It is built of earth and sun-dried bricks and sheathed with stone. The smaller Pyramid of the Moon is also within this pyramid field, all of which are stepped with the characteristic stairways we find in later Maya and Aztec building.

At some point during the power of the Teotihuacán civilization, this people dominated both the Mayas in the lowlands and the highlands, carrying off their riches for the Teotihuacán throne. They influenced both these groups and their traces also indicate that they are precursors of the later Toltec culture. We begin our look at the Toltecs, in fact, with the group who flees southward from this city of Teotihuacán when it succumbs to an invasion of fierce barbarians, the Chichimecs. This event occurs at about 600 A.D. And the Chichimecs, while they caused the total collapse of some high cultures and drastically altered the structure of others.



was it every complete. Some cities in the Valley of Mexico accepted the Chichimec rulers and were protected by them. Some resisted for considerable lengths of time. Some of the Chichimecs were assimilated by the valley's ancient civilizations and helped the survivors repel fresh invaders. Others built cities of their own and gradually improved them as their cultural level rose.

#### THE TOLTECS

At about 950 A.D. a group of people fleeing the disaster of Teotihuacán and claiming kinship with the Chichimecs found the city of Tula under the leadership of Tapiltzin. This is the beginning of the Toltec people, and their capital of Tula becomes the center of an empire that dominates not only the Valley of Mexico for 500 years, but many distant parts of Middle America. Ancient Tula is characterized by a fierceness and strength reflecting the Toltec warrior spirit. The Toltec art and architecture is, in fact, centered around the image of the Toltec warrior. The principal feature of the city is a low five-stepped pyramid topped by a wide platform once occupied by a large temple. Standing in a row on the platform are four stone columns in the shape of armed warriors 15 feet tall. These columns supported the temple's timber roof. In some ways Tula was a new kind of city. Its temples and large residential sections crowned an easily defensible hilltop. The Toltec capital was a city of soldiers, obeying military leaders and supported by wealth extracted from conquered populations.

By 1000 A.D. the Toltec armies, made up of every different race and tribe in the valley, had spread over most of Mexico. They dominated both coasts and reached northern Yucatán overwhelming centers where the late Maya civilization was flourishing. When the Toltecs invaded Yucatán, they established their regional capital in the conquered Mayan city of Chichén-Itzá.

1168 A.D. brought the destruction of Tula, probably at the hand of another wave of Chichimecs who, throughout Toltec times, never ceased to be a menace from the north. Its site was deserted, but the glory of Tula lived on in the hearts of the Mexican peoples who all claimed descent from this empire.



had developed a calendar. The rulers of Tula had a reputation for wisdom; their laws were just and their religion mild, free from cruelties. Definite influences are noticeable from the Teotihuacán religion. Here again we find pyramids of the sun and moon. In many ways, we can cite the Toltecs of precursors of both the Aztec and the Mayan developments.

#### THE AZTECS

1200 A.D. -----The Aztecs made their first appearance still as a wandering Chichimec tribe. Their principal god Huitzilopochtli was the fearsome god of war. When <sup>(Quetzacoatl)</sup> the Aztecs first entered the Valley of Mexico, they were shunted from place to place. All the good land in the valley was occupied, and none of its cities wanted these dangerous and hungry barbarians to settle near them. According to their legend, Huitzilopochtli, as the divine advisor, told the people to search for an eagle perched on a cactus and holding a snake in its beak. There they should find their city. On a deserted jungle island in Lake Texcoco, their search ended when the divine signal was found and there they began. In a remarkably short period of time, this small tribe accumulated an empire that dominated a large part of the Valley of Mexico.

In 1519, when Hernando Cortes and his small band of Spaniards set out to conquer Mexico, they expected to fight scattered tribes. And instead they found themselves at war with a highly civilized nation that could well be called an empire. Vast cities with temples and palaces greeted them, the greatest of which was Mexico, the Aztec capital. There they encountered the great Moctezuma and the treasure of the Aztecs, great quantities of gold and silver and precious stones. The accounts of the conquest of this empire by Cortes are complete and amazing. The result was a total destruction of the capital city and the civilization. In 1520, at the Battle of Otumba, the kingdom of the last Moctezuma died.

