

Lionel Curtis, *Civitas Dei: The Commonwealth of God*, MacMillan and Co., London, 1938. Selections by Peter Myers, August 19, 2001; update January 4, 2003. My comments are shown {thus}.

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{Curtis traces the ancestry of the British Empire first to Greece and Rome, then to the Viking-Norman kingdoms of Western Europe. Looking to the future, he posits the necessity of the United States rejoining the Empire (Commonwealth), so as to create an impregnable World-State.}

{p. 86} CH. XIII ROME

THE intrusion of northern tribes on Mediterranean society and its effect in producing a new system of life had not been limited to the shores of the Aegean. Somewhere north of the Alpine and Balkan ranges the migratory hordes had thrown off a second stream which eventually had made its way to the centre of Italy. There, as in Greece, they imposed their language on the composite race into which they merged. When, three centuries before the Christian era, their descendants came into contact once more, a thousand years of separation would amply serve to account for the difference of Greek and Latin.

The Latin peoples more nearly resembled the Dorian than the Ionian branch of the Greeks. It may well be that in Italy, as in the Peloponnese, the proportion of northern invaders was larger than that which came to stay in the village communities on the shores of the Aegean. They were less versatile than Ionian Greeks, slower to imagine and invent, but more stable in character and patient of detail. With a higher sense of discipline they knew better how to administer a system than how to change or interpret it. When Rome had become the centre of government for the whole Mediterranean, vast hordes of slaves were recruited from all its shores, especially from those of Asia Minor and Syria. The dark hair and complexion of the Latin races must be due in part to a large and continuous movement from the Levant. It need not surprise us, therefore, that the Romans on their first appearance should seem to resemble in character the

{p. 87} nations of northern Europe rather than those of the south.

The political development of the village communities was closely parallel to that of the Greeks. The resemblance alone is enough to prove the nearness of their kinship. About the same period they abolished the paternal government of chiefs or kings. When they first emerged in the light of history a hatred of dynastic rule was the strongest element in Roman tradition. The fact that their officers were elected and their laws approved in public assemblies showed that they, like the Greeks, had grasped and applied the principle of decision by majorities. The citizens assembled in the forum were the ultimate source of all authority, though they never applied it to the details of government to anything like the same extent as the people of Athens. On the other hand, they evolved two leading ideas to which they adhered with singular tenacity. The object of Roman devotion, as with the Greeks, was the whole body of fellow-citizens and their successors. The general welfare implied by the word *respublica* supplied the motive of their

public conduct. Side by side with this idea was the conception contained in the words *majestas populi Romani*, the sovereign authority of the Roman people, to which the citizen felt his obedience was due. The Greek had no word for obedience other than one which meant that his reason had been convinced. To the Roman mind the duty of obeying the law was prior to his right to share in framing it. The Greek was prone to forget that government is a condition precedent to self-government. For centuries the government of Rome was directed by a senate of hereditary elders by whom the traditions of public policy were handed on from one generation to another. The general assembly of citizens was content to elect officers and ratify laws submitted by the senate.

{p. 90} **The Greek, Roman and Phoenician world had grown to be one economic unit.** The premature death of Alexander and the absorption of his successors in the task of maintaining their various dynasties left Rome and Carthage to decide this phase of the long struggle between eastern and western ideas. As in the previous struggle of Greece with Persia, the issue was really decided by the relative merits of the two social systems. In the Roman polity the idea that a citizen owed more to the public interest than to himself was still uppermost, and stronger even than the passion for individual wealth. **When all was lost the Carthaginians** {i.e. Phoenicians} **rose to heights of heroism, and, true to the tradition of the Semite race, they fought like lions when driven to their lair. With the total destruction of Carthage in 146 B.C. Rome was left with no serious rival in the Mediterranean.**

Some fifty years before this time Rome had come into collision with Philip, a successor of Alexander in his Macedonian kingdom. At Cynoscephale in Thessaly the Romans defeated Philip in 197 B.C., and next year at the Isthmian games proclaimed the freedom of Greece from the Macedonian dominion. Now, as ever, the Greek cities proved incapable of maintaining stable relations between themselves, and Rome ere long was compelled to assume the office of constable from which she had ejected the Macedonian monarch. Her relations to the Greeks were marred by acts of cruelty, of which the destruction of Corinth, due to the jealousy of Roman merchants, was the most conspicuous. But, generally speaking, **the relations of Greeks and Romans were in marked contrast to the relations of either people to the Semitic races with whom they came in contact. To the Semites both reacted as aliens, to each other as closely kindred peoples** {Curtis' unabashed racism would be unacceptable today}.

