

The MODERN ROMANS

The Decline of Western Civilization

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Rome fell – a fact of history!

But why? The reasons have never been fully understood. The lessons have not been learned. Many of the same basic mistakes that weakened the once mighty Roman Empire before its toppling by barbarian hordes are now being repeated in America, Britain and the Western world.

You need to understand!

This booklet contains a shocking message – a warning for our day. And unless our peoples and nations wake up and immediately alter their course, they will – in modern fashion, and much more rapidly – suffer a similar crashing downfall!

CHAPTER ONE

Lessons of History Ignored

Massive public works ... striking architecture ... cosmopolitan cities ... masters of advanced warfare ... bureaucratic institutions ... a melting pot ... and more!

These descriptions are as valid of Rome's past achievements as they are of ours in our dizzyingly sophisticated modern Western world.

In its time in history, the Roman Empire occupied a position of power and influence very similar to that held by the United States or Western civilization in our time. We know more about the Romans than any other great civilization of antiquity. And, interestingly enough, the Roman Empire covered an area approximately the size of the United States.

The United States and the Rome of past glory both started out as struggling, insignificant colonies of people ruled over by a monarchy. Injustices led to revolution and establishment of a republic. Still later, after extensive expansions, they both were torn apart by civil war. But then each settled down and rose to heights of undisputed world power and leadership.

The Roman superpower could boast, just like American or Western counterparts, of their possession of a highly developed system of law and justice, government and order, and, without doubt, production of goods and services. Western civilization, in fact, prides itself on its Roman legacy.

But Rome crumbled!

Like all highly developed and powerful empires fallen into the dust of their times, rich, affluent ancient Rome left us another legacy all but forgotten in our hectic times: a chronicle of human social and political folly, of worsening economic and military events that virtually guaranteed Roman civilization, or any other civilization on a similar course, a destiny of growing troubles, decline and eventual collapse.

Certainly, history buffs could point out significant and valid differences between space-age Western civilization and the Rome of past centuries. Absolute parallelism is not the object of this booklet. But giving a **warning** is!

Proud Romans became lulled by the belief in the seeming "eternity" and superiority of their system, in their long chain of rarely broken military and economic successes, as if fate had determined they should always come out on top despite repeated challenges to their existence. They extolled their fabulous material-technological achievements and standard of living. They prided themselves on their liberal and generous (to their thinking) largesse to nations conquered in war.

But the Unthinkable Happened

When Seneca, the Roman statesman, warned that Rome would fall, the people snickered. "Rome fall?" It could lose a few battles, but not the Empire. "Rome," mused the average citizen basking in the height of world power, "is impregnable." Rome was the world – and the world was Rome.

To speculate at the moment of unsurpassed material, economic and military achievements that glorious Rome could collapse to inferior barbarians was unthinkable. What Roman Jeremiah could have prophesied that the ravages of wars, taxation, mounting crime, race problems, moral decay, subversion from within, political assassinations and public apathy – not to exclude natural disasters – would one day bring Rome prostrate before less-developed nations?

But the voices of the ancient Roman scoffers are as still as the rubble of ancient Rome.

Christian in name at the end of the fifth century, the Empire in the West obviously didn't have divine protection from the barbarian hordes that overran her. No nation that fails to fully respect and *live* by God's true moral standards ever does!

The Affluence of Rome

Fortunately, Roman history is fairly well documented.

The Romans built a highly advanced society for their time. To them, it was even a “Great Society.” They developed and used many techniques and achievements common to our modern way of life.

They were the Americans and Britons (and Canadians, Australians, South Africans and Western Europeans) of their day. They were the ones who had wealth, a high level of culture, fantastic buildings, bureaucratic institutions, and sprawling cities.

“Prodigious engineers ... high-rise apartment houses ... the cosmetic arts ... spectator sports ... sightseers and tourists.” These also are words used to describe Roman activity in the second century A.D. – the time when Rome was at the height of its power.

They constructed roads all over their vast empire – roads surpassed only in recent times. Some are still in use today. Roman engineers built a road network equal to ten times the circumference of the earth at the equator! And they didn’t hesitate to cut through hills, tunnel through mountains, build sturdy bridges over rivers and valleys. Their “freeways” ran as straight and flat as possible.

They used concrete hardly inferior to ours and just as durable. They even developed a cement that would harden under water.

The Romans mastered the art of plumbing and built water-supply and sewer systems perhaps only slightly inferior to ours. Some of them still function. Sewer systems like the Cloaca Maxima in Rome were large enough to drive a wagon through. Some of the rich had furnaces under their houses with warm air circulating through pipes or ducts in the walls.

Water was everywhere, supplied by fantastic aqueducts over long distances. Hot-and-cold-water public baths were a must to the Romans. There were over 800 public baths in the city of Rome itself.

“Health-Club Hysteria”

Romans cherished body hygiene, physical culture and health. “Roman baths” with a country club atmosphere for the well-to-do are thoroughly documented, and the ruins are with us to this day. The well-to-do were travelers, inveterate sightseers and tourists. Nothing was quite so dear to the Roman heart as languid vacationing, health resorts, mountain spas, or seashore villas. One of the most obvious marks of affluence was the possession of one’s own personal vacation retreat.

But the cities became increasingly crowded, requiring the development of high-rise apartment complexes. Records show many of these became much like modern slums. Some buildings were so poorly constructed that, despite stringent Roman building codes, they menaced the health and safety of infuriated tenants. Rome, too, had its ghettos.

Street noises were unbearable, day or night, in Rome’s big cities. The rich fled to the countryside whenever possible.

Yes, long before us, the Romans managed to run into that giant headache called the “urban problem” – complete with the unbearable traffic congestion, drab city appearance, crowded and noisy living conditions, rundown tenements and slums, high rents, unemployment, racial tension, spiraling crime, a soaring cost of living and polluted air!

Various civic disturbances over some of these worsening conditions resulted in riots and conflagrations which literally destroyed whole towns!

Rome had her “long, hot summers,” too!

And her economy? Rome’s economy crumbled under the crushing twin burdens of taxation and inflation. This steady deterioration of Rome’s currency was symptomatic of the increasingly serious financial situation of the Empire.

Her morality? We shall soon see what happened to it – *why* the moral breakdown, and how it contributed to the downfall of a great, world-ruling empire.

Rome Never Had It So Good

But at the height of her power, everything looked different!

"If, at any time in history, a people could have looked confidently to the future, it was the Roman people of the second century of our era," wrote Dr. Robert Strausz-Hupé, noted historian and international relations expert.

"Within the empire, law and order prevailed, and never [before] did almost everybody 'have it so good' ... no foreign power could challenge her."

But Strausz-Hupé asks: "Why did this ... civilization decline at all? And why did it decline so rapidly that, within another 100 years, the Roman Empire was plunged irreversibly into anarchy and penury, ravaged by foreign aggressors and doomed to extinction?"

The same author says: "What can Roman experience teach *us*? Of course, it can teach us nothing if ... we are satisfied with the ... [notion] that the Romans of the second century were not Americans of the twentieth century, and that, hence what happened to them could never happen to us."

But striking parallels between much of our Western civilization today and the Romans of yesteryear make such complacency very dangerous.

What average pleasure-oriented Roman, living for the day, ever dreamed his proud nation would some day collapse into the hands of inferior barbarians?

There were those who warned the Romans of the inevitable end. Rome had its prophets, its seers, its political satirists. But their combined jeremiad fell on deaf ears. Romans, as a whole, would not listen.

Will Americans, Britons, Canadians, Australians, Europeans, South Africans listen to the veritable torrent of shouts and warnings trumpeted by leaders in all aspects of national life?

And will these same peoples listen to the warning of the God they have forgotten? He has commissioned His servants: "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins" (Isa. 58:1).

We *must listen* if we are to survive. And in the following pages we present the example of Rome – its worsening internal problems and why it fell. More shockingly, we present parallel problems plaguing our Western world.

Said researcher of Roman history H. J. Haskell: "It required a century or more for the destructive forces in Rome to work out their effects. The modern tempo is faster. *The history of the later Roman Empire carries a warning to present-day Caesars*" (*The New Deal in Old Rome*, p. 232).

Will we heed the lesson of history, the voice of experience? Will we mend our ways before it is too late?

CHAPTER TWO

The Home: Foundation of Greatness or Decadence

Youthful rebellion ... the generation gap ... student unrest ... juvenile delinquency ... illegitimacy ... sexual revolution ... pot ... escapism – these are the social problems plaguing today's youth and modern society.

And fueling much of it is a radically changing family life-style. Some authorities even predict the disappearance of the traditional family unit.

Today divorces are a more and more commonly accepted part of modern living styles. Unhappy marriages by the millions are on the border of breakup. A high percentage of married women work outside the home – bringing both financial benefits and social conflict. Husband and wife roles are becoming blurred. Parents and children are increasingly going their own way, and many homes are becoming little more than boarding houses, merely providing a place to eat and sleep, and little else.

Rampant adultery, premarital sex, wife-swapping, a growing acceptance of homosexuality and perverted sex are all tearing away at stable home life and happiness in the Western world. No wonder! Every medium of communication disseminates the subtle message of “doing your own thing.” Increasingly, social leaders, psychologists, educators and even religious figures openly condone formerly condemned illicit sex.

The Roman Experience

Largely forgotten today is the fact that the home is the basic foundation of any society. It is the *most influential* element in national character. It lays the first ground-work for learning individual character, values, goals, morality, self-control and loyalty.

The *early* Romans basically understood this. And it was a force that helped Rome grow in power and stature.

In the book *Rome: Its Rise and Fall*, the author, Philip Van Mess Myers, notes: “First, at the bottom as it were of Roman society and forming its ultimate unit, was *the family* *The most important feature or element of this family group was the authority of the father*

“It would be difficult to overestimate the influence of this group upon the history and destiny of Rome. It was the cradle of at least some of those splendid virtues of the early Romans that contributed so much to the strength and greatness of Rome, and that *helped to give her dominion of the world*” (pp. 11-12).

This same strong family structure – with the father in leadership – was a foundation stone supporting the national power of the British Empire and the United States in their zeniths of greatness.

We use the word “was” because, as it did in Rome, this building block of national power, the strong family unit, is rapidly deteriorating!

Continued this astute historian:

“It was in the atmosphere of the family that were nourished in the Roman youth the virtues of obedience and of deference to authority. When the youth became a citizen, obedience to magistrates and respect for law was in him as instinct and indeed almost a religion. And, on the other hand, *the exercise of the parental authority in the family taught the Roman how to command as well as how to obey* – how to exercise authority with wisdom, moderation, and justice” (p. 15).

How similar to what one famous American crime fighter said is necessary to develop solid citizens. The late J. Edgar Hoover emphasized before the Special Senate Committee investigating organized crime in interstate commerce: “The *home* is the first great training school in behavior or misbehavior and parents serve as the first teachers for the inspirational

education of youth. In the home, the child learns [or should learn] that others besides himself have rights which he must respect.

“Here the spadework is laid for instilling in the child those *values* which will cause him to develop into an upright, law-abiding, wholesome citizen. He must learn respect for others, respect for property, courtesy, truthfulness, and reliability. He must learn not only to manage his own affairs but also to share in the responsibility for the affairs of the community. He must be taught to understand the necessity of *obeying the laws of God.*”

The Power of Example and Teaching

Early Roman parents, far from being perfect examples of parenthood, nevertheless basically realized their responsibility in nation building. They didn't leave the teaching of basic morals and responsibilities to others.

“The [early Roman] boy's upbringing was founded on a *profound conviction of the power of example, first of the father himself* as a representative of virtues peculiarly Roman, but also of the great prototypes of Roman valour in the boy's family and national history who were presented to him as men worthy of admiration” (E. B. Castle, *Ancient Education and Today*, p. 114).

Contrary to the situation in modern America today, the early Romans had exemplary heroes and *living examples* of what youth were expected to emulate.

And strange though it may sound to many a modern woman, mothers and homemakers in early Rome were accorded great honor and esteem. Here is what Tacitus, a Roman historian of the early Empire, wrote: “In the good old days [of the Republic], every man's son, born in wedlock, was brought up not in the chamber of some hireling nurse, but in his mother's lap, and at her knee. *And that mother could have no higher praise than that she managed the house and gave herself to her children*

“Religiously and with the utmost delicacy she regulated not only the serious tasks of her youthful charges, but their recreations also and their games” (Tacitus, *Dialogue on Oratory*, 28, Loeb Classics).

At the age of seven the boy was released from the exclusive care of his mother to continue his education under the leadership of his father.

“The idea of entrusting the training of a future Roman citizen to the incompetent guidance of a slave was repellent to the Roman mind at this time” (Castle, *op. cit.*, p. 113).

The Collapse of the Home

But the stable Roman family didn't last. Changes rapidly took place in the social life of Rome. Tribute poured in from conquered nations. A *growing commercial life* made pursuit of trade and wealth the all-too-common objective – especially of the upper classes.

Increasingly, men of capability were away from their homes on business trips to some remote corner of the empire. Children and wives were left alone. Rapidly a snowballing moral change occurred. The Romans began to practice a “new morality.”

“Added to this initial cause of family disruption was the consequent *easy attitude to the marriage tie, the increasing frequency of divorce*, and growing freedom and *laxity in women's morals*, all of which ended in a loosening of the old family unit in which the best in Roman character had its roots.

