

Christianity and Classical Culture

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*A Study of Thought and
Action from Augustus to
Augustine*

Charles Norris Cochrane

Latin Translations by Kathleen Alvis

Greek Translations by John Alvis



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This edition reprinted by Liberty Fund, Inc.,
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First published by Oxford University Press in 1940.

Reprinted from the 1944 edition, which was revised and corrected from the original 1940 Clarendon Press edition.

P 1 0 9 8 7 6 5 4

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Cochrane, Charles Norris, 1889–1945.

Christianity and classical culture: a study of thought and action from Augustus to Augustine / Charles Norris Cochrane; Latin translations by Kathleen Alvis; Greek translations by John Alvis.

—Reprint, with the text rev. and corr.

p. cm.

Originally published: Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940. With added Latin and Greek translations.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-86597-413-6 (pbk.: alk. paper)

1. Civilization, Christian. 2. Civilization, Greco-Roman.

3. Church history—Primitive and early church, ca. 30–600. I. Title.

BR170.C6 2003

270.1—dc21

2003047421

LIBERTY FUND, INC.

8335 Allison Pointe Trail, Suite 300, Indianapolis, Indiana 46250-1684

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Preface

The theme of this work is the revolution in thought and action which came about through the impact of Christianity upon the Greco-Roman world. This is a subject of profound importance, but it has not received the attention it deserves, especially perhaps from English-speaking scholars. The reason for this lies partly in the rather special character of the problems involved, partly, however, in the acceptance of a distinction between areas of investigation, which to my mind at least is wholly arbitrary and in no way warranted by the actual course of events. The result is that classical and Christian studies have become dissociated with consequences which are, perhaps, unfortunate for both.

In this work I have ventured to defy the accepted convention and to attempt a transition from the world of Augustus and Vergil to that of Theodosius and Augustine. I am fully aware of my temerity in embarking on such an enterprise. But I have been impelled to undertake it both because of its intrinsic interest and because of the light it throws on subsequent developments of European culture. And I have been emboldened to do so from a sense that, however difficult the religious and philosophic issues to be encountered, they cannot be neglected by the historian except at the cost of missing what is central to the events of the age.

In a subject so vast and intricate it has been necessary to make a somewhat rigid delimitation of the field. I have, therefore, taken as my starting-point the Augustan Empire, with its claim to "eternity" as a final and definitive expression of classical order. This is not to suggest that the work of Augustus was in any deep sense novel. On the contrary, it was merely the culmination of an effort begun centuries before in Hellas, the effort to create a world which should be safe for civilization; and, from this standpoint, such originality as the emperor exhibited was merely one of method. In this sense, however, his settlement

may well be accepted as the last and not least impressive undertaking of what we may venture to call “creative politics.”

The history of Greco-Roman Christianity resolves itself largely into a criticism of that undertaking and of the ideas upon which it rested; viz. that it was possible to attain a goal of permanent security, peace and freedom through political action, especially through submission to the “virtue and fortune” of a political leader. This notion the Christians denounced with uniform vigor and consistency. To them the state, so far from being the supreme instrument of human emancipation and perfectibility, was a straight-jacket to be justified at best as “a remedy for sin.” To think of it otherwise they considered the grossest of superstitions.

The Christians traced this superstition to the acceptance of a defective logic, the logic of classical “naturalism,” to which they ascribed the characteristic *vitia* of the classical world. In this connection it is important to notice that their revolt was not from nature; it was from the picture of nature constructed by classical *scientia*, together with its implications for practical life. And what they demanded was a radical revision of first principles as the presupposition to an adequate cosmology and anthropology. The basis for such a revision they held to lie in the *logos* of Christ, conceived as a revelation, not of “new” truth, but of truth which was as old as the hills and as everlasting. This they accepted as an answer to the promise of illumination and power extended to mankind and, thus, the basis for a new physics, a new ethic and, above all, a new logic, the logic of human progress. In Christ, therefore, they claimed to possess a principle of understanding superior to anything existing in the classical world. By this claim they were prepared to stand or fall.