{p. 91} In less than a hundred years from the fall of Carthage the Roman republic had mastered the entire basin of the Mediterranean, the west of Europe from the Rhine to the Atlantic, and the whole Greek world including most of the conquests of Alexander, that is to say, Egypt, Syria and Asia as far as the Euphrates. The civilisation imposed on this vast area was neither Greek nor Latin but a fusion of both, Greek elements prevailing in the east and Latin in the west.

After the Persian wars the Athenian commonwealth had organised the cities of the Aegean in one political system by the simple expedient of rendering them all subject to her sovereignty. In two generations the system collapsed, to the ruin of Athens. In like manner the Roman commonwealth imposed its will on the vast congeries of heterogeneous peoples surrounding the Mediterranean. The system she created lasted for centuries, long enough to enable the principles of Graeco-Roman civilisation to take permanent root in the life of mankind. How she achieved so much and at what cost to her own institutions remained to be seen. The sovereignty of Rome was exercised by the citizens assembled in the

{p. 92} forum, though the general transaction of business was left to the senate.

When Rome had mastered the Mediterranean, the citizens who could gather in the forum represented the communities they controlled no more, and indeed less, than the citizens of Athens in the ecclesia represented the cities combined in the confederacy of Delos. **They, like the people of Athens, failed to conceive the idea of representation.** With their practical minds they disliked civil disorder more than the Greeks: so they solved the problem by

{p. 93} entrusting the general interest to the one man able to maintain order, who could be no other than the leader whom the legions were willing to obey. When Rome had conquered the world the reality of power had passed from bodies which could gather in Rome to the conquering armies and the general they obeyed.

The long revolution which transformed Rome from a city republic to a world empire was consummated by Caesar. He was in fact a tyrant in the Greek sense of the word, in that he used force to destroy the existing forms of law. The selection of officers and the ratification of laws by popular vote ceased, except in form. Henceforward the official appointments were the choice and the laws enacted the edicts of a monarch. But these appointments and enactments were still influenced by the conception of the general interest extended from the city republic of Rome to include the whole of the people governed by the Empire. Emperors like Caligula were of course blind to the notion, but the marvellous succession of public-spirited rulers who administered the Empire in the course of three centuries, several of whom were not even Italian, attest the potency of the idea which the city republics had bequeathed to a society too large to be capable of direct government by its own citizens.

An essential feature in the principle of the commonwealth was the rule of law as the Greeks had divined.

{p. 94} To men like Caesar, Augustus, Trajan, Hadrian and the Antonines the general interest of the whole civilised world was the end and object of public policy. As things were, the only possible way to preserve it was to entrust its maintenance to the master of the legions. But then, as always, **the minds of men refused to accept a theory of government based on nothing but physical force. Quickly the idea developed that the emperor wielded his power by divine right, and was in fact himself divine.** In a world which accepted polytheism the idea presented no difficulties, and throughout the Empire temples rose and altars smoked to the genius of Caesar. **The magistrates and officers of the Empire relied on the theory in much the same way as officials and lawyers of the British Commonwealth rely on the theory of sovereignty of the Crown.** As Kitchener imposed the oath of allegiance to Edward VII. on Cape rebels as a test of loyalty, so Pliny in Asia Minor imposed on Christians the duty of sacrifice as a test of loyalty to Trajan. But Pliny mistook the man Trajan for a god no more than Kitchener supposed that King Edward was the actual ruler of the British Dominions.

To the masses of Asia conquered by Alexander organised by Seleucus as an empire and annexed

{p. 95} by Rome, the idea of the emperor as divine was a living reality. In these regions the western culture imposed by the Greek conquerors was a veneer. **Asiatic ideas of divine right were accepted as fundamental. They gradually mastered the Roman Empire itself until, in its later stages, there was little to distinguish it from the typical despotisms of Asia.** The Christian Church absorbed the idea from the Empire {this is a jibe at the Pope}, and Church and Empire together are largely responsible for its survival in Europe to the present age. Slowly but surely the idea of

government by divine right destroyed the conception of the general interest which the best of the Roman emperors inherited from the city republics of Rome and Greece. The idea was the fruit of a system by which the people of a village community had learned to control their own public affairs, and in doing so had contracted a sense of devotion to the public welfare which was new to the world. The Roman Empire afforded a breathing-space in which a system of law and administration directed to the public interest could be developed. But the principle of authority which made this possible destroyed the springs from which the sense of devotion in individuals to the public interest had grown. Had migratory hordes from the north not appeared to destroy it, the Roman Empire would still have collapsed for lack of subjects with the public spirit to hold it together.