“Great as were the men who made history in these last years of the Republic, there was yet something lacking in moral stature among the Roman upper classes which had been characteristic of earlier generations. Personal aggrandizement was too eagerly sought and too readily achieved by the ruthless ... and *the old traditions of selfless service to the state were weakening*” (*Ibid.*, pp. 119, 120).

Roman men began to “play around” on business trips, in their offices, with neighbors' wives. The institution of slavery did much to encourage loose and easy morals. It was now considered naïve to be honest in business.

Children Rule Their Parents

By the beginning of the second century A.D., Roman fathers, in general, had “yielded to the impulse to become far too complaisant. Having given up the habit of controlling their children, *they let the children govern them*, and took pleasure in bleeding themselves white to gratify the expensive whims of their offspring. The result was that they were *succeeded by a generation of idlers and wastrels*

“The fine edge of character had been blunted in the Rome of the second century [A.D.]. The stern face of the traditional ‘pater familias’ [the father of the family] had faded out; instead we see on every hand the flabby face of the son of the house, *the eternal spoiled child of society*, who has grown accustomed to luxury and lost all sense of discipline” (Jerome Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, pp. 78-79).

A modern historian couldn’t better describe contemporary family life in the “developed” countries today.

Divorce, Roman Style

According to Roman authors such as Aulus Gellius, Valerius Maximus and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, divorces in early Rome were extremely rare – in fact, *all but unknown*.

But in the first century B.C. – about the time of Cicero – marital breakdowns, especially in the upper classes, had become so prevalent that divorce became “normal.”

“*From this time on, we witness an epidemic of divorces*, at least among the aristocracy whose matrimonial adventures are documented,” writes Carcopino (*ibid.*, p. 97).

Regarding the Rome of the Antonine period (around A.D. 150), Carcopino quotes from Seneca, who witnessed the same problem a number of decades before: “*They divorce in order to remarry. They marry in order to divorce*” (*ibid.*, p. 100).

The Roman writer Martial declared that marriage had become merely a form of legalized adultery!

Practically the same wording could be used to describe the American marriage-go-round today. Families are falling apart at the highest rate ever – even surpassing the post-World War II breakups of hasty wartime unions.

In 1974 alone, there were nearly one million divorces and annulments. More than a million children were directly affected by these proceedings. Statistically, there are almost two divorces every minute in the United States!

According to the Census Bureau, fifteen million Americans have been through a marriage breakup. Many U.S. counties and cities have nearly as many, or more, filings for divorce than marriage licenses granted during a year.

But divorce figures, as bad as they are, are only the tip of the iceberg smashing American family life. For every divorce, there are scores of unhappy, frustrated and unfulfilled marriages – held together by children, relatives, or business and social obligations. Even these reasons are rapidly being disregarded, due largely to our urban, mobile way of life.

At present rates, nearly every third home in the nation will at some time experience the tragedy of divorce. And divorce is a tragedy, despite all the claims to the contrary. The idea of an amicable or friendly divorce is a myth. Divorce is a tragic, costly, nerve-shattering experience! Why so much divorce? Too many marry the wrong person for the wrong reasons.

Dr. Clifford Rose Adams, professor emeritus of Penn State University, reported in June 1969 that government statistics showing that about 28 percent of all marriages end in divorce are misleading. He said:

“If you take in annulments and desertions [about 100,000 yearly] which are not included, the figure would be nearer 40 percent. Add to this what we call the morbidity marriage, where a man and woman may continue living with each other just for appearances or convenience while actually hating each other, and you find that *only about 25 percent of marriages are really happy*. The other 75 percent are a bust.”

Yes, family life in modern America and most of the Western world is falling apart at the seams. It is affecting (or infecting) the whole world, for that matter. Cynicism toward the family institution is in the air. As the feminist movement gains momentum and the youth of the Western democracies put forth the clarion cry of rebellion, the words of the ancient prophet Isaiah are strikingly appropriate: "As for my people, *children are their oppressors, and women rule over them*. O my people, *they which lead thee cause thee to err*, and destroy the way of thy paths" (Isa. 3:12).

In verse 5 of the same chapter, Isaiah also says: "And the people shall be oppressed ... every one by his neighbour: *the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient*, and the base against the honourable."

God shows the problem to be a result of a *lack of right leadership*. In today's wide-open society all the wrong voices are heard. The most sensational and radical statements gain the greatest publicity. Righteous and God-fearing values are turned upside down and ridiculed by many. Far more popular are permissive lifestyles. Isaiah vividly describes our national sickness: "... Our sins testify against us ... In transgressing and lying against the Lord, and *departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt* Judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for *truth is fallen in the street*, and equity cannot enter"! (Isa. 59:12-14) As we drift farther away from the true values of our Creator, we plunge deeper into a morass of family problems. Marriages break up. Children rebel. Adultery becomes commonplace and even "normal." And as a result, our society is immeasurably weakened. Today we are beginning to pay a high price for acceptance of indulgent and permissive leadership.

God has commissioned His servants not only to warn the nations of their sins, but also to *show the way* that would lead to the establishment of true family stability. Notice it in Malachi 4:5-6: "See, I will send you another prophet like Elijah before the coming of the great and dreadful judgment day of God. His preaching will bring fathers and children together again, to be of one mind and heart, for they will know that if they do not repent, I will come and utterly destroy their land" (*The Living Bible*).

Older Marriages Breaking Up

A phenomenon now bothering the social scientists is the increasing number of marriages which are breaking up in divorce courts after enduring for 15 or 20 years and even longer.

It has previously been assumed that the longer a marriage lasted, the stronger the marital bonds. But a sampling of divorce statistics across the United States in a recent year shows 24 percent of marriages that ended in divorce had lasted 15 years or more.

Sexual affairs outside of marriage have become almost the rule rather than the exception, according to the Institute for Sex Research founded by the late Dr. Alfred Kinsey. It estimates that 60 percent of married men and 35 to 40 percent of married women have affairs with partners other than their spouses sometime during their marriage. Adultery shatters home, peace, love and stability!

Speaking out against the proliferation of adulterous relationships in modern Israel (the United States and British Commonwealth), God says: "How can I forgive you for all this? Your sons have forsaken me and sworn by gods that are no gods. I gave them all they needed [national affluence], yet they *preferred adultery* [both spiritual and literal!], and haunted the brothels; *each neighs after another man's wife*, like a well-fed and lusty stallion. Shall I not punish them for this? The Lord asks. Shall I not take vengeance on such a people? (Jer. 5:7-9, *The New English Bible*)

Bitter Fruit of Delinquency

Nearly 500,000 illegitimate babies are born each year in the U.S. Thousands more are "covered" by abortions or hasty, unwanted marriages – marriages that often break up. Nearly one out of six births is illegitimate in the U.S. (among non-whites it's nearly one out of three). Venereal disease has reached epidemic proportions in the U.S. (and around the world) according to alarmed public health officials. V.D. is our number one reportable *communicable*

disease (not considering virus flu or colds). It is our number two communicable disease killer. Well over two million become infected yearly with either gonorrhea or syphilis – youth accounting for 60 percent of the cases.

Juvenile delinquency reaches shocking new highs every year in the United States. Nearly half of all arrests for serious crimes involve juveniles *under the age of 18*. Joseph M. Kennick, past president of the National Conference of Juvenile Authorities, admits: “Somewhere along the way, as parents and as a nation, we went wrong in the rearing of our children. We are now paying for having produced a generation heavily populated with hostile, rebellious, and lawless youths who have no respect for themselves or for us

“Where did we go wrong? We went wrong in many ways – *in the laxity of our discipline ... in indulging and pampering our children*, by lifting from their shoulders the burdens they should rightly carry.”

Yes, we are paying the painful penalty for permissive, indulgent child-rearing concepts. Children don't just “grow up” to be respectable, useful citizens – *they must be reared* by positive teaching of basic rights and wrongs, by balanced discipline and right parental example. A child *must* have the teaching, example, love and discipline of a concerned parent who is willing to give him the *right kind* of attention. The failure in these major areas has been immense.

The Maker's Instruction Book contains many instructions on proper child rearing. As an example, notice Proverbs 29:15: “The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a *child left to himself* bringeth his mother to shame.”

Will yet another lesson that could be learned from Rome's decline be lost on our peoples?

“Battle of the Sexes”

Along with the erosion of the father's authority in the home, historians note the emergence of a “battle of the sexes” in Rome when the Empire became rich and affluent.

Upperclass Roman society (the average American would be “upperclass” by Roman standards) witnessed a growing force of wives who wanted to be “emancipated” from homelife. Some wives wanted “careers” of their own. Others didn't want to have children for fear of “losing their figures.”

Wrote historian Carcopino: “Some evaded the duties of maternity for fear of losing their good looks, some took pride in being behind their husbands in no sphere of activity, and vied with them in tests of strength which their sex would have seemed to forbid; some were not content to live their lives by their husband's side, but *carried on another life without him*

“‘To live your own life’ was a formula which women had already brought into fashion in the second century It is obvious that *unhappy marriages must have been innumerable*” (op. cit., pp. 90, 93, 95).

Today's “Feminist Movement” is not a new thing in history. Let's not misunderstand. Women do need better rights. Work for women outside the home is absolutely vital for many. But never should it be at the cost of the deterioration of husband-wife or parent-child relations.

Women in Imperial Rome “did their own thing,” and the results were wretched marriages, divorce, growing juvenile delinquency. They had “come a long way” indeed! But *where* they went – the result – is not a very happy thought to contemplate.

And the same has happened since the close of World War II in America – “the land of working wives.”

The working wife has been singled out by many social authorities as a major contributor to husband-wife problems and child-rearing problems. Today over 40 percent of all U.S. Workers are women. Almost 60 percent of the female labor force are married women whose husbands are present in the home. And of that 60 percent, over half have children under 18 years of age.

The disintegration of the family as the basic unit of our social structure has not come about overnight. It has been a *gradual and insidious deterioration* – a veritable “fifth-column” movement attacking the stability of the home from within. The roles and relationships of father, mother and child have, in the process, become confused. Each has lost his identity

and place. How can we expect such a condition to produce a common national and community problems?

Utter Confusion

In the Western “progressive” world, the sexes have, in some cases, begun to dress alike and wear their hair alike – or, in some cases, *switch* styles.

“Unisex,” “free sex,” “swinging singles,” “group sex,” “the Pill,” “sexual revolution” – these are the phrases magazine headlines are made of today. Utter confusion about sex, marriage and the family is rampant.

But where are all these changes leading us?

Many leading specialists who study family life admit that the family is changing profoundly. But they do not agree on what it is becoming or where it ought to go from here.

Some marital “experts” even predict that the very institution of marriage is “obsolete” and on its way out – perhaps to be replaced by the expression “pair-bound,” or some equally undefinable arrangement.

During at least one period, decadent Rome lapsed into a similar irresponsible outlook toward sex and marriage, especially among the ruling classes, who set the tone of life in the Empire.

“One cause of the decline in population [in the Empire] was the singular aversion that the better class of the Romans evinced to marriage Penalties and bounties, deprivations and privileges, entreaties and expostulations are in turn resorted to by the perplexed emperors, in order to discourage celibacy and to foster a pure and healthy family life.

“But all was in vain. The marriage state continued to be held in great disesteem” (Myers, *op. cit.*, p. 447).

In the same way, respect for marriage and the home is at the lowest ebb at which it has ever been in the United States and Britain. Marriage, to many, means little or nothing. And in any society where marriage – which the Creator God intended to have utmost meaning – is treated so lightly, where a solid family relationship is no longer desired, *that society is threatened with extinction.*

Rome traveled this road. It weakened that society!

America, Britain and most of Western civilization is speeding along the same roadway.

CHAPTER THREE

The Failure of Ancient and Modern Education

Former President Johnson, addressing the National Education Association at Madison Square Garden in 1965, said: “*Education*, more than any single force, *will mold the citizen of the future*. That citizen, in turn, will really determine the *greatness* of our society.”

In the student revolt of the 60’s, one national leader warned: “We live in an age of anarchy both abroad and at home Here in the United States, great universities are being systematically destroyed.”

Even though momentarily fairly quiet, why are the centers of the dissemination of education seedbeds of civil disobedience, moral and sexual decay, looseness and drug experimentation?

Because there is something drastically *wrong* with modern education! Most of modern education teaches solutions to mankind’s problems by materialistic means – when man’s real problems lie in a wrong mental and spiritual approach.

Instead of disseminating knowledge capable of solving the nation’s mounting problems, education, itself, has become a major crisis! As much as any problem facing us, the problems of education – from kindergarten on up – are tearing away at the stability of the nation. Now ugly racial difficulties threaten major disruptions in our school systems.

Teachers, as well as students, are frustrated, angry, dissatisfied and are striking out!

Money Hasn’t Been the Answer

Unparalleled in history, Americans (and other nations) have poured billions upon billions of high priority taxpayer dollars into behemoth modern education facilities – from grade schools to multiversities.

Civil and government leaders have looked to modern education to equip and inspire youth with proper goals, values, knowledge, understanding and self-discipline to strengthen their communities and nation.

But something has gone wrong. Education has not produced what everyone hoped it would. Something is radically *missing* in modern education!

Modern education has failed to provide the right worthwhile *goals* and *values* that would inspire its youth to discipline themselves to meet national, community or personal crises or needs.