It is none of my business as a historian to pronounce upon the ultimate validity of Christian claims as opposed to those of Classicism. My task is simply to record those claims as an essential part of the historical movement which I have attempted to describe. This I have done to the best of my ability by letting the protagonists on either side speak, so far as possible, for themselves. Still less appropriate would it be to hazard any application of issues debated in the first four centuries to the problems of our own distracted age. Nevertheless, to those who are looking for a solution to those problems, it may at least be sug-

gested that the answer will not be found in any attempted revival of obsolete conceptions associated with the life of classical antiquity. This is not to disparage Greco-Roman achievement, still less its close and attentive study. On the contrary, it is to see it in a perspective from which, I think, it gains immeasurably in value and significance. As the Christians (somewhat ungenerously) put it, the best approach to truth is through a study of error. And from this standpoint it cannot be denied that the great classics were one and all splendid sinners. Their work thus constitutes a "possession for ever," if not quite in the sense they imagined, at any rate as an imperishable record of thought and aspiration in what must always be regarded as a chapter of unique importance in human experience.

The present work is one of interpretation. As such, it is based primarily on a study of the relevant material in ancient literature and citations from modern authors have been kept to a minimum. It is hardly possible to measure one's indebtedness to scholars whose labors have contributed to throw light on different aspects of the subject. I hope, however, that I have not failed to make a proper acknowledgment of my obligations in specific cases. In conclusion I wish to express my thanks to various members of my old university who have seen the MS. either in whole or part and whose criticisms have enabled me to avoid numerous errors both of style and content. I am particularly grateful for the help I have received from Professor R. G. Collingwood and Mr. R. Syme.

C.N.C.

OXFORD, *July* 1939

Part I

Reconstruction

1

Pax Augusta: The Restored Republic

“May it be my privilege to establish the republic safe and sound on its foundations, gathering the fruit of my desire to be known as author of the ideal constitution, and taking with me to the grave the hope that the basis which I have laid will be permanent.”¹ In these words, which translate into the common language of human hope the formal professions of the *Monumentum Ancyranum*, the emperor Augustus is said to have expressed the ambition of his life and rested his claim to a place in history. It was his wish to be remembered as a second founder, the man who had restored and consolidated the republic, giving it a constitution adequate to its present and future needs. And so far were his ambitions fulfilled that his successors, one after the other, swore to administer their office *ex praescripto Augusti*, as they also assumed his name. Thus, if the younger Caesar fell short of greatness in the wider, he fully deserved it in the narrower sense. For he discovered what had eluded earlier statesmen, the formula by which the revolution was concluded and the empire launched upon the course it was to follow for at least two hundred years.

It is not surprising that the principate should have proved to be something of an enigma. Its creation was the personal achievement of a man whose signet-ring bore an image of the Sphinx and whose whole career involved, by his own admission, the deliberate assumption of a role. Originally an intrusion into the machinery of govern-

1. Suetonius, *Aug.* 28: “ita mihi salvam ac sospitem rem publicam sistere in sua sede liceat atque eius rei fructum percipere quem peto ut optimi status auctor dicar et moriens ut feram mecum spem, mansura in vestigio suo fundamenta rei publicae quae iecero.”

ment, it was destined to be transformed, first into the naked military and bureaucratic absolutism of the pseudo-Antonines and later into the theocratic dynasticism of Diocletian and Constantine. It is not unnatural, therefore, to see these elements in the original system of Augustus. From this standpoint the "destruction of citizenship as a meaningful concept" would coincide more or less definitely with the fall of the republic, and thenceforth "all that was new and significant in the political development of Rome" would be "obscured by the process which reduced it to the form of those Oriental monarchies of which the world had already witnessed sufficient examples."²

Such estimates are not confined to modern times. Already in the first century thoughtful men were divided regarding the true character of the principate, and discussion raged as to whether it should be accepted for what it professed to be or understood as a skilfully camouflaged scheme of personal domination.³ Again, at the beginning of the third century, when the tide had set toward militarism and bureaucracy and a fresh Roman revolution was in the making, contemporary observers professed to find in the prerogatives of Augustus a precedent for those claimed by the Septimian house or, at least, they minimized the substantial differences between them;⁴ just as the autocrats of the lower empire identified themselves in name with the Roman Caesars, although the real spiritual antecedents of Byzantinism lay in an indiscriminate mixture of Asiatic dynasticism and Hebraic divine right.