{p. 96} CHAPTER XIV

INTERACTIONS OF JEWISH, GREEK AND ROMAN HISTORY

In the earlier records of Greece and Rome we meet the Phoenician traders everywhere scattered along the coasts of the Mediterranean. But after the fall of Carthage they seem to fade from the pages of history. Before the time of Caesar we meet the Jews in every part of the Graeco-Roman world, filling the place which the Phoenicians once occupied in the commercial life of the Mediterranean. Paul in his journeys finds a settlement of his countrymen in almost every city which he visits.

The explanation is fairly obvious. So long as Carthage remained the greatest centre of Semitic life, the mistress of Greek cities in Sicily and the formidable rival of Rome, **the Phoenicians wherever they lived and traded boasted their race and their name.** The splendour and wealth of Carthage covered the monstrous religion of which she was the centre with a cloak of respectability. **But when Carthage was wiped from the map the cloak fell off and the Phoenicians in the Graeco-Roman world learned to be ashamed of human sacrifice** practised in its most revolting form.

Carthage fell in 146 B.C. It so happened that their near kindred, the Jews, at that very moment had reached a stage in their history which recalled the days of the house of David.

{p. 97} In 175 B.C. Seleucus IV. was murdered by his minister Heliodorus, who hoped to govern in the name of his infant son. Antiochus, the brother of Seleucus, had for some years lived at Athens, and was indeed elected to the chief office in the city republic. He now managed to frustrate the designs of Heliodorus and seized the throne of his brother at Antioch.

With a natural bias in favour of Greek culture, he thought to unite the many and various races of the Seleucid Empire by a general adoption of Greek rites, manners and customs. Indeed he seems to have gone so far as to extend the self-governing powers of the leading cities on Greek lines. At this period Greek culture had acquired the same kind of prestige as European culture acquired in Bengal in the first half of the nineteenth century. His policy seems to have met with general acceptance outside Judea. But even in Jerusalem hellenisation, since the conquest of Alexander, had begun to exercise a marked influence, especially in priestly circles. Judea was by no means a rich country, but **the Temple had become the repository of fabulous wealth annually furnished by the piety of the Jews, whose trading colonies now spread from Spain to Mesopotamia.** Like the Vatican in the fifteenth century, the Levitical hierarchy of the Temple was tending to become rich, luxurious and sceptical and readily absorbed the

fashionable side of Greek culture. There were noble exceptions, like the Maccabees and the sons of Zadok who seceded to Damascus in the time of Herod the Great and later on, in all probability, joined the Christians. But, generally speaking, **the priests represented the pagan elements in Judaism and may be identified with the Sadducee party. In their view of a future existence they never advanced beyond the pagan idea of Sheol**; religion was a question of securing the favour of Jehovah by appropriate ritual during men's lives.

{Curtis' derogatory remarks about Judaism would be considered "AntiSemitic" today; the difference points to the distance society has moved from the Imperial idea}

{p. 98} The champions of the Jewish faith and law were drawn for the most part from the peasants and poorer classes. From these elements was formed **about 200 B.C. a small sect called the Chasidim, who opposed the spread of Greek culture** with the heroism and devotion of their race. ...

The history of the Chasidim bears an interesting resemblance to that of our own nonconformists. The religious developments of the two centuries before Christ described in the next chapter were mainly, if not entirely, their work.

The sect of the Pharisees, which was presently to play so important a part, was an offshoot of the Chasidim. Its organisation was far less close than that of the Sadducees to which it was opposed. They stood for resistance to foreign influence. **The name Pharisee implies separation, devotion to the idea of a people separated from all others** as the people of Jehovah. In accordance with the teaching of the prophet Jeremiah, they included in this people all who accepted the Law of Moses, **irrespective of natural descent.**

This explains the missionary activities of Judaism in the period between the exile and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. **Behind this anxiety of the Pharisees to make proselytes was the motive which inspires the Christian missions of to-day.** They were also responsible for organising synagogues, which

{p. 99} discharged the functions of both churches and schools.