The Romans gradually fell into the same educational trap.

Contrary to later developments, education in early Rome was closely related to clear-cut goals and values. It was clearly *character* and *purpose* oriented. It was education to meet clear-cut responsibility toward the family, the community and the nation; a preparation to meet realities head-on with strength and ability.

Later, in the Republic, under the influence of Greek culture, elementary, secondary and higher schools of rhetoric and philosophy were established. The latter were based on the works of so-called “great” pagan authors, especially Homer. The Romans wanted to be as cultured as conquered subjects and vassals – especially Greeks. Therefore, they set up schools after the Hellenist type to rival those in the East at Athens and Rhodes.

Did Not Build Character

But gradually, with the influence of wealth, ease and commercial life within the Empire, character training became forgotten.

“The Roman Schools (leaving out of account the philosophers) did not profess to do anything more than inculcate a particular branch of learning. *They did not claim to build character, to*

teach religion or patriotism or morality, and some ancient teachers were notoriously ill equipped for such teaching

“Yet there was certainly a feeling abroad that a school master should be something more than a mere instructor, that he should take the place of a parent, perhaps even *supply that moral guidance that some Roman homes conspicuously failed to provide*” (*Roman Civilization*, p. 208, section by m. L. Clarke, edited by J.P.V.D. Balsdon).

Looking at the education of Roman youths in the first century of our era, “we find several conditions of good education sadly lacking. The moral, social and intellectual climate was not healthy; there was *no grand conception of the education of the whole man ...*” (E. B. Castle, *Ancient Education and Today*, p. 124).

“Character” Not Education’s Business

Failure to “educate the whole man”? Schools that have little or no emphasis on “character,” “morality,” “religion,” “patriotism”? How similar to the approach of much of modern public education.

Several years ago, an elder educator noted that American institutions of higher learning were turning out “*splendid splinters*” instead of well-rounded educated men and women. He said, “Nine-tenths of our faculties are bores, simply because they are nincompoops outside of their specialties.”

Following the pattern of later Rome, a state university professor (former a college president) said recently: “*We’re not in the business of building character*. I doubt if some of us are qualified.

“Colleges are not churches, clinics, or even parents. Whether or not a student burns a draft card, participates in a civil rights march, engages in premarital or extramarital sexual activity, becomes pregnant, attends church, sleeps all day or drinks all night, is not really the concern of an educational institution.”

Just develop the ability to absorb materialistic knowledge, is the modern concept of education.

Meanwhile, Morals and Values Collapse

Students are increasingly told there are “no moral absolutes,” no solid values to guide moral choices or decisions in life.

Is it then surprising that two out of every three college students think it is *not wrong* for men and women to engage in premarital sex – especially as long as participants say they are “in love”? Or that we have a V.D. epidemic among youth? One poll showed that even in those cases where participants do not claim to be “in love,” half of all those surveyed still accepted the idea of premarital sex.

Much of modern education has been in the forefront of the moral and sexual revolution! Modern education must take its share of guilt for *destroying* true values!

Irrelevant Education

“It gets pretty depressing to watch what is going on in the world,” said a University of California senior girl, “and realize that your education is not equipping you to do anything about it.”

She is not a radical. She has never demonstrated. She, and millions like her, will graduate with honors and *profound disillusionment*.

Recently, John Fischer, editor for *Harper’s Magazine*, wrote that the fragments of knowledge that most youth fritter away precious years to receive are only “bits and pieces which don’t stick together and have no common purpose The typical liberal-arts college has no clearly defined goals. It merely offers a smorgasbord of courses, in hopes that if a student nibbles at a few dishes from the humanities table, plus a snack of science, and a garnish of

art or anthropology, he may emerge as 'a cultivated man' – whatever that means" (*Harper's Magazine*, September 1969).

Useless Knowledge, Wasted Time

Now see the shocking parallel in the Roman record.

"On the whole we are compelled to admit that at the most glorious period of the empire the schools entirely failed to fulfill the duties which we expect of our schools today [written in 1940]. *They undermined instead of strengthened the children's morals*, they mishandled the children's bodies instead of developing them, and if they succeeded in furnishing their minds with a certain amount of information, they were *not calculated to perform any loftier or nobler task.*"

In other words, the bits of knowledge Roman children learned did not relate with any high ideal of personal character, national goals or system of values.

Continuing, the historian Carcopino writes: "The pupils left school with the heavy luggage of a few practical and commonplace notions laboriously acquired and of so little value that in the fourth century Vegetius could not take for granted that new recruits for the army would be literate enough to keep the books of the corps *Popular education then in Rome was a failure*" (Jerome Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, pp. 106-107).

What do we see today? High schools and college graduates who cannot read, write or spell, who are unprepared to earn a living, who are often as unfit morally as they are physically.

Much to Unlearn

As for higher education, the Romans paid undue attention to rhetoric in training men for higher offices as lawyers and administrators.

"So, far from preparing young men for practice in the courts ... the schools [of rhetoric] accustomed them to a thoroughly unreal atmosphere and *sent them into the world with much to unlearn*" (*Roman Civilization*, p. 209, section by M. L. Clarke).

Again Roman historian Carcopino tells us: "... The Romans saw no long-term usefulness in disinterested research ... they made a collection of the results research had achieved, and lifted science ready-made into their books, without feeling any need to increase it or *even verify it*" (*op. cit.*, p. 113).

In other words, Roman students gullibly swallowed anything poked at them as "knowledge," but rarely ever checked its veracity.

The philosophic school of thought apparently even circulated the idea that there was no such thing as unchangeable truth. The Roman governor, Pilate, confronting Jesus Christ who brought up the matter of the concept of truth, retorted: "*What is truth?*" (John 18:38). Pilate was a product of Roman education. He, like many sophisticated students today, didn't believe in unchangeable truths or values!

By the way, the answer to Pilate's question about truth is found in the Gospel of John: "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

Undermined the Empire

With this education and the overemphasis on luxury living and materialism, the minds of Rome's educated citizens were dulled.

"In this atmosphere of indolent contentment the privileged classes, and especially the urban middle class, came to find their *ideals in pleasure, the pursuit of gain* Creative genius dwindled ... [which education should have sparked]. No new artistic discoveries were made ... the pen, the graving tool and the pencil produced *highly spiced work, able to attract and amuse the mind but incapable of elevating and inspiring it*" (M. Rostovtzeff, *Rome*, p. 322).

Historians remark with astonishment that apart from a few religious writings, no outstanding literary works were produced in the 400s A.D. Yet that period was filled with monumental events.

There were few great men or works of literature to inspire others to high levels of accomplishment – no Abraham Lincolns, no Winston Churchills. And today, it seems the works most attractive and popular are publications of titillating sex, pornography or violence – not of character- or nation-building.

But Rome was indifferent: “Under the brilliant exterior of the Roman Empire we feel the failure of *creative* power ... we feel the weariness and *indifference* which *undermined*, not merely the *culture* of the state, but also its *political system*, its *military strength*, and its *economic progress*” (Rostovtzeff, pp. 322-323).

Uninspiring materialistic education played a part in warping the time-honored values of the Roman Empire!

World Crisis, a Product of Wrong Values

A tree is known by its fruits. What have been the fruits of education – both ancient and modern? Has education solved mankind’s ills?

In 1964, Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, president of Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, said at a conference at the University of Michigan: “We have more educated people than at any time in history; we have more people with college degrees, *yet our humanity is a diseased humanity* It isn’t knowledge we need; knowledge we have. Humanity is in need of something *spiritual*.”

Yet, paradoxically, God says: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge ...” (Hosea 4:6). The lack being described here is not in material, scientific knowledge, however – it is in the knowledge of the true values. It is a lack of knowledge of *God* and His way of life. This kind of knowledge the world has rejected (same verse – last part).

A strong, durable nation needs much more than wealth and material, technological knowledge!

Obviously there has been a missing dimension in education. Education should answer the most important questions of all: What is man? Why is he here? What motivates him? What is the purpose of life? What is the way to peace? How should a nation use its resources? How should we deal with our fellowman?

Can a man or woman claim to be fully educated without knowledge of the God-intended purpose of life? Too often education answers: “There aren’t any ultimate values or answers We can never know absolutely.” Is there any wonder Western civilization is floundering directionless?

CHAPTER FOUR

Religion in Confusion

“We are adrift without answers We are witnessing the death of the old morality No single authority rules our conduct No church lays down the moral law for all.”

So wrote a senior editor of *Look* magazine a dozen years ago, reporting the major indications of the post-World War II American moral crisis.

An elder statesman of the National Council of Churches said at a meeting in Boston recently: “Beneath all the social unrest there is an even profounder unrest of the human spirit – a sense of meaninglessness; disenchantment, *a search for ultimate meaning.*”

Religion in general, like education and the home, has failed to give an answer to the most important question of all – the purpose of life.

Weak Influence of Religion

Never has the influence of religion been at a lower ebb in the United States. The same could be said of Britain (where many churches have been put up for sale) or any other nation in the Christian-professing world!

Yet 130,000,000 Americans claim a church affiliation.

Let’s note this paradox between church *affiliation* and church *influence*.

The majority of Americans feel religion is losing influence. Gallup polls for over a decade have reported a rapidly growing majority of Americans acknowledging the decline of religion in American life. In 1957, Gallup reported only 14 percent of Americans thought religion was “losing its influence” on American life. By 1967, ten years later, 57 percent held the same opinion. And by 1970, the percentage jumped dramatically again to 75 percent. Gallup reported that this “represents one of the most dramatic shifts in surveys on American life.”

A 1975 Gallup survey indicates, however, that current problems are causing interest in religion again. Still, there is the growing feeling among Americans, Britons, and others that religion, as commonly presented to them, is “sterile,” “outmoded,” “irrelevant” to today’s needs and problems. To youth it is especially meaningless, a part of the hypocrisy of the Establishment that drastically needs changing.

As one youth put it: “The Church has no meaning – a place full of old ladies in felt hats ... boring sermons, meaningless prayers.” As a result, church membership is in a decline.

There is no lack of religious *form* and *ceremony* in today’s modern America and Britain. There is plenty of that. It is just that it does not seem to offer the motivation to change lives for the better. Today’s religions are not bringing peace (witness the Irish conflict!). Rather they only serve to deepen the divisions between people. People have a *form* of godliness, but they deny God’s power in their lives! (II Tim. 3:5).

Reporting on this trend, a clergyman and professor at George Washington University said in the early 1960s: “Never has Christianity been so ineffective and irrelevant *The distance between professed faith and our daily performance is astronomical.*”

In other words, despite an almost unanimous belief that “a little religion is good” for society, it hardly makes a dent in altering the massive problems of our time. It doesn’t change the way people live their daily lives. Why has this happened? It can partially be understood by studying what happened to ancient Rome.

Roman Religion

Early Roman paganism, superstitious and ritualistic (a fatal flaw), did produce one benefit: it closely united the ideals of religion and state – lending support to unified thinking and action. “To a Roman of the best days of the Republic, religion represented stability in the State and

in the home; it was the foundation of public and private life ..." (*Roman Civilization*, edited by J.P.V.D. Balsdon, p. 182).

With the ascent of the Roman Emperor Constantine in the early 300s A.D., Christianity became the favored religion of the Empire. But unity of faith eluded the Emperor. The new religious form demanded a higher standard of morality than ancient paganism, but it had no profound moral effect on the Roman citizen. "For the vast majority of ordinary men Christianity caused no fundamental change of attitude" (A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, p. 1063).

Let's not misunderstand. The *institution* of universal religion received growing acclaim, converts, and political leverage. But the greater mass of individuals professing "Christianity" did not allow it to alter their basic corrupt cravings and materialistic values.

While the adoption of State-Endorsed "Christianity" brought the Empire a step closer to the ideal of unity, its conflict with ancient paganism made it a surface unity. And paganism did not lose out entirely! Religious strife and confusion abounded. "Christianity" absorbed more and more pagan traditions and philosophy (and surprisingly, many have been handed down to us today!).

To the average Roman any Christian moral teaching seems to have made little practical difference.

Besides this, corruption and abuse of power became widespread in the Church. Splits and schisms caused much conflict, bloodshed and disunity. Confusion and ignorance concerning doctrine were rampant – as they are today!

Sophisticated Rejected "Myths"

Hellenized education caused some highly sophisticated Romans to view weak ancient religious traditions as superstitious. "For the sophisticated Roman, myth was not enough The old beliefs were *not* forsaken in response to the challenge of a more profound understanding of higher spiritual values, but merely because they failed to satisfy *intelligent* people. When the appeal of a higher moral purpose is absent men seek their own *sensual* satisfactions" (E. B. Castle, *Ancient Education and Today*, p. 120).

And today, many educated have "seen through" the superstitious approach many people have toward religion, even in America and the Western world, and therefore reject religion entirely and fall back on liberal values of their own reasoning.

But another trend affected a greater majority.

The confusing, abstract religious concepts of the old Roman religion didn't fill the spiritual void in the Roman populace. This was especially true among the rapidly multiplying free-slave class whose ancestral roots were in the Middle East rather than the Italian peninsula.

These people felt right at home with the imported Eastern sun cults and mystery religions which began to stream into the empire.