To maintain, however, that "the aspects of Oriental absolutism, though veiled, were all present in the rule of Augustus" is to do something less than justice to his work. For this is to envisage it, not so much in terms of its actual character and purpose, as of the nemesis which was to overtake it two centuries later. Properly considered, the events which succeeded the fall of Commodus testify to the defeat, rather than to the fulfillment, of the Augustan hope, the failure of the idea to which, in the *Pax Augusta*, the emperor had labored to give final and permanent expression. Evidence of that failure is every-

2. R. M. MacIver, *The Modern State*, p. 110.

3. The arguments on either side are carefully marshaled by Tacitus (*Ann.* i. 9 and 10: "multus hinc ipso de Augusto sermo," &c.).

4. e.g. Dio Cassius, liii. 17, where he describes the principate as "a pure monarchy."

where apparent in the intellectual and moral phenomena of the age. In their apostasy from Augustan principles, men groped blindly for a new and commanding formula of life. The Pantheon was crowded to the point of suffocation by a host of extraneous deities. Powerful court circles listened with attention to the ravings of Asiatic theosophists. The vogue of astrology was such as to draw forth the condemnation of successive emperors, culminating in the fiery denunciation of Diocletian, "the whole damnable art of the *mathematici* is forbidden" (*tota damnabilis ars mathematica interdicta est*). Short-lived war-lords, flung up sporadically on all frontiers, tried to evade their doom by drawing for support upon alien spiritual conceptions rooted in the life of the East. With oriental fanaticism, one prince, Heliogabalus, ventured to depose *Iuppiter Optimus Maximus* in favor of the Emesan Baal (*Sol Invictus Elagabal*). Another, Alexander Severus, with truly classical indifference, included Christ among the gods to be worshiped in his private chapel. Still another, Aurelian, sought to attract to himself something of the prestige of the revived Persian monarchy by assuming the diadem of the Invincible Sun. Diocletian and Maximian solemnly consecrated Mithra as chief tutelary deity of the empire, and represented themselves as his counterparts on earth. The crisis of the third century was thus a crisis of despair; disintegration resolved itself into chaos, and the bankruptcy of the Augustan system was finally exposed when the empire went into receivership at the hands of Constantine.

On the other hand, despite the perils and uncertainties to which it gave rise, the crisis which issued in the principate may be regarded as, on the whole, a crisis of adjustment, during which men never quite lost faith in the possibility of conserving the essential elements of the classical heritage. This, indeed, was precisely the aim of Augustus; his work marks a herculean effort to solve the problems of his age in terms consistent with the thought and aspiration of classical antiquity. From this standpoint, his problem was to associate the notion of power with that of service and thus, at one and the same time, to justify the ascendancy of Rome in the Mediterranean and that of the Caesars in Rome. To see it in this light is not merely to credit the founder with a sincere desire to reconcile the new demands of empire with the ancient claims of civic freedom; it is also to discover the possibilities of Classicism as a basis for the good life in what has been characteristically described as

the happiest and most prosperous period in the history of the human race.⁵

Thus envisaged, the principate emerges as the outcome of more than a century of civil commotion, the origin of which may be traced remotely to the wars of overseas conquest. So long as the activities of the Romans had been confined to Italy they had preserved the character of a peasant society, in which the impulses toward individual self-assertion, powerful though they were, were none the less held in leash by the collective egotism of the civic ideal. But, with the overthrow of Carthage and the kingdoms of the hellenized East, it presently became evident that the spirit which had served to create the empire contained no ingredient by which it might guard against its own excess. Intoxicated by the wine of victory, the Romans proceeded to exploit their position as lords of the world, but with consequences hardly less disastrous to themselves than to their victims. For while the empire, hitherto a model of justice and beneficence, was thus converted into an instrument of intolerable oppression, the constitution of Roman society was itself radically transformed.⁶ In that transformation we may perceive the genesis of divisive forces which were destined to shatter the foundations of public concord and lay the republic in ruins. Those forces found their supreme embodiment in Julius Caesar.