The Aztec civilization was characterized by a highly developed social life, by innovative educational methods, and by real civilizational progress: regulation of traffic, census-registration in cities, building construction, dikes, floating islands



This was the god who demanded human sacrifices, a cruel ritual which dominates the historical impression of this people. At the same time, it can be said that the people had a highly developed morality. And they called themselves "Teocaltitlan" which means temple people from "teo-cal-li" meaning "House of God."

#### THE MAYA

We divide the study of the Mayas into two empires: Old Empire and New Empire. This division is linked to the sudden and hitherto unexplained migration of an entire population of people from one geographical location to a totally new one. The Old Empire takes place in the middle Mexican lowlands. Then that empire of highly developed cities is abandoned for a new location far north in the Yucatán peninsula.

We consider first the development of the Old Empire. As we have noted, the ancestors of the Mayas arrive in the highlands by 2500 B.C. During a formative period which lasts until about 150 A.D. farming is firmly established and we mark the first intensive settlements of Maya land, primarily in the central valley of Mexico. It is a time during which there is an establishment of Maya-speaking peasants everywhere. Many cultures are beginning, all with some forms of pottery. Fishing and farming form the basis of the life. From 150 A.D. until 370 A.D. the developments of these various cultures bring us to the threshold of the classic Mayan civilization. The date of the oldest city, Uaxactún is 374 A.D.

From this date until 610 A.D. is the period when the Old Empire reaches its peak of development. Many cities are founded. In particular, three cities (Uaxactún, Palenque, and Copán) are built, each at the vertex of a triangle within the area of which the entire civilization develops. Other cities are built on the sides or within this triangle. The Mayas are the only people in the world whose living space developed centripetally rather than centrifugally. There is real growth and expansion involved, for there is no political power superior to the Mayas. Nevertheless, the Old Empire develops in this unexplained and unusual way.

The accomplishments of this people of the Old Empire are great. The Mayan calendar, based on a dual system of the Long Count and the Short Count was develo-



It dominates every phase of Mayan life. The archeologist Alfred Percival Maudslay observes:

"Everywhere in this Mayan art, in buildings that had been raised tier on tier in the jungle without the aid of draft animals or carts, in sculptures executed in stone with stone tools, there was not a single ornament or relief, animal frieze or sculptured figure, that was not directly related to some specific date. Every piece of Mayan construction was part of a great calendar in stone. There was no such thing as random arrangement; the Mayan aesthetic had a mathematical basis. Apparently meaningless repetitions and abrupt breaks in the conformation of the gruesome stone visages were, it appeared, occasioned by the need for expressing a certain number or some particular calendrical intercalation. When the ornamentation on the ramp of the Hieroglyphic Stairway at Copán was repeated some fifteen times, this was in order to express that number of elapsed leap years. . ."

The social organization of the Mayas was one of extreme social status. The palaces of the nobility and the temples of the priests were built on high ground and enclosed as a fortress. About this stone city were the wooden huts of the common people. There were no intermediate social estates. The farmers were obliged to support the ruling classes with maize. They were also the builders, hauling great blocks of stone for the massive stepped pyramids built with such calendrical precision and chiseling with stone implements. Iron, copper, bronze were not yet used.

The high culture and superior knowledge of the priests grew increasingly esoteric. There was virtually no exchange of experience. The Mayan savants were preoccupied with the stars and forgot the farm lands. Thus there was no plow. The primitive "milpa" agriculture prevailed, a simple system of burning jungle brush, making holes with a pointed stick and dropping the maize seeds in the hole.

It may be that eventually the farm lands within all reasonable distances from the cities were totally worn out. And the population, to avoid starvation evacuated the entire kingdom. Or the answer may have been linked with the Teotihuacán domination. The event has not been yet understood.

But it is certain that about 610 A.D. a whole people packed up and migrated to the wild country of the north. And the New Empire was begun. In the new cities that were founded, again the Mayan pyramids appear and other evidences of a continuation of the former civilization. But there are indications, too, that there were



costume. In the special architectural style of the New Kingdom there appears to be a synthesis of techniques and motifs of Toltec Mexico and native Mayan. At about 987 A.D. there is a real Toltec invasion of the new Mayan cities. The Toltecs establish their capital at Chichén-Itzá, overcoming the Mayas by sea and land. But the two peoples seem to blend well. Both the society and the religion of the two groups mesh; and the native Maya princes are incorporated into the power structure. Progress continues. A League of Mayapan is founded among three major cities: Mayapan, Chichén-Itzá, and Uxmal. But internal dissension provokes an uprising of the oppressed elements who, under the leadership of the Xiu Dynasty, take Mayapan. The league is weakened, and further fighting leads to its collapse. In 1441 A.D. we come to the real end of the kingdom of the Mayas. The Itzá, another wandering tribe are involved in these last two hundred years of Mayan history. When the Mayapan League collapses, they found another small center at Tayasal where the Mayan civilization persists awhile longer. In 1697 A.D. that center finally falls to the Spaniards.