Samuel Dill, in his work *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire*, wrote: "The paganism which was really living, which stirred devotion and influenced souls ... came from the East – from Persia, Syria, Egypt Foreign traders, foreign slaves, travelers, and soldiers returning from long campaigns in distant regions, were constantly introducing religious excitement, and then penetrated to the classes of culture and privilege" (pp. 74-76, 78).

Carcopino also noted the decay of traditional Roman religion.

He wrote: "The Roman pantheon still persisted, apparently immutable But the spirits of men had fled from the old religion; it still commanded their service but no longer their hearts or their belief In the motley Rome of this second century it had wholly *lost its power* over the human hearts" (Jerome Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, pp. 121, 122).

Similar to Conditions Today

Many trends similar to those which affected Rome are with us today.

Religion is in a state of confusion and turmoil.

The Roman Catholic Church has been wracked with controversy up to its highest levels of authority. The hierarchy is deeply concerned over the increasing number of priests leaving the ministry.

Meanwhile, Protestantism – divided into hundreds of sects – is having its own “identity crisis.” “We Protestants are tired and confused,” confessed Dr. Walter D. Wagoner, director of the Boston Theological Institute. He was writing in a widely circulated nondenominational magazine. He criticized the trend toward theological “faddism” exemplified by the short-lived “death of God” movement, espoused by some protestant theologians.

He complained of a widespread “spiritual malnutrition” among ministers and laymen alike. His conclusion? There is a growing awareness among Protestants that “we have no direction to go but up.”

The strong, but simple and clear-cut teaching of Christ and the apostles has been so watered down by modern religionists that it is too often a meaningless mishmash, irrelevant to the daily life of the average individual.

Too often the power and authority of God, the Bible and the Ten Commandments have been ridiculed, questioned, doubted by modern theologians and clerics. Educators have called the Bible “myth.” The spiritual base of the average layman has become a weak reed to lean on in these times of personal and national peril.

How can such religion of fuzzy, vague values and meaningless formality lend weight to solving the nitty-gritty problems of our times?

Religious Hypocrisy

Today, growing numbers of clerics are in the forefront of civil disobedience marches; they advocate “situation ethics” morality, condone premarital and extramarital sex relations, homosexuality, and other clear-cut Bible declarations of sin. Other thousands of clerics remain virtually silent about the sins of their parishioners or nation.

In much of today’s popular religion, there are no “sins” – just “behavioristic abnormalities” or “social maladjustments.” There are crimes against man, but not against God. A clear definition of “sin” or wrongdoing is lacking in our modern societies, although it is clearly explained in God’s revealed Word to man – the Bible. The apostle John states that “... sin is the transgression of the law” (I John 3:34).

It’s the age when millions of Americans have accepted churchgoing without bothering to learn much about it – just like the pagans who flocked – unchanged in heart – into the church after Constantine. Millions are ignorant of even the most basic tenets of their faith or the Bible.

Said one Bible translator: “It is one of the curious phenomena of modern times that it is considered perfectly respectable to be abysmally ignorant of the Christian faith. Men and women who would be deeply ashamed of having their ignorance exposed in matters of poetry, music, or painting, for example, are not in the least perturbed to be found ignorant of the New Testament” (quoted in *Christianity Today*, Aug. 30, 1963).

It’s the age of *hypocritical* religion.

“Mystic Revolution”

In the midst of pervasive religious and moral confusion, many are turning to astrology and the occult in hopes of finding the answers to the big questions in life: Who am I? Where am I going?

Many who have found little solace in conventional Christianity are now seeking spiritual enlightenment by attempting to “expand the mind,” explore the unusual, or experience some psychic thrill or sensation.

Ours is the age of marijuana, “speed,” LSD and other mind-scrambling drugs – of psychedelic music, bizarre art and fashions. Now we have the “mystic revolution.”

According to a professor of sociology at the University of Washington: “Sociologists argue that in a stable society religion provides the necessary answers to the *great questions of life*,

death and man's fate. But when stability is upset, persons experience a sense of being lost, and, in a peculiar state of receptivity, they turn desperately about, looking for new answers.

"Some are looking for new answers within the framework of organized religion. Hence such trends as 'speaking in tongues,' 'underground masses,' or the introduction of jazz and contemporary dancing into religious services."

But for the most part, the seeking of "new answers" is conducted outside the church, and has fueled the upsurge in interest in astrology and the occult.

It was this way in Rome, too, at the time when the mighty Empire was crumbling.

"Predictive astrology, like divination and occultism, generally tends to take hold in times of confusion, uncertainty and the breakdown of religious belief. Astrologers and assorted sorcerers were *busy in Rome* while the empire was declining and prevalent throughout Europe during the great 17th century waves of plague. Today's young stargazers claim to be responding to a similar sense of disintegration and disenchantment ..." (*Time*, March 21, 1969).

Some sources estimate that ten million Americans are "hard-core adherents" to astrological forecasting. Another 40 million, it reported, dabble in the subject. Said one magazine: "It appears clear that what was once regarded as an offshoot of the occult is a rapidly evolving popular creed."

In Canada, the story is much the same. Robert Thomas Allen writes in the October 1969 issue of *Maclean's Magazine*: "... Canadians are going in for what is probably the biggest revival of astrology since the fall of Babylon."

"Colossal Increase" in Britain

In Britain, the new "psychic" age is perhaps more entrenched than anywhere else in the Western world. A leading London consultant in psychosomatic medicine says: "There is undoubtedly a colossal increase in interest in mysticism of all kinds The unmistakable trend is for more professional people to pursue a search for a glimpse into the future."

The respected *Sunday Times* in Britain estimates that over two-thirds of Britain's adults read their horoscopes. Of these about a fifth – or several million – take them seriously.

Some estimate that over a third of the adult British public believes in fortune-telling and nearly half in telepathy. Today, the finest bookstores in any town have racks reserved for books on astrology and the occult.

Yet in spite of all this, no answers are forthcoming. Millions of moderns – like the ancient Romans – admit to the "irrelevance" of traditional concepts and beliefs. They know organized religion has no power. Eastern mysticism and the occult are bruised religious reeds that confused, uncertain and fearful moderns are often leaning upon. But they are *not* providing the sought-for spiritual support.

Just as ancient Rome welcomed Eastern mysticism and occult practices, so the United States and Britain are following suit. All the same symptoms of religious and spiritual sickness are present. Speaking of the last days, God says of the modern House of Jacob: "... *They be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers* like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers [foreigners]" (Isa. 2:6).

CHAPTER FIVE

A Mad Craze for Pleasure

We live in a society where “anything goes.” The consequences are manifested in a society of escapists, gripped in history’s greatest pleasure binge, in excessive cravings for luxury and ease, in materialistic lust and money-worship!

“Anything goes” shows itself in entertainment obsessed with sexploitation, violence and the depths of human perversion. It is found in a drug-inundated culture that is ill at ease outside a continual state of drug-induced euphoria or “kicks.”

We have our “anything-to-make-a-buck” business ethic, our “New Morality” (or rather immorality), our loose-living hippie subculture, our white-collar thief and the shoplifting housewife.

We see the “anything goes” philosophy in the furtive support of a multibillion-dollar organized vice and pornography industry, in the topless and bottomless nightclubs and restaurants, in the subtle message that preaches, “crime pays – just don’t get caught.”

“Live It Up – Now!”

Our commercial society shouts and screams its materialistic goals and values at every corner, on our billboards, with nearly every flip of a magazine page, with many a TV broadcast. The tempting message says, “Live this way”; “live a little more”; “it’s the ‘in’ thing”; “don’t worry, everybody does it” or as Madison Avenue says, “Happiness is”

What is happiness supposed to be?

“Happiness is,” continues the unrelenting bombardment, “buying our car ... purchasing this style of clothing ... eating this food ... drinking this beer ... seeing this movie ... taking this trip ... indulging in this sporting activity.” Or it is “joining our gang ... popping this pill ... freaking out ... pot ... speed ... free love ... the Pill.” As if this were life’s ultimate achievement!

“Indulge yourself” ... “you owe it to yourself” ... “buy now, pay later” ... “live it up – now!” goes the swan song of an indulgent society. And millions ignorantly throw caution to the wind. In an age of selfish materialism, few seriously question whether all this rapid consumption of indulgences is really good for them, or where it will all lead!

Only the strong can resist the temptation to immediately overindulge themselves; only the wise with a strong sense of values can see through the superficiality, sham, deceit and emptiness of much of it.

Only those with an eye on the lessons of history understand the subtle dangers of careless, excessive self-indulgence, self-seeking and hedonism, while the nation faces the greatest problems in its history, demanding the greatest effort and sacrifice. However, millions would rather play, escape and indulge themselves in temporary, selfish goals.

What does history teach us about such trends? Again, let Rome tell her story.

The Roman Pleasure Binge

As mentioned earlier, with the conquering of many nations, wealth, trade and fortunes were to be made. But with wealth came a crucial problem.

A Roman historian explains: “The ‘Pax Romana’ brought many blessings; it made possible the *greatest luxury*, the *most active commercial life* the world ever saw ... though a few savage tribes might ravage the frontiers, the quiet interior provinces were destined to perpetual peace and prosperity [so the Roman citizens thought]

“And so in this dream of the absolute fixity of the Roman system, men went on *getting*, *studying*, *enjoying dissipating* – doing everything except to prepare for fighting until Alaric

sacked the Eternal City And so the barbarians at length destroyed a society that was more slowly destroying itself" (William Stearns Davis, *The Influence of Wealth in Imperial Rome*, pp. 314, 317, 330).

What were the Roman's highest social values and goals?

"... *The excessive desire for wealth without regard to methods or to duty toward posterity ... the downright sensuality* were accomplishing their perfect work. The economic evil was at the bottom. First Italy, then a vast Empire, devoted itself for centuries to a *feverish effort for getting money by any means*, and to spending that money on *selfish enjoyments*. Other things went for little"

"*Their fall was great ... while the lesson of their fall lies patent to the twentieth century*" (*ibid.*, pp. 334, 335).

Mad Craze for Pleasure

The noted Roman historian Edward Gibbon commented on the pleasure-crazed ruin of the Roman character in his famous treatise, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. He wrote: "From the morning to the evening, careless of the sun or of the rain, the spectators, who sometimes amounted to the number of *four hundred thousand* [the giant Circus Maximus in Rome seated this many], remained in eager attention; their eyes fixed on the horses and charioteers, their minds agitated with hope and fear for the success of the colours which they espoused; and *the happiness of Rome appeared to hang on the event of a race*" (vol. II, p. 148, Modern Library edition).

Games lasting one day soon became games lasting seven, nine or fifteen days. But the Roman people could never have too much. They were not much different from the crowds who sleep overnight in front of the ticket offices waiting to buy World Series or Super Bowl tickets in the United States.

A Remarkable Parallel

Few people realize just how closely contemporary American and British life parallels that of Imperial Rome before its collapse. The gripping book, *Those About to Die*, by Daniel P. Mannix (pages 6-7, 139-140), portrays startling conditions about Roman life. Notice the interplay between Mannix's observations of ancient Roman life and conditions today.

"In a sense, the people were trapped. Rome had over-extended herself. She had become, as much by accident as design, the dominant nation of the world.

"The cost of maintaining the 'Pax Romana' – the Peace of Rome – over most of the known world was proving too great even for the enormous resources of the mighty empire

"The cost of its gigantic military program was only one of Rome's headaches. To encourage industry in her various satellite nations, Rome attempted a policy of unrestricted trade, but *the Roman workingman was unable to compete with the cheap foreign labor and demanded high tariffs* The government was finally forced to subsidize the Roman working class to make up the difference between their 'real wages' [the actual value of what they were producing] and the wages required to keep up their relatively high standard of living."

Just as in America and Britain today! Spiraling wage increases are helping to cause inflation and are pricing American goods right out of the world market. And lower-cost *imports* are threatening our own domestic market.

"As a result, thousands of workmen lived on this subsidy and did nothing whatever, sacrificing their standard of living for a life of ease."

Today, we find America and Britain increasingly becoming welfare states. This is taxing our resources and setting in motion unhealthy attitudes toward work and productivity. "Attempts were made to abolish slave labor in the factories but *the free workman's demand for short hours and high wages had grown so great* that only slaves could be used economically."

What effect did all this have on the average Roman citizen? Continues Mannix: "With the economic and military position of the empire *too hopelessly complicated* for the crowd to

comprehend, they turned more and more toward the only thing that they could understand – the arena.

“The name of a great general or of a brilliant statesman meant no more to the Roman mob than the name of a great scientist does to us today. *But the average Roman could tell you every detail of the last games*, just as today the average man can tell you all about the latest football or baseball standings, but has only the foggiest idea what NATO is doing or what steps are being taken to fight inflation.”

Life simply became too complex for the average Roman. But the continuous staging of games and spectacles – cleverly promoted by the Caesars to keep the people’s minds occupied – was something to which he could relate. The Caesars, said one historian, “exhausted their ingenuity to provide the public with more festivals than any people, in any country, at any time, has ever seen.”

Until our time, that is.

Sports Heroes Enthralled Populace

Rome endowed its professional sports heroes with great glory.

“The charioteers knew glory too – and more. Though they were of low-born origin, mainly slaves emancipated only after recurrent success, they were lifted out of their humble estates by the fame they acquired and the fortunes they rapidly amassed from the gifts of magistrates and emperors, and the *exorbitant salaries* they extracted ... as the price of remaining with the colours” (Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, p. 219).