From this standpoint the career of Caesar presents itself as the climax of that fierce struggle between Left and Right which constitutes the ultimate phase of republican history; he was, in the words of his biographer, the doom of the *optimates*.⁷ For this he was marked out, not less by temperament and inclination, than by a hereditary affiliation with the family of Marius. With other survivors of the Sullan terror, he had as a young man withdrawn from Rome during the dictatorship. But, from the moment of his return to the city in 78 B.C., he set himself to revive and direct the forces of democracy. Thus, while holding aloof from premature and ill-considered ventures like that of

5. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. Bury (1896), ch. iii, p. 78.

6. Sallust, *Cat.* 10. 6: "civitas immutata; imperium ex iustissimo atque optimo crudele intolerandumque factum."

7. Suet. *Jul.* 1.

the consul Lepidus, he lost no chance of advertising himself as the hope of the *populares*.⁸ He seized the occasion of his aunt's funeral to recall the public services of Marius.⁹ He supported the movement which led in 70 B.C. to the restoration of tribunician power.¹⁰ The descendants of those proscribed by Sulla had been for ever deprived of property and civil rights; Caesar boldly agitated for their restoration. In order to establish the illegality of the so-called ultimate decree or declaration of martial law by the senate, thereby vindicating the claim of the people to sole jurisdiction in capital cases, he instigated the prosecution of Rabirius, an obscure old man, who was supposed to have murdered the popular leader Saturninus in the disturbances of 100 B.C. At the same time he rendered himself notorious by the splendor of his life and, by the lavish distribution of personal favors, rapidly drew about him the elements of a Roman Tammany.¹¹ The success of his methods was conspicuously demonstrated in 64 B.C. when he was elected Pontifex Maximus in the face of powerful aristocratic opposition. This triumph was followed two years later by a praetorship with its concomitant, a military command in Spain;¹² to be succeeded in due course by the consulship, as the wits called it, of "Julius and Caesar."¹³ In the historic debate of December 63 B.C. on the punishment of the Catilinarians, Caesar, as praetor-elect, had ventured to defend the conspirators before the senate and to urge upon that body a mitigation of the death-sentence which had been proposed against them. It was on this occasion that, according to Plutarch, the aristocracy "missed the chance of exterminating the viper in its bosom." The consequences of their failure were soon to be apparent. As consul in 59 B.C. Caesar, with a defiance of constitutional convention unprecedented in republican annals, forced through a program of advanced social and economic legislation while, at the same time, he consummated his plans for the *societas potentiae*, the coalition with Crassus and

8. 3.

9. 6.

10. 5.

11. Sall. *Cat.* 54.

12. Suet. *Jul.* 18.

13. *Ibid.* 19-20.

Pompey, which was to yield him his "extraordinary" command in Gaul, with its opportunities for profit and distinction.¹⁴

The next stage of Caesar's career embraced the conquest and annexation of the Gauls, the crossing of the Rhine, and the invasion of Britain. As proconsul, he startled the world by the tireless energy with which he planned and executed his military movements, as well as by the methods he adopted to develop the efficiency of his troops and to secure their devotion to himself.¹⁵ The solid work of fighting and organization was accompanied by propaganda, in which Caesar represented himself as the man who had for ever disposed of the Gallic peril; together with preparations for a future, the nature of which could only be surmised. For, beginning with his second *quinquennium*, he embarked upon a wholesale corruption of the Roman world, the capital city, the Italian municipalities, and the more important allied states, not to speak of the client kingdoms beyond the frontiers.¹⁶

It is, perhaps, unnecessary to credit Caesar with any clear prevision of the enormous significance of his territorial acquisitions, any more than with the deliberate planning of the civil war. The ordinary practice of the day suggests that his object was merely to accumulate a fund of economic and political power sufficient to counterbalance that of Pompey. Nevertheless, his means became ends in themselves, the establishment of a firm bulwark on the Rhine against the restless tide of barbarism and, within the enlarged frontiers, the creation of a new Italy through the settlement of impoverished Italians on the undeveloped lands of Gaul and their fusion with the native Celts, in whom he saw potential material for a vast civilization of the Greco-Roman type. But such ideas were in themselves enough to excite, in the hearts of his opponents, the utmost terror and apprehension. Accordingly, during the later and more critical years of fighting in Gaul, these men maneuvered persistently to destroy him, by setting up obstacles which would interfere with his election to a second consulship and by attempting to bring him to book for the irregularities of which he had been guilty since his first. The failure of their efforts provoked the senatorial stam-

14. Sall. *Cat.* 54. 4.

15. Suet. *Jul.*, chs. 65-70.

16. Suet. *Jul.* 26 foll.

pede of 1 January 49 B.C., when the oligarchical diehards, supported by Pompey's legionaries, compelled a timid and reluctant majority to declare Caesar a public enemy, thereby precipitating the civil war.