The contributions that the Maya made, the developments they made in a variety of areas, is a long study. In Chichén-Itzá, the main pyramid called the Castillo, is built as a series of eight terraces with steps which mount each one. On the upper platform is the temple of Kukulcan, the Plumed Serpent god. It is known that this structure was under construction for a period of at least 400 years. The Mayas believed that the world ended at the end of every 52-year period which accounts for the eight terraces. The observatory located atop on of the pyramids in this city is a circular structure with windows placed to focus on certain astronomical lines of sight. The treasure brought up from the Sacred Well, the "Cenote" of Chichén-Itzá, has been noted as a value surpassed only by the treasure of the Pharaoh Tutankhamen. Into this well, to propitiate angry gods, were thrown beautiful maidens and captive warrior youths. And it was the custom to throw rich offerings in after the sacrificial victims: household utensils, ornaments, gold. The custom reminds us that this people, too, though highly rationalistic in many senses, were dominated by the



We conclude with an interesting parallel to other great civilizations drawn by the German archaeologist Theodor-Wilhelm Danzel:

"Occasionally in order to characterize the Aztec, as distinguished from the Mayan, culture, analogies with the Old World have been adduced, in which the Aztecs have been compared to the Romans and the Mayas to the Greeks. These parallels, on the whole, are apt. The Mayas were indeed a people who, like the Greeks, split up into many communities, who quarreled among themselves, and who formed temporary alliances only when it became necessary to resist a common enemy. But even though the Mayas did not distinguish themselves as a political power, they have to their credit remarkable achievements in sculpture, architecture, astronomy, and mathematics.

The Aztecs, on the other hand, were a warlike folk, who built their empire on the ruins of another people, the Toltecs, unable to resist the power of their onslaught. The Toltecs, if we carry our analogy still further, would parallel the Etruscans."

Michael D. Coe, The Maya, Penguin Books, Ltd., Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England, 1966

C.W. Ceram, Gods, Graves, and Scholars, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York, 1951

Ann Angell Freeman  
Bergamo, 1974



We have seen, in a simple way, the difference between society and civilization. Now we give a more accurate definition. By society we mean an association of living organisms. . .with the purpose of preserving the species through a greater protection given through their union; that is, the union of several beings belonging to the same species. Sometimes these individuals reach a specialization of labor. Therefore, we do not have to come to man to discover these associations.

Civilization indicates the way in which a material, social and spiritual life of a people manifests. Civilization has made it possible for Homo sapiens, through his customs, culture, language and art; to become the master of all the other living beings and to mark a new evolutive process. Civilizations of the first human groups are called **cultures** because they are still rudimentary. The first human society was the family. We have seen how necessary the family is to man due to the prolonged infancy of his offspring. Man, if isolated from human society, will laugh, will cry, will express his emotional life. But he will lose his human characteristics and remain nude. Therefore, the family nucleus is not only important, but necessary.

During nomadic life, man felt the need to get together as a family---and sometimes for several families to get together. Men realized that union was good for defense and cooperation. The cooperative effort is the main characteristic of any form of civilization. With the passage from the nomadic to the sedentary life, the groups increased in population. Division of labor started; division into classes; rights and duties of different classes developed; people started to experiment in social and moral subjects. In order to survive, a community must be able to codify its behavior. (In the beginning men do not write the laws; but the codification begins.)

The behavior may change according to the people; and in the same people may change according to the time. It is necessary that these patterns of behavior be flexible because, if they become static, they destroy the people. These patterns of behavior are called laws. To form the laws special persons are chosen and different governments established. During the unfolding of history, we will study the different forms of government, analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of the different forms.