Professional athletes today are demanding – and receiving – whopping salaries. Some football and basketball “superstars” have negotiated multiyear contracts for several million dollars. Highly touted but unproved “rookies” straight out of college are virtually financially set up for life. Some of them are paid four or five times the salary of their former professors (who have doctor’s degrees).

Gambling Mania

And there is the matter of gambling on sporting activities. Affluent Rome thrived on it.

“But the passionate devotion which they [the charioteers] inspired in a whole people was fed also from more tainted sources. It was related to the *passion* for gambling

“The victory of one chariot enriched some, impoverished others; the hope of winning unearned money held the Roman crowd all the more tyrannically in its grip in that the larger proportion was unemployed. The rich would stake a fortune, the poor the last penny” (*ibid.*, pp. 220-221).

Gambling is a major and traditional ingredient of modern Britain’s way of life. No one knows for certain, but it may even be Britain’s number one industry. Surely it is her number one pastime. Ever since Parliament passed the Betting and Gaming Act in 1960, establishing betting shops and permitting gaming for charity and other purposes, the gambling industry has taken off like a rocket. In 1969 in Britain the turnover of the gambling industry equaled \$6 billion.

Every week in the winter, football pools pay out small fortunes that may range from £50,000 to £500,000 or more. Although the pools themselves are taxed, the winnings are not.

In almost every town in Britain today, at least one of the major cinemas has been turned into a bingo hall. In some towns all the cinemas have become bingo halls. Everywhere, one sees storefront signs reading “Turf Accountant” – referring to a bookmaker’s shop.

The Modern “Orgy” Scene

But there are other trends which manifest the growing craze for unrestrained pleasures and thrills.

Recent rock festivals attended by hundreds of thousands of youths have become orgies of several days of music, drugs and free love.

Increasingly, near-naked youths walk around in these crowds – unashamed and unabashed. Massive groups gather for “nude-ins” or frolic on the beaches.

The moral mood of the nation is simple: “Let’s have an orgy” – not unlike a Roman orgy!

For vast segments of the American and British public, the “orgy” continues as television fills the need for vicarious thrills and violence.

For frankness, it is hard to top some of the shows on the “telly” in Britain and America. Staff members of a large American newspaper recently tabulated TV violence in the prime evening hours for seven consecutive nights. The results? Eighty-one murders and killings and 210 incidents or threats of violence.

Recent studies show that the average American child between the ages of 5 and 15 watches the violent destruction of over 13,000 persons on television during his childhood years.

Just like the Romans, watching the gory spectacles in the arenas, our young people are “learning nothing but contempt for human life and dignity” (Carcopino, p. 243).

Stage and Screen

An almost unbelievable avalanche of sex, perversion, pornography, “blue” films, sadism, masochism, bestiality, murder, rape and brutality has flooded into public view through motion pictures, stage productions and lurid magazines and pulp novels.

It was much the same way in Rome before that great empire was swept into oblivion.

“Almost from the beginning the Roman stage was gross and immoral. It was one of the main agencies to which must be attributed the *undermining of the originally sound moral life of Roman society*.

“So absorbed did the people become in the indecent representations of the stage that they lost all thought and care of the affairs of real life” (Myers, *Rome, Its Rise and Fall*, pp. 515, 516).

Scraping the bottom of the barrel of utter depravity, recent stage productions have gone far past mere nudity to include on-stage simulation of intercourse and, in at least one case, bestiality.

Pornography alone, in the United States, is big business! And most pornographic material finds its way into the hands of youths.

Self-indulgence today has reached new lows in morality and new highs in expenditure!

“Pleasure Explosion”

Americans are literally in the midst of a pleasure explosion.

Statistics from a recent year show that total expenditures on leisure activities in affluent America came to at least \$105 billion. This enormous sum was:

1. Higher than the annual defense budget.
2. Roughly one-tenth of the U.S. gross national product (GNP).
3. More than the GNP of most of the nations of the world, with the exception of the largest industrial powers.

Of the \$105,000,000,000, it is estimated that over \$50,000,000,000 will be spent this year on recreational equipment and leisure-time pursuits other than travel. The equipment ranges from boats, private planes, motor bikes, snowmobiles, camping equipment and athletic paraphernalia, to in-home items such as color TV’s, “home entertainment” consoles, records and musical instruments. The sum also includes the mushrooming hobby business (\$800,000,000 a year), purchases of books, magazines and newspapers, club and fraternal organization memberships, admissions to movies, plays, athletic events and racetrack betting. Another \$40,000,000,000 will be spent on vacations and travel within the U.S. Foreign travel chalks up an additional \$6,300,000,000.

Romans, we are told by Dr. Robert Strausz-Hupé, were “inveterate sightseers and tourists.” But it is doubtful they topped contemporary Americans.

Don’t Misunderstand

Let's not misunderstand! Money, material gadgetry, entertainment, athletics, travel, in themselves, are not necessarily wrong. Far from it! Used properly, they can help to maintain a well-balanced, healthy, abundant life. But when an entire nation seems to have nothing but the pursuit of money, gadgetry, pleasure, escape and thrills as its national goals – that nation is in *serious trouble!*

Today, millions have no higher ideal or purpose than to get out and indulge themselves in a particular personal pleasure. So wrapped up and involved are millions in these short-range pleasures that few are willing to endure any discomfort or privation to solve national problems or threats.

One young man summarized the general attitude of many: "I don't care much what happens, as long as I get my beach time." Another said, "Don't bother me while *Gunsmoke* is on." During one of the Saturn-Apollo trips, regularly scheduled TV programs were interrupted. Furious citizens deluged TV stations with complaints.

On another occasion, former President Nixon had to carefully time a return trip from Europe and a nationwide television address *before* a Monday night professional football contest in order to assure himself of a significant audience.

Why has such crass materialism and pleasure become the overriding concern of millions? Because the nation has lost a sense of national purpose or higher ideals other than personal selfish ones.

Andrew Hacker, in his book, *The End of the American Era*, pointed out that thanks to our material success "a willingness to sacrifice is no longer in the American character." And "what was once a nation has become simply an agglomeration of self-concerned individuals" – "200 million egos," as he scathingly captioned one chapter.

Britain Changed, Too

No two modern nations have changed so drastically in national character and ideals in recent years as have the British and American peoples.

In his book, *Decline and Fall? – Britain's Crisis in the Sixties*, author Paul Einzig clearly explains the real cause for the decline of Britain as a world power.

"Britain's most valuable asset had always been the *character* of her people They are, or were until recently, as public-spirited as any nation and more so than most nations

"What has been the main cause of Britain's decline? The answer is, the author regrets to say, the deterioration of some of those qualities of British character which had been responsible for the achievement of British greatness

"The [British] Empire was built up and maintained by the devotion of the British people to the cause of their country. That devotion seems to have declined to the vanishing point. Everybody, or at any rate the overwhelming majority, is now for himself and himself alone

"When the author ... reads books or sees films on the Battle of Britain period, he finds it somewhat difficult to believe that the people he encounters or reads about today can possibly belong to the same race as the people who gave such a magnificent account of themselves in 1940" (pp. 16, 28, 29, 6).

Author Einzig then asks: "What has happened to the 'Spirit of Dunkirk'?"

"If it had not been for that spirit," he says, "Britain could not have survived as an independent nation. Had the men engaged in aircraft production slowed down for the sake of earning more overtime pay, or had they embarked on wildcat strikes at the slightest excuse, or had they been resisting measures aimed at increasing output or saving manpower, the R.A.F. could not possibly have been provided with the additional Spitfires that enabled them to win the Battle of Britain with a narrow margin.

"Unfortunately today the behaviour that was the exception in 1940 has become the rule, while the attitude that was the rule in 1940 has now become the rare exception.

"Everybody, or almost everybody, is trying to get as much as possible out of the community and to give the community as little as possible in return If the debasement of the British

character is allowed to continue too long, the point of no return might be passed at some stage” (pp. 6, 7, 11).

Witnessing a plethora of strikes in vital areas when the nation has been at the heights of economic difficulties, one even wonders if the point of no return has not already been passed.

Warning: Selfishness, Then Disaster!

In his State of the Union message in January 1960, the late President Eisenhower said: “A rich nation can for a time without noticeable damage to itself pursue a course of self-indulgence, making its single goal the material ease and comfort of its own citizens. But the enmities it will incur, the isolation into which it will descend, and the internal, moral and physical softness that will be engendered will in the long term bring it to *disaster*.”

“America did not become great through softness and self-indulgence,” he continued. “Her miraculous progress and achievements flow from other qualities far more worthy and substantial. And those were adherence to principles and methods constant with our religious philosophy, of satisfaction in hard work, the readiness to sacrifice for worthwhile causes, the courage to meet every challenge to our progress, the intellectual honesty and capacity to recognize the true path of our own best interests.”

Sadly, those qualities are rare today. Selfishness, pleasure-seeking, dishonesty, hatred, lying are the watchwords.

How remarkable that a certain Book – the Bible – claiming to speak of the “last days” of society as we know it, says: “This know also, that in the last days *perilous times* shall come. For men shall be *lovers of their own selves*, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady highminded, *lovers of pleasures* MORE than lovers of God; having a *form* of godliness, but denying the *power* thereof: from such *turn away*” (II Tim. 3:1-5).

And you have witnessed, with your own eyes, this very prophesied social revolution in the past two decades!

CHAPTER SIX

The Economy in Trouble

“Nothing is surer than death and taxes,” goes the oft-repeated joke. But to the Romans of the Empire it was no joke – for many, it was truly hard to decide which was worse!

The economic oppression of the later Empire increasingly ate the spirit, loyalty and pride out of the citizenry, high and low, and fostered a rash of other ills. It tore away at community and national spirit.

The costs of running a gigantic empire were massive. They caused a perpetual administrative struggle to maintain a stable economy.

The ever-burgeoning government bureaucracy became horribly expensive. Especially after Diocletian (late third century), the greatly enlarged military establishment caused great economic strain. Food, supplies, weapons, new frontier posts and fortification of towns cost fantastic amounts. Extravagant and excessive spending on buildings and engineering works added to the financial load.

It took a veritable army of officials to man and work the complicated dual supply and demands of both the government services and the military. This necessitated laying still heavier burdens of taxation upon already overburdened people.

There were land taxes, property taxes, occupation taxes, poll taxes, crop taxes, commercial taxes ... taxes on almost everything. No stone was left unturned for revenues.

There were other economic problems which aggravated the revenue problem. Rising prices, loss of money's purchasing power, the escape of the rich from taxation, the poor growing poorer, the decline of production, soil exhaustion and droughts, disease epidemics decimating provinces, peasant rebellions, brigandage, barbarian incursions and expensive wars – all violently shook and weakened the economic superstructure of the Empire.

Agriculture in Trouble

While commerce and industry were important to the economic base of the Empire, agriculture was the chief source of wealth. Hence, landowners were heavily taxed. The poor farmer had special troubles.

The rich could afford great numbers of cheap slaves to work their vast estates. The poor small farmer couldn't compete.

“The big farmers could undersell him, both in cattle and in produce, in the market. The result was that in course of time the small, independent farmer was driven to the wall” (James Westfall Thompson, *Economic and Social History of the Middle Ages*, p. 33).

The small farmer either had to sell out and flee to the city or become a tenant farmer, hardly better than a slave.

Forced to mortgage a part, then all of his farm, he usually found himself evicted from his land by a covetous grand proprietor who bought the mortgage from the broker.

“Latin literature abounds with complaints regarding this evil, which thinking men saw was sapping the vitality of the nation The free yeoman class, that middle class which is the bone and sinew of every healthy society, was gradually being crushed out. But the protests of these enlightened citizens went for naught The evil of land monopoly was spread over the whole Roman Empire” (*ibid.*, p. 33).

And at the same time, *imported foodstuffs* from newly conquered lands were undercutting the small farmer's prices. Since the Empire always imported more than it exported, the balance of trade was always against Rome. The heart of the Empire suffered at times from its own version of trade war.

There were other resulting evils.

“Many of the dispossessed gave up the struggle and drifted to the towns there to become dependents or clients of the rich, or to be engulfed in the increasing idle proletariat of the cities fed at public expense (the *annona*) and amused with the baths and the circus” (*ibid.*, p. 32).

That is a familiar story, reminding us of the evils of present-day skyrocketing welfarism and the massive migration to urban areas from the farms.

Farmers Fleeing the Land

As in Rome, small farmers today are leaving the field in droves and fleeing to the cities, aggravating problems already there. Small farmers today just can't make it. Increasingly farm buildings lie desolate. Many farmers can't meet the expenses of modern farming at the prices they are receiving. Only the growing number of agricultural monoliths consistently make a respectable profit!

“Since the end of World War II, more than 20 million Americans have abandoned the countryside to take up residence in the nation's cities and suburbs. The great exodus was prompted in part by a technological revolution in agriculture which put 3 million farms out of business and 6 million farmers out of work. It also was stimulated by television, national-circulation magazines and other mass media which brought the age-old lure of city lights right into the living rooms of town and country America” (*The Drovers Journal*, Feb. 27, 1969).

Farming today is no longer looked upon as a noble occupation – witness the fleeing of the farmers' sons and daughters to the alluring jobs and glamour of city life. Reliable, steady hired hands are becoming a thing of the past. The age of the average farmer is in the mid-50's.