Caesar was not slow to accept the challenge, which gave him the twofold opportunity of asserting his own political claims and of vindicating the majesty of the people, infringed in the persons of the tribunes who had vainly endeavored to sustain them in the senate. In so doing, he treated the governing aristocracy merely as a "faction," in no wise competent to speak for the sovereign people as a whole. Yet he entered upon armed conflict with reluctance; for he saw, as his adversaries failed to see, the consequence of intestinal strife, and especially the implications of an imposed rather than a negotiated settlement. Throughout the struggle he aimed consistently to prove that he was no Sulla, by maintaining a policy of studied moderation (*clementia*) in the face of savage atrocities perpetrated by the senatorials and their barbarian allies. At the same time, he shook himself free from the more disreputable of his own followers; passing the famous bankruptcy law by which he sought to mediate between the claims of debtor and creditor in a fashion altogether new and refreshing in Roman history.

The victory of Caesar in the civil war made possible the fulfillment of his program as a statesman. It is an exaggeration to describe that program¹⁷ as one of regeneration for his deeply decayed country. What Julius accomplished was rather a task of social and political reconstruction, and this was inspired by ideas, all of which fell within the ambit of Greco-Roman thinking, which hardly contemplated, even in a metaphorical sense, the notion of rebirth. Thus, with regard to domestic problems, Caesar executed the testament of the great reformers from Gracchan times; just as, in the conquest of Gaul, he had fulfilled the dream of Marius and the new democratic imperialism. And, therein, he revealed himself as one of the greatest exponents of scientific statecraft in the history of antiquity. This was shown by measures which ranged all the way from a reform of the calendar to the reorganization of Italy on municipal lines and the extension of municipal rights to the Western provinces, especially Spain.¹⁸

17. With Mommsen, *History of Rome* (1894), vol. v, ch. xi, p. 308.

18. Hardy, *Roman Law and Charters* (*Lex Iulia Municipalis*).

There existed, however, insuperable barriers to the possibility of reform which were, as Caesar himself realized, the inevitable consequence of an imposed peace. It is unnecessary to dwell upon the circumstances which ultimately drove him toward complete military autocracy in the form of a perpetual dictatorship. These were not less the untrustworthy character of his own supporters than the behavior of the conquered aristocracy, which oscillated from stubborn intransigency to disgusting subservience. Caesar labored assiduously to dispel the impression that the basis of his régime was force and fear. Yet, despite all efforts to conciliate his opponents, he failed to obtain the cooperation needful to support his "new concord." Moreover, his own liberalism had inescapable limits: the cynics recalled the profession of loyalty to popular principles with which he had embarked upon the war, when he brushed aside the interference of the tribune Metellus in 49 B.C. and, still more, when he unceremoniously deposed Flavius and Marullus five years later. Finally, Caesar was acutely conscious of the difficulty in which he was placed by his assumption of personal control over the administration. "How can I fail to be disliked," he observed, "when men like Cicero must await my convenience for an interview?"

Such were the fruits of a conflict, the issues of which were presently to excite a storm of bitter controversy. The suicide of Cato at Utica had served, as nothing else could have done, to ennoble the cause for which he had perished; and, already during Caesar's lifetime, opposition to the dictatorship was to discover a focus in the memory of his traditional rival and anti-type.¹⁹ In an effort to neutralize the force of this opposition, Caesar for once abandoned his professional clemency, and pursued Cato in the grave with a vehemence such as he had never exhibited toward him while he lived. But, as the opposition nevertheless continued to stiffen, he was finally compelled to resign all hope of conciliation or compromise. It was then that he determined upon the final subversion of republicanism, the structure of which had been crumbling with progressive rapidity since the outbreak of the civil war. "The republic," he said, "is merely a name, without form or