Though ardent exponents of the Law, they held, at least in their earlier stage, that God's will must be read from the course of history. When numbers of faithful Jews were massacred by Antiochus, they drew the conclusion that these martyrs of righteousness would be raised to life in the day of judgement to take their place in the Kingdom of God. It was thus that they came to teach a doctrine denied by the Sadducees.

In the view of the Pharisees God was their real King. No human ruler was entitled to obedience except as the mouthpiece of God. While the Sadducees held that the books of the Law as they stood were sufficient, the Pharisee scribes undertook to interpret the Law. In course of time their logical deductions from the text developed a mass of minute provisions, which some of them treated as of higher importance than the Law itself. **The denunciations of Jesus were directed against this legalism**, which had grown more oppressive than the Law as administered by the priests. But the Pharisee movement as a whole is no more to be judged by these later developments than the Protestant movement is to be judged by the fundamentalists and the rigid deductions they have drawn from Scripture.

With these explanations we may now return to the thread of our narrative.

Antiochus IV. naturally supported the priestly party which favoured hellenisation. He appointed one Jesus or Joshua as high priest, and authorised him to convert Jerusalem into a Greek city. He **changed his name from Joshua to Jason, as a Jew nowadays will change the name of Levi into Lewis.** A Greek gymnasium was established, for which the priests forsook the Temple. The young priests

{p. 100} adopted the garb of the Greeks. The Chasidim were driven into fierce opposition. They resented the athletics and hats of the Greeks, just as the Moslems of Afghanistan resented the western clothes and habits of King Amanullah.

The cultural aims of Antiochus IV. were reinforced by the desire to possess himself of the vast treasures accumulated in the Temple. In 170 B.C. he plundered the Temple, massacred numbers of Jews, ordered the nation to adopt the polytheistic rites of Greece, and **sacrificed swine to Zeus on the altar sacred to Jehovah. The sanctuary was dedicated to Zeus Olympius, and the Samaritan shrine on Mount Gerizim to Zeus Xenius.** The rites of Judaism and the observance of the Sabbath were proscribed, and the Greeks in Palestine ordered to enforce the proscription. An Athenian missionary was introduced to direct the ceremonies of Greek worship. The first book of the Maccabees tells how matters came to a head. The story may be summarised as follows. When the king's officers reached the city of Modin to insist on the performance of a pagan sacrifice, Mattathias, the descendant of one Hasmon, an aged priest, moved to frenzy by the sight of an apostate Jew performing the rites, cut him down and slew the king's officer. He then fled with his five sons to the mountains and raised a rebellion, which was joined by the Chasidim. The third son of Mattathias, Judas, proved himself a brilliant military leader and acquired the Aramaic title of 'Maggaba', or 'the Hammer' (like Charles Martel). The name was shared by his brothers, who came to be known as the Maccabees.

{Although Curtis castigates the Persian Empire, that multicultural state accepted the Jewish religion under the umbrella of Zoroastrianism, a universal religion, whereas Rome still enforced obeisance to the Indo-European tribal god, Zeus (Jupiter); Rome might have learned much from Persia in this respect}

Antiochus IV. died in 164 B.C. After his death the Seleucid Empire was so weakened by internal dissensions that the Maccabees were able to establish the virtual independence of Judea. They entered into friendly relations with Rome, and were able to ex-

{p. 101} tend their dominions over regions wider than Solomon had ruled. In 143 B.C. Simon, the last of the brothers, was invested with the office of high priest and clothed with absolute powers as ruler of the nation. The combined offices of priest and ruler were declared to be hereditary in his family. Simon was murdered by his son-in-law Ptolemy in 135 B.C. But Simon's son, John Hyrcanus, succeeded in seizing the high priesthood and, in doing so, lost the support of the Chasidim. He extended his father's conquests and died in 104 B.C. His son Aristobulus assumed the title of king. The office of high priest and king were thus combined in his person. Aristobulus conquered Galilee, a region occupied at this period by the normal Syrian mixture of Phoenician, Philistine, Hittite and Greek elements, a people who had not as yet adopted the Jewish faith. **They were suffered to remain in Galilee only on condition of submitting to circumcision.** The majority appear to have accepted the condition and so to have joined the Jewish community, which, unlike the Samaritan sect, looked to Jerusalem as its centre. But **their non-Jewish origin explains the contempt with which**

Galilee was regarded in Judea.