Just under 10 million Americans live on farms in a population of over 210 million – a drop in farm population of one-third since 1960.

Galloping Inflation

Our copper-nickel “sandwich” coins are signs of economic deterioration, but look at the Roman experience: “By the third quarter of the third century the silver coins had become copper pieces washed in silver and issues of gold had virtually ceased. There was a *vast inflation*; by the end of the third century prices had risen to *two hundred times* the second-century level” (*Roman Civilization*, edited by J.P.V.D. Balsdon, p. 73).

M. Rostovtzeff, in his book, *Rome*, put it this way: “... The emperors in their need for money issued a vast quantity of coin. Not possessing enough of the precious metals for these issues, they alloyed the gold with silver, the silver with copper, and the copper with lead, thus debasing the coinage and ruining in the end men who had once been rich. This measure cut at the root of trade and industry The government mint in the third century became a vast manufactory of base coin” (p. 276).

Diocletian, in the late third century, struggled to restore the quality of the economy, and for a time succeeded in establishing a semblance of order.

But the financial state was in such turmoil that he had to proclaim an edict fixing maximum prices on all goods to curb inflation.

Portions of that decree have come down to us and the following are a few telltale excerpts revealing the emperor's anguish at the collapsing economic situation: “For, if the *raging avarice* ... which without regard for mankind, increases and develops by leaps and bounds ... almost from hour to hour, and even minute to minute, could be held in check by some regard for moderation ... but ... *there is seen only a mad desire without control to pay no heed to the needs of many* ...” (Elgin Groseclose, *Money and Man – A Survey of Monetary Experience*, p. 43).

Sound familiar? The modern version manifests itself in a continual push-cost spiral – fantastic wage demands, followed by commodity price increases, resulting in ballooning

inflation! (A dollar that was considered to be worth 100 cents in 1900 now is worth 16 cents in terms of what it will buy; a 1940 dollar, 29 cents).

But Diocletian's edict backfired! Rather than fix prices, it made people afraid to sell. Therefore, demand skyrocketed and so did prices! Utter economic stagnation resulted. The price-fixing decree was a failure and abandoned within five years.

Even though Diocletian's and Constantine's total administrative and economic reforms were a temporary help to the Empire, the ultimate end continually crept closer and closer.

Another significant factor that played a part in the decline of the Empire needs mentioning. Many historians note that the economic base of the Empire was seriously shaken at times by rampant *disease epidemics*.

There was a devastating plague under Marcus Aurelius in the second century, and several more from time to time in the third century. As well, barbarian incursions added to these epidemics, causing loss of population in some areas for long periods. Also droughts and famine wrought havoc periodically. These, among other trends, played a part in weakening the Empire.

Dangers of Welfarism

Another significant factor that contributed to the breakdown of the character and spirit of the populace was welfare. The dole became a way of life.

Roman wealth and government welfare spoiled the citizenry. Many became so accustomed to government doles of food and other services that the government could ill afford to cut down these services lest it face a major uprising.

At times, the city of Rome had from one-third to one-half of the population receiving part or all of its subsistence from public charity. The problem faced all major cities of the Empire, but probably not to the same extent as in Rome.

Of course, that shouldn't shock us in modern America and Britain. We are well on our way to advanced welfare states. In New York City, already one out of seven people is living on welfare. And similar problems are bemoaned by despairing city officials everywhere in a modern America cursed by the burden of welfare loads!

The tragic lesson of Rome is again being ignored – even though most people today have at least heard about Roman society being sapped by the dole.

"... The history of the dole carries a warning Even under the Empire it became a *permanently demoralizing factor* in the social and economic life. *People were schooled to expect something for nothing*. This failure of the old Roman virtues of self-reliance and initiative was conspicuously shown in that part of the population that was on relief. It had far wider aspects. Emergencies that would not have dismayed the men of the Republic were too much for the men of the later Empire" (H. J. Haskell, *The New Deal in Old Rome – How Government in the Ancient World Tried to Deal with Modern Problems*, pp. 228-229).

Although today welfare is needed by many just to survive, the real tragedy is our way of life which has pushed so many to depend on – and far too many to abuse – government help.

Economic History Repeated – Crushing Taxation

It doesn't take a degree in economics to see the many economic crises in our modern nations!

Welfare and the dole are only one aspect of the devastating financial burden. Ever-increasing taxation is another demoralizing load the public has to carry. Every American and Briton is more than well aware of the voracious tax bite which gobbles up a bigger chunk of his income with each passing year.

In 1902, the total bill for taxes of all kinds in the U.S. amounted to \$18 per capita. By 1948, it had risen to \$377; by 1960, \$709. In 1968 it was more than \$1,000. And every year sees another rise.

State and municipal taxes are rising astronomically, too. Cities are finding themselves at the end of the taxation rope. With the exodus of the white-collar middle class to the suburbs, city tax bases are crumbling.

Recent statistics reveal that all U.S. taxes combined – federal, state and local – consume more than 35 cents of every dollar of national income.

Taxes, combined with the evils of inflation, are causing many to practice the principle of “live today, forget tomorrow.”

“People have no reason to save their money,” said a secretary in London. “If you keep it the government will soon find some way of taking it from you.”

Taxpayers complain they realize little for their money. Services in education and other vital functions get poorer; many get pinched or curtailed. Little wonder that there are growing signs of a tax revolt in parts of the United States.

Most of Western civilization is merely repeating the financial mistakes of the Roman Empire – and surprisingly also the mistakes of a pre-Roman people recorded in biblical history.

When Ancient Israel Chose to Reject God

Long ago when ancient Israel wanted to replace God’s government with a monarchy like the surrounding Gentile nations, the prophet Samuel was instructed to give them solemn warning of what such a government would be like. In the language of the day, he warned the people that the king would take their sons and daughters to serve in his armies, that it would cost them dearly to finance such a government and that the people would cry out to God because of the burden of man’s rule. But the people wanted their own way. And God allowed them to have it – to teach them a lesson.

The modern descendants of those ancient Israelites have still not learned that lesson! Today the burden of big government is heavier than ever. Taxes soar and the offspring of our populace still spill their blood in an endless round of wars in the world’s “hot spots.” Since the first World War, how many parents have cried out to God in anguish: “Why did you take *my* son on the battlefield?” And when have people not cried out about the staggering weight of taxation? But notice the words of the Creator: “And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king [government] which ye shall have chosen ... and the Lord will not hear you in that day” (1 Sam. 8:18).

Soaring Inflation, Plunging into Debt

Far more relative to the average Westerner is the soaring inflation that is eating away at everyone’s standard of living. Nobody likes it, but few accept their part in causing it! Millions on small or fixed incomes, especially the poor, aged or needy welfare recipients, are oppressed by inflation but can do nothing about it – they are hapless, helpless victims.

Despite high interest rates, millions upon millions of people plunge headlong into debt. They live for the pleasure of the moment, and pursue an endless array of gadgets and thrills. But the “piper has to be paid.” Once again, it is the experience of ancient Rome being repeated.

Writes historian William Stearns Davis in his book, *The Influence of Wealth in Imperial Rome* (pages 163, 164, 167): “As an almost unavoidable corollary of the huge Roman fortunes, went the *accumulation of debts* Even men of grave and respectable habits caught the mania of their age, that of *living beyond their incomes* The typical Roman of birth and fashion may then be imagined as *regularly in debt, and frequently on the brink of ruin.*”

The average American is in the same sinking financial boat. Total debt in the United States, both public and private, stands at an astronomical 2.7 trillion dollars!

Debt living is the typical American way of life! Sixty-five percent of all Americans use installment credit and one-third of these are believed to be on the brink of serious financial trouble, according to one expert. “Most of the people in a financial bind today are earning \$7,000 to \$12,000 [a year],” said the president of a major Washington-based credit counseling service.

[Editor's note: If you are one who is in debt – and would like to free yourself from frustrating financial burdens – the Worldwide Church of God publishes an easy-to-read booklet giving several useable commonsense techniques concerning money management. Write for your free copy of *Managing Your Personal Finances*.]

A Flood of Imports

On top of all this is the growing threat of worldwide trade war. Under the sudden crushing burden of quadrupled oil import costs, nations are seriously tempted to “beggar their neighbors” by promoting exports and limiting imports.

In fact, the first warning shots of trade battle have already been fired. The trouble is, few have heard the volley of shots.

Charges and countercharges of protectionism, discrimination and bad faith regularly hurtle back and forth across both the Atlantic and the Pacific.

Both Japan and the Common Market have become economic supergiants – far surpassing expectations. Both produce high-quality goods and want to expand markets. They must if they are to earn sufficient foreign exchange to pay for high-priced oil and vital resources.

Yet, instead of gearing up for the fight for economic survival and sacrifice, Americans and Britons are seemingly more interested in enjoying an ever-higher standard of living.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Political Paralysis

The Roman Empire was administered by Big Government. It was a vast machine that awed less organized and less disciplined nations. But it developed alarming weaknesses we need to be warned of today.

“... Long before the [barbarian] invasions of the reign of Honorius [A.D. 395-423], the fabric of Roman *society* and *administration* was honeycombed by moral and economic vices, which made the belief in the eternity of Rome a vain delusion” (Samuel Dill, *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire*, p. 277).

Rome possibly could have “fallen” several times in its history. But the leadership of strong men, despite other personal vices or shortcomings, delayed the breakdown of the Empire by the institution of strong administrative reforms.

Following on the heels of Julius Caesar, Augustus Caesar more perfectly welded together the unity of the Empire – saving it from the corruption and civil war of the later Republic. Diocletian and Constantine delayed the “end” again by certain reforms in administration and economics in the late third and early fourth centuries. Theodosius and a few other emperors tried desperately to put a stop to rampant corruption and injustices toward the end of the fourth century. But in spite of such leaders, the end of the Western Empire finally came.

One man could not take the place of national spirit and unity! A few struggling and concerned men at the top couldn’t alter the course of a largely apathetic and morally decadent populace which combined disastrously with the politically corrupt maladministration of underlings.

After the death of Theodosius (A.D. 395), the decay of the Roman Empire in the West was rapidly accelerated. Following emperors were appreciably weaker and incompetent. They became the puppets of scheming advisers, administrators, and military commanders, the latter being largely of barbarian stock.

Giant Bureaucracy, Hobbled Effectiveness

Administrative problems for the Empire gradually intensified through the years. As the Empire grew, Roman administration demanded better collection of taxes and improved distribution of services – especially to the military. A gigantic bureaucracy developed. The imperial civil service, instituted first by Augustus, was greatly enlarged by Diocletian to service the reorganized administration and the greatly enlarged military.

But, true to form, with this rapid expansion of civil service came a downgrading in the quality of the administrators. The central government could no longer exercise sufficient discrimination in appointments or keep a close check on conduct of civil service appointees.

By the days of Constantine, administrative corruption was rampant.

“It is clear from Constantine’s legislation that he was shocked by the corruption and extortion which prevailed among provincial governors, but he was evidently unable to restore respectable standards of probity” (A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, p. 1054).

And, like today, “red tape” didn’t help. “Excessive centralization involved an immense volume of clerical labour and *slowed up the processes of government*. Nor did it achieve its object of checking corruption” (*ibid.*, pp. 1056-1057).

Rampant Corruption

A study of the Roman law code reveals the great effort of several emperors to control abuses and injustices rampant in the later Empire.

The paradox is clear. The very institution of law after law is evidence that order was breaking down. Legislation was legion: laws to put down fraud; protect the weak, the slave, the debtor,

the poor free man from the rich, the laborer against his superior, the father from the ingratitude of his children; laws against corrupt political practices.

“The last and deepest impression which the inquirer will carry with him, as he rises from a study of the Theodosian Code [issued A.D. 438], is that *fraud and greed are everywhere triumphant*, that the rich are growing richer and more powerful while the poor are becoming poorer and more helpless, and that the imperial government, inspired with the best intentions, has *lost all control of the vast machine*” (Dill, *op. cit.*, p. 229).

But it wasn't just the bureaucracy which was often criminal. The whole society was infected with the same corrupted spirit!

“*Everyone stole*. In the army, the clerks stole the pay; the *navicularii* [commercial tradesmen] charged with the service of the *annona* [crop supply], stole from the corn; they themselves were exploited by those set over the ports. The recruiters accepted for conscripts the refuse of the *coloni*. The postal administration exploited travelers. Public servants ... took bribes for judicial audiences” (Ferdinand Lot, *The End of the Ancient World and the Beginning of the Middle Ages*, p. 176).

Many forms of extortion became general practice and caused no great excitement. Civil servants increased their salaries by tips or fees. Soon, however, the difference between the tips and bribes became unclear. But, often, it was the only way to get things done.

And, too often, like today, the justice for the rich and the poor was quite different.

“The high courts of justice were so clogged with appeals, the delays so interminable and the fees so high, that the victims of injustice in the lower courts were denied redress unless they had very long purses” (Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 1057).

Growing Government Paralysis

The crisis resulting from the administrative abuses elaborated by Diocletian and Constantine were a tragedy in the truest sense. There was “a humiliating paralysis of administration; in which determined effort to remedy social evils only aggravated them till they became unbearable; in which the best intentions of the central power were, generation after generation, mocked and defeated alike by irresistible laws of human nature, and by hopeless perfidy and corruption in the servants of government” (Dill, *op. cit.*, p. 281).