19. The formal antithesis between the two is established in Sall. *Cat.* 54. For the rapid growth of the Catonian myth see Cic. *Ad. Attic.* xii. 4. 2 and 21. 4.

substance.”²⁰ And, as though to signalize his contempt for republican institutions, he appointed Caninius consul for the last day of the year 45. “He was,” observes Cicero, “a most vigilant magistrate, for during his term of office he never slept.” Then, too, he accepted what were felt to be “excessive” honors; breaking “all laws, human and divine,” and scaling the heights of Olympus in a manner which represented a complete departure even from his own earlier pretensions, when he had merely sought for himself a place beside the ancient Roman kings. It might indeed be urged that, since those kings were the legitimate heads of a free people and the natural protectors of the commons, the *regium imperium* could properly be cited as a precedent for that which was to be claimed by Caesar. But no such argument was possible on behalf of a man who evidently aspired to associate himself with glories traditional to the line of Alexander. What Caesar at one time thought of Alexandrianism may be judged from his own scathing comments on the situation which he found to prevail in the capital when he first invaded Egypt.²¹ Yet the evidence leaves no doubt that in his last months he definitely embraced the scheme of Alexandrian monarchy, thus renouncing the visions and ideals of the classical commonwealth and plunging into the most degraded form of contemporary political obscurantism in the vain endeavor to find a basis for his régime. It was, indeed, beyond the capacity of Caesar, master of *Realpolitik* as he was, to discover the formula of transition between the old world and the new. And this he himself appears to have confessed when he remarked that “by satisfying the claims of honor and glory” he had “lived long enough.”²²

In this significant pronouncement, we may perhaps see Caesar as he saw himself and as he appeared to the eyes of his contemporaries. Modern historical scholarship has discerned in him at once the greatest political architect and the greatest political destroyer of antiquity.²³ To antiquity itself he was both or neither; he was *par excellence* the gam-

20. Suet. *Jul.* 77.

21. *Bell. Civ.* iii *ad fin.*, esp. 110.

22. Cic. *Pro Marc.* 8. 25.

23. Mommsen, *op. cit.*, vol. v, chs. x and xi; Ferrero, *The Greatness and Decline of Rome* (1909), vol. ii, ch. xvi, pp. 344-8.

bler with fortune, and the stake for which he played was nothing less than mastery of the world. It was, on the other hand, equally evident that the destinies of the world were largely bound up with those of Caesar. Thus a contemporary publicist, in the second of two letters addressed to the dictator, hails him as the sole bulwark against perils which threaten the whole future of European civilization. "Should this empire perish," he declares, "either from disease or by fate, who can doubt that the result will be world-wide devastation, bloodshed, and strife?"²⁴ Such was the prevailing mood during Caesar's lifetime; and to it even Cicero appears to have subscribed at the moment when he wrote the *Pro Marcello*. "Who," asks the orator, apostrophizing the dictator, "who is so blind as not to realize that his personal safety is involved with yours; that on the life of Caesar depend the lives of his fellow countrymen. It falls to you alone to restore all that warfare has overthrown and destroyed, to re-establish the administration of justice, to recall confidence, to repress license, to promote the growth of population, in short to bind together by strong legislation all that you see scattered and dispersed. The task of the day is to heal the wounds of conflict and no one but you can do it."²⁵ But for those like Suetonius and Plutarch, to whom the end was a matter of record, the picture is somewhat differently colored; both observe, especially in Caesar's closing years, evidences of *adrogantia* or ὑβρις which, by exciting divine displeasure, portends ultimate catastrophe. To Suetonius, as a skeptic, the death of Caesar could mean nothing but extinction. Nevertheless, he fails to escape from the impression created in the public mind by that world-shaking event. Accordingly, he notes, coincident with the death of the dictator, the appearance of a new comet in the heavens, the *sidus Iulii* which, in Chaldean lore, marked his reception into heaven. "Thus," he concludes, "Caesar was translated to the number of the gods, not merely by the lips of those who so decreed, but also by popular conviction."²⁶ To the meteoric career of Caesar, Plu-

24. The pseudo-Sallust, Ep. ii ad Caes. *De ordinanda re publica*, widely accepted as a genuine work of the historian, composed in Africa during the summer of 46.