It must be clear that something is necessary, some form of government. There may be good and bad systems. Many times the worst systems are formed by persons complaining about the laws that already exist. They remove them and create a worse system. Laws are necessary: there is no way of living without them. They allow persons to live together. Some have thought---and some still think---that it is enough to destroy capitalism in order to live in a "fairy tale world." Some think that the democratic state has been surpassed, and that now a strong ruler is necessary. However, in destroying one thing or the other, it often leads to terrible dictatorships. Dictatorships are hidden in sophisticated sentences: "This misery is necessary for the defense of the welfare of the state." or "These imprisonments, these deaths, are necessary measures to defend the freedom of the state." In this way dangerous members are eliminated. They are killed or sent into exile or into forced labor camps.

Thus we must help young people become responsible, helping them decide, think with their own heads. And not always seeking the "elixir," the panacea of youth, love, etc. (Elixir: any medicinal potion thought to have generalized curative or restorative powers.) That is, the search for a ready and simple solution for all the ills of the world.

We have seen, in the chart of the fundamental needs of man, that man has an intuition for material and spiritual needs. Often the latter become the most important ones. These spiritual needs, at a certain point, become codified by religion. Religions have a great influence during the whole life of the individual. Religion also has great influence on art and philosophical movements. If the family is as old as man is, we can say that fear, too, is that old: especially the cosmic fear. We can



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the time to sacrifice something precious and dear, to appease the gods. In this way human sacrifices began. If an individual didn't submit to these religious forms, he was ostracized from society: "an untouchable." Often this poor being finally felt guilty; and he had to repent publicly in order to be reaccepted. The chief of these primitive religions was a member of the tribe, perhaps more intelligent than the others. He was given the name of wizard or magician, and he was also often the civic leader of the community.

Some of the magic institutions of the past still exist in our society in the form of superstitions. An example is the taboo: a prohibition excluding something from use, approach, or mention because of its sacred and inviolable nature. This is an object or a person or an idea that cannot be touched, reached, discussed. Witch-hunting is not a remote happening in our past. Thousands of persons at one time have been killed because they were suspected to be witches. And today certain persons are accused of "bringing bad luck." Some superstitions are so common that we hardly recognize them as such: knocking on wood, the broken mirror, the black cat. Then there are totems: objects which bring good luck: these are the direct descendents of such totems which were used by the spiritual leaders of primitive tribes. The totem is the origin of the family coat of arms. These are rudimentary forms of religion, but they created the first laws and gave origin to a pattern of social and moral life.

It is important to respect such moral and religious laws of any group. We think of all the effort man will make to see and touch a relic. Pilgrims make long trips to visit the place where a relic is kept, to places where the Virgin has made a miracle, to sacred cities: the Moslems go to Mecca, the Hindus to the Ganges River. Objects, symbols, religious characters as found in jewelry are part of this, too, a protection against divine fury.

Man needs protection in life and death. The mystery of sleep without end, the survival of the spirit, the possibility to communicate with the dead, the reincarnation in other beings (including animals), the continuity of life even after death in the form of a spirit or with the same material needs---all create a part of the history of civilization. Through religious cults, it has been possible to reconstruct the life of certain civilizations; for there are tangible clues of the life they had in the traces of the practices and relics left. In ancient tombs we find ancient remains which tell of the life of civilizations. Some of these testimonies are understood; some are still a secret, not yet known to us. Stonehenge is a prehistoric ceremonial ruin on the Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire, England: it was constructed at its first stage in the megalithic period, 1900 - 1700 B.C., a circular formation of huge upright stone slabs and lintels. We do not know the story. Certain mysterious temples exist in part on the island of Sardinia. Such testimonies are found on every continent. These religious cults transferred from father to son, creating a security for the people, giving them the power to struggle and to win: in wars, in life itself.

Faith and ideals make individuals within the society strong. When faith and ideals are lacking, there is insecurity, weakness, no more reason to live. If the force of the spirit dies, the most important part of man dies. Thus the spiritual part of a people's civilization is more important than the material one. Material possessions are difficult to transport, but the spiritual ones move with man, helping him to overcome any obstacle. The important thing for the individual is to feel himself a part of the spiritual force of his group. It is enough to think that if a man of one group kills a man of another, he will become a hero. But if he kills one of his own group, he will be a criminal.

We have seen the great influence of religion on civilization. Now we look at the influence of trade and commerce. The first civilizations did not develop in places chosen at random, but they followed the laws that govern all evolutive processes: the first ones developed where the environment offered advantages. We know that the first peoples were nomads. With agriculture they settled down. But not all human