Need we mention the shame of Watergate, where lies, cover-up and illegal political activity dragged this nation through one of its greatest traumas and left the populace disenchanted with any leadership for a long time to come?

Today, leaders in government, high and low, face an impasse. Despite all of their well-intentioned attempts to alleviate severe problems – social, economic and political – things only become worse! They are met by opposing factions and forces at every turn. Many of the more capable men are just throwing up their hands and quitting! And so it was in Rome.

Ferdinand Lot, historian, says of the overall condition of later Roman administrations: “In spite of all, the State failed in its role of protector. It was ill served and betrayed by its own agents This aristocracy was disloyal in its service to the government, while cowering before it. It secretly thwarted it, not so much from hatred as from *a spirit of opposition and from selfishness* ... the ruling class lost all spontaneity and initiative, and in its case also, character fell very low The Empire had become too vast, too cunning and too complicated a mechanism” (*op. cit.*, p. 185).

Roman bureaucracy, trying to tackle the vast problems in every area, couldn't keep track of what was being done. The difficulties increased in complexity and numbers. Result? The Empire was forced to increase the number of individual administrators which limited each one's authority and cut effective communication between each division. One governmental unit was not sure what another one was doing. This further complicated the problems of governing.

Failure of Mutual Aid

In the same years in which the barbarians were actively harrying the Roman provinces, mutual assistance and concord between the Eastern and Western divisions of the Empire was urgently needed.

Unfortunately, the reins of government were in the hands of men who for different reasons were unpopular and in all their political actions were influenced chiefly by the consideration of their own fortunes (J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, p. 126).

Thus hampered by ineffective administration, coupled with continual struggles of usurpers for the throne, Rome succumbed to the barbarians within and without the Empire, who took advantage of Roman political turmoil and weakness and, piecemeal, sliced off sections of the Empire.

American Political Paralysis

In like manner, the political trends in America are endangering the strength of the nation!

Today's swollen bureaucracy at federal levels alone approaches three million individuals, hundreds of thousands of buildings, mountains of paper. Nobody really is sure who is doing what. There are scores and even hundreds of departments, boards, and advisory committees administering countless programs and projects – often overlapping and in conflict with each other.

In addition the federal government has increasingly become involved in functions usually relegated to states or urban administration.

This also was a growing problem in the Empire. Why? Because cities vied with one another in local patriotism, public munificence, public health and order. Lavish and spendthrift expenditures on pageants, public distributions and buildings occurred. Many cities went over their heads in debt.

In order to control this, the emperors increasingly had to interfere in city and provincial administration. The result? "Central authority was called upon to interfere on account of deplorable defects of municipal administration, while municipal life was disturbed and atrophied by constant interference from above" (*The Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. I, p. 554).

Today the situation is similar – only municipal and state governments are often *asking* the federal government to step in and rescue them from their out-of-control problems. But often they rebel at the *conditions* which the federal government wants to impose.

Given Over to Greedy Human Nature

Today, there is a growing consciousness of a credibility gap between what politicians and administrators say and what they actually do! And today, government, large and small, is held in ever-lowering esteem by growing numbers. But government is not always to blame for this situation. The moral character of many individuals is so poor that they have lost respect for any constituted authority, no matter what officials do.

In ancient Rome, it was government officials who provided the "bread and circuses" to keep unruly mobs quiet or to win public acclaim. Today, political office often goes to the man who can offer the biggest promises to the most, whether he can deliver them or not – the modern version of "bread and circuses."

And yet, while government seems more distant than ever from the individual, more and more individuals look to big government to do even more for them!

CHAPTER EIGHT

Militarism and a “Calculated Risk”

Rome found herself, like the U.S. after World War II, in the unenviable position of being a “world policeman.” Her people grew weary of this burden, and committed careless mistakes in a dangerous world.

In a military age, surrounded by nations becoming more aggressive, hostile and treacherous, Rome followed a policy that made her increasingly weaker defensively and more vulnerable to conquest. She thought her policies of defense would make her *stronger*, and for a while they did. But in the end they destroyed her!

Pride of Power Being Lost

Britain just recently, and the United States today, are experiencing the same problem. The English already have become satisfied with a “Little England” – giving up their position as a world power. The United States is also having grave difficulties. Despite the most awesome military machine the world has ever seen, the U.S. is losing power, prestige and respect. America no longer seems able to win wars – jus stalemates at best.

It’s not that American (and Britain) has no power. It’s just that we have lost pride in our power. We are uncertain how to *use* our power. But notice what God said He would do if we refused to obey Him (which we have): “And I will break the pride of your power ...” (Lev. 26:19).

Insignificant nations like Cuba and North Korea were able to stand up to superior American firepower. American forces were denied striking at the heart of enemy sanctuaries. This is a tragic spectacle for a nation that looks for its total protection from human weaponry alone.

For a dozen years the relatively inferior forces of the enemy in North Vietnam became a nagging nightmare to America – a *major* cause of national divisiveness!

Surprisingly, the historians report that the Roman Empire in the West fell under the dominance of “inferior” barbarians. Rome increasingly followed the military policy of taking a “calculated risk” on rearming neighboring warlike vassal states to defend her own borders. It backfired on her and, along with other shortcomings, allowed Roman power to be swept under!

Far-Reaching Power of Rome

For hundreds of years the Roman Empire possessed the most powerful, awe-inspiring and disciplined military force in history.

At its peak, “The Roman Empire was surrounded by a ring of military fortresses – in Britain, on the Rhine, Danube and Euphrates; in Arabia, Egypt and Africa” (M. Rostovtzeff, *Rome*, pp. 210-211).

But to support this ever-growing military machine, with all its vast requirements for more fortresses, weapons of every kind, manpower and food, required heavy financial burdens on the government and populace. Taxes were high in order to support burgeoning military needs; the bureaucracy needed to back up the collection and distribution of supplies grew ever more complicated – and corrupted!

From Diocletian onward, vast armament factories (*fabricate*) manufactured all arms required for the insatiable military forces. There were fifteen factories in the Eastern Empire for production of shields and arms – Damascus, Antioch, Edessa, Nicomedia, Sardis, Thessalonica, and others. Other cities were centers for production of heavy cavalry armor.

The Western Empire had its vast military-industrial complexes, too.

“There were shield works at Aquincum, Carnuntum, Lauriacum, Cremona, Augustodunum and Augusta Trevirorum, arrow factories at Concordia and Matisco, a bow factory at Ticinum, a breastplate works at Mantua, sword factories at Luca and Remi, and for *ballistae* [catapult artillery] at Treviri” (A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, p. 834). Other arms were produced elsewhere.

Special factories produced bronze armor adorned with silver and gold for officers. Others produced uniforms for the troops and civil services.

“The *fabricae* must have been large establishments, for their personnel was a substantial element in the population of the towns in which they were situated” (*ibid.*, p. 835).

A familiar story to the economy of modern America and other nations!

Awesome Weaponry

Rome borrowed military techniques or tactics from other nations. This gave her the latest effective tools of warfare. In the early Empire, the cool discipline and mastery of arms of her legions always won out in the end over the impetuous fury and more numerous hordes of many of her enemies. She might lose a battle, but she generally won the war.

The Romans were masters in the art of siege warfare. They built complex towers to overrun the highest walls. They developed huge protected battering rams to break down heavy walled fortresses. Besides the usual small personal arms – swords, spears, shields, bows and arrows – the Romans developed fear-inspiring and devastating heavy artillery, much of it mobile.

They had catapults that could hurl 50-pound rocks 400 yards or more – nearly a quarter of a mile – wreaking devastating destruction.

Other catapults could hurl bags of stones – the Roman equivalent of shrapnel. One device called a *ballista* could hurl a 12-foot flaming spear 2,000 feet or more – over a third of a mile. A huge crossbow device could hurl smaller fire-tipped darts in rapid succession and strike home with great accuracy.

Former Enemies Become Allies

In early times, the Romans refrained from allying *large* numbers of barbarian troops. The sons of the senators, nobles and landholders produced the backbone and leadership of Roman legions. These were the courageous fighters who steadfastly fought for the protection and glory of their homeland – expressing the character and discipline of men engaged in the work of the state.

Later, however, the armies of Rome were literally filled by barbarian soldiers, many of them former enemies. In fact, when speaking of the army of the Empire in the West in the fifth century, we are talking basically about a barbarian army in the hire of Rome; and mostly an army of Germanic origin at that!

The Russian historian Rostovtzeff relates the beginnings of this practice:

“In the troublesome times of the later Antonines, Rome needed a constant supply of recruits to defend her from the barbarians. Thousands fell in battle, and still more were carried off by pestilence. And further, the civilized classes grew less and less accustomed to military service and *sent inferior men to the ranks*.

“Hence the emperors preferred to employ a more primitive section of the population – field labourers and herdsmen from the outskirts of the empire, Thracians, Illyrians, Spanish mountaineers, Moors, men from the north of Gaul, mountaineers from Asia Minor and Syria. And so the army came to represent the less civilized part of the population” (*Rome*, pp. 271, 274).

So Romans grew used to, and even preferred to have these barbarians do the fighting for them. They had long grown used to them as neighbors. Some even settled on lands within the Empire. They had long been well known as slaves. And gradually, the Germans became the greatest leaders of the military.

Defense dependency on former enemies or using mercenary troops is not new!

Effects of Racial Changes

As pointed out by Roman historians such as Tenny Frank, a vast change in the Roman character, temperament and national feeling developed as freed slave stocks and other Easterners proliferated to become the majority within the Roman heartland itself. As the original Romans were killed in warfare or scattered in the colonies – their places at home were filled by these peoples. Racial stock changes had tremendous effect.

“The profuse intermixture of race, continuing without interruption from 200 B.C. far into the history of the Empire, produced a type utterly different from that which characterized the heroes of the early republic” (Duff, *Freedom in the Early Roman Empire*, p. 205).

With this gradual change of population came a steady drop in national feeling and deep patriotism. The freed slaves and other Easterners, after all, had little regard for ancient Roman traditions and cultural heritage. Their heritage lay elsewhere.

In measure, this affected the quality of the armies of Rome, for many of the later Romans were unwilling to fight.

“Under the later empire, service in the army grew so unpopular and even odious that many cut off the fingers of the right hand in order to escape military duty. The government was forced to impose severe penalties for such acts

“The result of this decline in the military spirit among the Romans was, as we have seen, that the recruiting ground of the legions became the barbarian lands outside the empire The loss of the military spirit in a military age, and this transformation in the armies of Rome could of course have no other outcome ... the *entrance into the army of a non-Roman spirit*, and the final overthrow of the imperial government by the revolt of the mutinous legions” (Philip Van Ness Myers, *Rome: Its Rise and Fall*, pp. 449, 450).

Then, gradually, lower discipline and softer living further weakened the effectiveness of some of the troops. And rampaging corruption gripped many of the officers, with evil effects.

Parallels to the sweeping changes taking place in the U.S. military structure cannot be missed, especially the relaxation of discipline and the scrapping of time-honored traditions.

The Germanic Pressure Increases

Increasingly, growing numbers of Germanic tribes came in contact with the Empire, some peacefully, others as invaders.

The general nature of these peoples was quite varied and unpredictable. Their basic nature was love of looting, pillaging and warfare, with few stable roots. Some became more peaceable because of weariness with warfare, and settled down within the Empire and served Rome.

Few of these tribes hated Rome to the point of wanting to totally destroy her. Many respected the civilization of Rome and its organization. But, the lure of plunder, riches and land often couldn't be restrained when the opportunity offered itself and Rome steadily grew weaker.

With the pressure of many groups of rampaging barbarian tribes threatening the provinces, Rome accepted the offers of some tribes to serve in defense of the Empire as *foederati* (federated allies) in return for money, lands or supplies. Other tribes were forced en masse into the standards of Rome as the result of defeat in battle.

Thus, the increasing threats of yet other ravaging barbarians pressured Rome into taking “calculated risks” and federating herself with uncertain allies.

The German tribes, however, were more often fighting one another than fighting the Empire. Rome used them, first one, then another, to fight each other if any became a threat to the Empire. Rome tried, as much as possible, to maintain a balance of power between these warring, unpredictable tribes so that none would gravely endanger Rome.

Rome even had to set up a “foreign aid” program to keep the barbarians from revolting. It was easier and cheaper to pay foreign mercenaries already in the provinces to protect the Empire than to go to her own defense. The policies of the Romans were much like our

foreign-aid programs today. Rome hoped to buy her friends, and keep the “peace” with gifts of money and supplies.

But the plan backfired!

“To fight the barbarians and also buy them off, and keep the magnificent edifice of the Empire standing, great resources were needed” (Ferdinand Lot, *The end of the Ancient World and the Beginnings of the Middle Ages*, p. 184).

More and more demands were made by the barbarians. As these demands increased on all sides, Rome could no longer shell out the required gifts.

The parallels between then and now are clear!

A Turning Point in History

A new terror struck the fringes of the Empire. Hordes of the terrible Huns were sweeping across the continent. Many German tribes fled in horror and sought Roman help. In A.D. 376 Emperor Valens permitted a million or so Goths to seek refuge within the Empire. The Goths came as suppliants for protection, food and shelter. If they were given lands and basic supplies, they promised that they would lead peaceful lives and provide auxiliaries for Rome’s defense if required.