25. §§ 22-3.

26. Suet. *Jul.* 88. Cf. Pliny, *N.H.* ii. 25. 94, who adds that for this reason a star was placed on the head of the statue presently to be erected in the Forum. The date of this consecration was 18 Aug., 29 B.C.

tarch finds an appropriate analogue in that of Alexander; and for him it illustrates at once the glory and the nemesis of power. "That empire and ascendancy," he says, "which Caesar, had pursued with so much hazard throughout his career, he did at last with much difficulty attain, only to reap from it nothing but an empty name and invidious glory. But the great genius which attended him in life remained after his death to avenge his murder, pursuing through every sea and land all those who were concerned therein, and permitting none to escape, but overtaking all who were in any way either privy to the deed or by their counsels in any way accessory to it."²⁷

In the light of these ancient concepts, Caesar emerges as a figure at once fascinating and dangerous. For the spirit thus depicted is one of sublime egotism; in which the *libido dominandi* asserts itself to the exclusion of all possible alternatives and crushes every obstacle in its path. We have spoken of Caesar as a divisive force. That, indeed, he was: as Cato had put it, "he was the only one of the revolutionaries to undertake, cold-sober, the subversion of the republic"; finding support for his designs with equal readiness among the rabble of the forum, in uncivilized Gaul or in effete and decadent Egypt, and even exploiting to his purpose the fierce religious nationalism of the Jews. A force like this, however, does more than divide, it destroys. Hostile to all claims of independence except its own, it is wholly incompatible with that effective equality which is implied in the classical idea of the commonwealth. To admit it within the community is thus to nourish the lion, whose reply to the hares in the assembly of beasts was to ask: Where are your claws? The problem had long since appeared as one of the most baffling which confronted classical political science.²⁸ With Caesar, it finally emerged in Rome.

Thus envisaged, the career of the dictator presented itself rather as a warning than a model; and if it be true that his final solution was to "sell out" in favor of Hellenistic autocracy, it is not surprising that he was in the end repudiated by many, even of his own former adherents. Loathed by the older republicans, such as Cicero, for having had the temerity to parade himself as a god, his name was associated, even

²⁷. Plut. *Caes.* 69.

²⁸. Arist. *Pol.* iii. 1284a.

in the minds of later Caesarians, with that of his great rival Pompey, as one who "had hardened his heart to internecine strife and turned against its own vitals the might of the Fatherland."²⁹ Accordingly, the deed of the "liberators," puerile though it may have been in design and execution, was not wholly in vain. Despite the revulsion of popular feeling occasioned by Caesar's funeral, despite the spontaneous apotheosis of the dead leader, the assassination served to postpone the immediate orientalizing of the empire. And, by demonstrating, however perversely, the tenacity of the native civic tradition, it helped to determine the settlement which was ultimately to be effected by Augustus.

In his last few months the dictator is said to have remarked that nothing but his life stood between the empire and chaos. And certainly the existence of Rome, with all that she meant to the world, never hung by a more tenuous thread than during the years of turmoil which succeeded the fatal Ides of March. The question might thus be asked: If Caesar, for all his talent and insight, had proved incapable of solving the Roman problem, who could now be expected to do so? The crisis was accentuated by the hopeless incapacity of the Regicides to control the situation created by their own act, and they soon discovered to their dismay the impossibility of appealing at once to the head and to the belly. Their failure was presently exposed by Marc Antony, whose subsequent career was, in fact, to constitute the most emphatic criticism of their deed. The latter, as sole surviving consul, brazenly abused his position in order to erect for himself a domination of the Caesarian type. Nor can there be much doubt that his schemes would have succeeded had it not been for the intervention of the young Octavian who, for the purpose of making good his claims as Caesar's heir, associated himself with the senate in its contest with Caesar's ape. Mutual suspicion and fear were soon to destroy this alliance, the incongruity of which became evident when, after Antony's reverse in Cisalpine Gaul, the senatorials endeavored to break the sword of their self-appointed champion, as a preliminary to reversing the revolutionary measures of Caesar and re-establishing the domination of the oligarchy which for more than a century had lacerated the Roman world.

29. Verg. *Aeneid*, vi. 832-3.