“But the well-devised plan was frustrated by the knavery of the Roman officials who had its execution in charge. By their corrupt connivance *the Goths were allowed to keep their arms*; by their greediness the newcomers were defrauded of promised supplies; and by their perfidy they were driven into open rebellion” (William F. Allen, *A Short History of the Roman People*, p. 319).

Emperor Valens was killed in the battle of Adrianople (A.D. 378) in an effort to control the insurgents. (The Goths surprised the legions by introducing mounted cavalry which cut the Roman forces to ribbons.)

The Goths were finally given lands. But it was the beginning of the end. The story was to be repeated again and again in varying forms with many chieftains. The barbarians, though often militarily inferior, continuously took advantage of the corrupt, internally weak and untrustworthy Roman government and military command.

Empire Sliced to Ribbons

The rapacious barbarians slowly sliced off pieces of the Empire until little was left of the Western Empire except Italy itself.

In this period, Alaric the Visigoth, supposedly in the service of Rome, sacked Rome because of slighted and cheated feelings. It was a sign of the weakness in the very heart of the Empire. In 455 Geiseric and the Vandals occupied and sacked Rome.

The enfeeblement of the Empire had a snowballing effect. It encouraged other treacherous allies and enemies to join in the excitement and opportunities for plunder. The pressure on the forces of the Empire became unbearable.

Finally in A.D. 476, the fiction of Roman rule in the West finally came to an end when the Herulian, Odoacer, decided to replace the Roman figurehead, Romulus Augustulus, with himself. Rome, which had been at the mercy of her foreign allies and the barbarians, now fell before them.

As one Roman history source says: “... The Roman army ... failed only at the end, and failed then because it *trained in its own ranks* the border nations that swept it back in the day of its old age and exhaustion” (Grant Showerman, *Rome and the Romans*, pp. 465-466).

Dr. Robert Strausz-Hupé, noted educator in international relations, summarized Rome’s military woes this way: “Rome’s hostile neighbors turned more aggressive For awhile, *appeasement* of her enemies bought Rome peace. Then, *her strongest allies defected*, and her enemies, encouraged by Rome’s limp response to their provocations, renewed the attack and proceeded to ravage Rome’s home territories, Italy and Gaul.”

Rome’s “calculated risk” – her federations with questionable allies – failed. Her allies turned out to be “Frankenstein monsters”! They turned on Rome and destroyed her!

What about Britain and America today?

Not by Might

The United States has spent over one trillion 500 billion dollars (\$1,500,000,000,000) on armaments and defense since the end of World War II. It has poured over \$130 billion into Vietnam alone.

Despite this awesome power potential, the U.S. lost the *Pueblo* and apologized to get the crew back without the ship. Despite the latest weapons, a low-rate power was able to encourage a U.S. pullout from Vietnam.

Why?

A number of years ago a Navy official, Commander P. N. Searls, spoke out against the declining moral standards and values of society, specifically mentioning the new recruits he had to deal with.

"We can have the best missiles and ships and planes in the world," he said, "but they are no better than the men who operate them."

Then he referred to Rome's fall.

"Effete and overcivilized Rome *lost its national will and national purpose* and was overrun by the Vandals. Civilizations with a low standard of morality have been pushed to the grave throughout history by people with a low standard of dying." (In Vietnam, millions of Americans didn't know why the U.S. was involved.)

Character and purpose are the important values. That's where the strength of a nation begins. Unfortunately, we have been neglecting these qualities and have relied instead upon sheer military power (in armaments) along with the power of *other* nations as allies.

Can We Buy Faithful Allies?

Since the end of World War II, the United States has given or loaned over \$125 billion in foreign aid! Has it gained us permanent, unwavering allies?

In the past 20 years, the United States has *given away* three times as much in arms as it has sold! It gave away nearly \$35 billion worth of arms from 1950 to 1969, and *sold* over \$12 billion more. Has it made America any safer?

The United States has entered into defense pacts with over 40 nations.

During the 60s, America ringed the world with a wall of defense fortresses – over 400 major and 2,000 minor overseas bases, staffed by over a million military men. Are we secure? Today, forces have been reduced and technical weapons building increased. Yet we face the dilemma of increasing destructive power and diminishing national security.

Do military money, hardware and manpower form a wall behind which we can let morality, righteous goals and values collapse in a final splurge of self-indulgence and selfishness? Does America actually expect to remain permanently strong with such trends?

Today, America is being overcome with a noninvolvement frame of mind. The general populace has grown apathetic, ignorant and unconcerned about the increasing power of former enemies or potential enemies.

Military Underpinnings Waning

Military standards and spirit have decayed. Before the end of the draft in the United States, the prime young men of the nation, drafted for service, were rejected in alarming numbers for physical, mental or moral reasons.

In 1961, President Kennedy was highly disturbed when he learned that the U.S. Army had to call up seven men to get two soldiers. Of the five rejected, three were turned down for physical reasons, and two for mental disabilities. Later, standards were lowered so more could be accepted.

The lowering of spirit and quality of manpower has begun to manifest itself in growing trends affecting the military. Growing dissidence, refusal to obey orders, underground newspapers

undermining loyalty, drug and moral problems, racial conflicts, and relaxed regulations regarding military discipline are all on the increase.

America's "Calculated Risk"

Today, the United States finds itself supporting, defending and looking for support from former enemies, while former allies are now enemies, or becoming more hostile to the U.S. America and Britain chose to take a "calculated risk" when they rearmed Germany in fear of the Soviets. Increasingly, Japan and other nations are being asked to share the burden against the Communist "barbarians." Our trust is increasingly placed in allies to defend the borders of the American sphere of influence.

And now our allies are growing uneasy and alarmed about America's show of weakness and overinvolvement with her internal problems to the point where they suspect America may *not* keep up its professed commitments.

Is history repeating itself?

Could it be possible that in the end our "calculated risks" will be provoked to take matters into their own hands and turn out to be "Frankenstein monsters"? Will it happen to us as to Rome?

An ancient warning was applied to the biblical nation of Judah that could be a solemn warning to modern America:

"How does the city sit solitary, that was full of people! How is she become as a widow! *She that was great among the nations*, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary! She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks: *among all her lovers* [allies] she hath none to comfort her: *all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies*" (Lamentations 1:1-2).

It seems to be a growing "sport" for many nations to blame the United States for any or all world ills, and this should not be lost to anyone with open eyes.

CHAPTER NINE

The “Unseen Hand” in History

There is yet another major factor in the rise and fall of nations and empires that has not been told.

Modern man, including most historians, has largely overlooked or been ignorant of this *primary factor*! Many reject, repudiate it, ridicule it. Yet, you can *prove* it true!

Many students who have studied nations and empires, including Rome, have searched the records and have come up with one or many causes for the *decline* of those nations and empires. So far, in covering the Roman Empire in the West, we have basically shown the reasons for Rome’s *decline*.

These were largely internal weaknesses – perpetuated by the folly and carelessness of the Romans themselves.

A Time to Fall

But why did Rome “fall” *when* it did? Why did the barbarians invade the Empire and gain dominance *when* they did? Why at that time and not earlier, or later? Was it all just happenstance?

Again, why did any major empire or nation of note in history collapse *when* it did? Sometimes this is perplexing to those who study history. Even the noted Roman historian Edward Gibbon marveled that Rome lasted as long as it did, despite her many severe problems.

Severe deterioration in the major underpinnings of a nation does not automatically guarantee *immediate* national collapse and conquest by aggressors. Nations and empires have gone on stewing in their own corruption for remarkable periods of time, but eventually they were destroyed.

The Roman Empire, with all its weaknesses, could possibly have fallen long before it did – or even gone on longer than it did – but it didn’t. Why? One who claims to be God says there is a reason. He emphatically says that the rise and fall of empires is not by accident.

A Plan for History

Did you realize that the Roman Empire was predicted to rise long before it did? Did you also know that its eventual dominance by the barbarians was also forecast 1000 years before it occurred?

Did you know that the same can be said for the rise and fall of Babylon, Persia, the Greco-Macedonian Empire, Egypt and many other powerful empires and nations – including the United States and Britain?

Surprising? The biblical record is there for all to see. You can *prove* it for yourself.

God proclaims only He can guarantee what will be performed: “Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: *before they spring forth I tell you of them*” (Isa. 42:9).

This Supreme Power also charges man with foolishness and ignorance of a basic fact: “Have ye not known? Have ye not heard? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He that sitteth upon [above] the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers ... *That bringeth the princes to nothing*; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity” (Isa. 40:21-23).

Again, in Daniel 4:17, God – the “unseen Hand in history” – explains that He “... ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.”

Mankind's Wretched Record of History

The history of mankind has been a horrible chronicle of war, suffering, heartache, fear and death! The history of Rome is only another chapter continuing the same story. History repeats itself again and again with slightly varying forms, modified by national temperament and technological developments.

The fruits of human behavior – strife, envy, jealousy, hatred, vanity, pride and prejudice – have run rampant both within and among nations. The record of history is not encouraging. Something is horribly missing in the mind of man!

The natural mind of man has led him to do *insane* things in the name of human “progress.”

The Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans each had their chance at world dominion. Each, in turn, left a bloody trail of suffering and depravity as they tried to make the world over in their own image.

The story continues in the twentieth century. It fills the newspapers, radio and television. Only today mankind is threatening himself with genocide, and the weapons of his Armageddon are spreading to many nations.

Choose: Blessing or Cursing

God says He is man's Creator. And that He has permitted man to make his own choice – to follow a course of action that seems best to him – in order to prove that man's way ends in suffering, war and death. Man has been allowed to prove, individually and nationally, that he cannot, apart from God, discover the way to *true* peace, enduring prosperity, radiant happiness, a full and meaningful life.

The choice set before mankind contained a promise of fantastic blessings to be heaped upon those who obeyed Him. It was also a warning: “See, I have set before thee this day *life and good, and death and evil*; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, and to *keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments*, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you *life and death, blessing and cursing*: therefore *choose life*, that both thou and thy seed may live” (Deut. 30:15-16, 19).

History is merely the record of mankind making the *wrong choices!*

The Book that professing Christians claim to take their religion from actually points out that mankind has rejected the right way – obedience to God and His laws – and brought curses upon himself. And humanity has largely ignored the record of past generations and foolishly gone on to make the same mistakes again and again with ever-increasing magnitude – with greater technology, more devastating weapons – and with mounting human suffering.

What does the future hold? There is *good news!* But there is also some bad news!

Future Foretold in Advance

The Scriptures are full of advance news – prophecy – some of which has been fulfilled. But other events are scheduled to be fulfilled in *our* time, in just a few short years from now.

Great cities and nations have had decrees passed on them that no one has been able to alter, critics notwithstanding. Each nation has been allotted enough time to prove how destructive and corrupted its methods are, time to see the end results of its own ways. In a sense, God has given each nation or empire “enough rope to hang itself.” But there comes a time of

correction and punishment to each one.

God also foretold the rise to unprecedented greatness, wealth and power of the United States and Britain. (Write for your free copy of the fascinating booklet *The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy*.)

But the same God also tells what will eventually happen if those nations reject His rule and disobey His commandments! (Lev. 26: Deut. 28). These prophecies are a frightening appraisal of problems plaguing our modern nations.

Right Way Rejected

Is anyone so blind that he cannot see the growing evil, sickness and violence in our modern societies – the vileness, corruption and depravity in which we wallow? National character continues to disintegrate and degenerate. Our own leaders and men of historical vision have decried the way we are going. Some draw the same parallels to Rome we have shown in this book.

America, Britain and the Western world as a whole have rejected true values and self-restraint; rejected the *revelation* of God – rejected His laws as revealed in the spirit of the Ten Commandments! This is the law upon which all true goals and values must be based!

Our nations desperately need righteous goals, values and national purpose. God reveals what they are – but we have to want them, God's way!

The nation that turns to God in obedience will be a nation blessed by God – a nation whose God will protect it personally and directly from its God-rejecting enemies. This is the lesson of ancient Israel, whose great victories were wrought by the hand of God.

A Presidential Proclamation

The United States and Britain were blessed by God with the most bountiful heritage the world has ever known. We didn't acquire it by our great power alone. We think we have. That is part of the problem. It's been given to us in ways we little recognize.

Abraham Lincoln recognized this fact and expressed it in a presidential proclamation in 1863. He said: "*We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown; but we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us:*

"It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness:

"Now, therefore, in compliance with the request, and fully concurring in the views, of the Senate, I do by this my proclamation designate and set apart Thursday, the 30th day of April, 1863, as a day of national humiliation, fasting, and prayer All this being done in sincerity and truth, let us then rest humbly in the hope authorized by the divine teachings, that the united cry of the nation will be heard on high, and answered with blessings no less than the pardon of our national sins, and the restoration of our now divided and suffering country to its former happy condition of unity and peace."

Those words – from a President of the United States – would undoubtedly be ridiculed by this generation. But we would do well to heed the warning. There are promises of national well-being if we do. The question is, will we rise to meet the challenge?

Our peoples today stand on the brink of a disaster greater than Rome's.

We need a national *change* of spirit NOW – before it's too late! Before history repeats its agonizing sequence of events on our nations, the Modern Romans.

"If my people, which are called by My name, shall *humble themselves*, and pray, and seek *My face*, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (II Chron. 7:14).