From the moment when Simon in 143 B.C. assumed the high priesthood the worship of Jehovah in the Temple and the rigid enforcement of the Mosaic law was once more observed. **Jerusalem acquired the place from which Tyre and Carthage had both fallen as the leading centre of Semitic civilisation.** The monotheistic worship of which it was the seat was as much above the level of Graeco-Roman polytheism as the worship of Baal was below that of Athens and Rome. **The numerous colonies of Jews dispersed from Babylon to Spain proudly regarded Jerusalem as the centre of their faith. The aim and hope of every Jew was, at least once in his life, to visit Jerusalem, to say his prayers and offer**

{p. 102} **his sacrifice at the altar of Jehovah. Vast revenues flowed to the treasury of the Temple in the form of voluntary offerings collected by the synagogues in every commercial centre from the shores of the Atlantic to those of the Persian Gulf.**

The Jews proudly viewed themselves as the people to whom the God of the universe had chosen to reveal not only his nature but the ritual and law by which men ought to live. Believing this, it was natural that, under Pharisee influence, they should wish to convert others to their faith. **Their readiness at this stage of their history 'to compass sea and land to make one proselyte' is a well-established historical fact. The edict of Hadrian forbidding circumcision, at least of proselytes, was needed to quench it. With Jerusalem in her glory and Carthage in ruins the scattered Phoenician traders with their close racial affinity to the Jews were likely to be the readiest converts** {Sigmund Freud identified with Carthage - see p. 146 at freud.html}. **From the time of Plato a certain drift towards monotheism had begun to affect the thought of the Graeco-Roman world. The Greeks and Romans viewed the religion of Jehovah with involuntary respect, and until the fall of Jerusalem regular provision was made by Roman emperors for sacrifice to be offered in the Temple on their behalf. The Jewish communities in Rome and elsewhere were allowed to lead their separate life and accorded certain privileges.** Except in Judea and Mesopotamia they had generally adopted the Greek language, and after the fall of Carthage **the Phoenician traders** no doubt followed suit. They had thus every motive as well as every facility for abandoning the worship of Baal, with its hideous and barbarous rites, for that of Jehovah and for **merging themselves in the Jewish communities.** The process was gradual, and we know from Tertullian that up to the time of Tiberius they were still suspected of reverting to the practice of child sacrifice.

The upshot was that **after the fall of Carthage the**

{p. 103} **Jews replaced the Phoenicians as the champions of Semitic culture in opposition to Graeco-Roman civilisation.** The issues were postponed by the fact that the Maccabees sought the protection of the Roman republic against the Seleucids and became involved in the struggles of Roman parties and generals which ended in the establishment of the Empire. ... The Jews found their reward in the privileges which Caesar accorded to their colonies at Rome and elsewhere throughout the Roman dominions. **The payment of tribute by Jewish colonies to the Temple was legalised. Judea was relieved of any obligation to pay taxes to Rome.** Antipater was appointed as Procurator. His son, Herod the Great, became king of a powerful monarchy under Roman protection. The high priesthood was now separated from the kingship

{p. 104} and rendered subordinate to it. The high priests were in fact appointed by the king.

{p. 109} It must always be held in mind that the great Jewish community settled in Mesopotamia was not at this time subject to Rome. In 248 B.C. the Parthian kingdom had broken off from the empire of Seleucus. The Romans themselves, after conquering that empire, had been unable to subdue the Parthians. In 53 B.C. these Iranian nomads had utterly destroyed Crassus and his army at the battle of Carrhae, after which Mesopotamia and Babylon remained in the hands of the Parthians till the time of Trajan. At the period with which we are now dealing **this Parthian Empire was the spear-head of the Asiatic reaction against Graeco-Roman civilisation**. Its frontiers were not very distant from Galilee and Judea and the famous disaster to Roman arms was vividly present to the minds of the Zealots.

We are here approaching the climax of history, when diverse materials of human experience smelted in a furnace were to yield elements of indestructible truth {Curtis is a Christian, though anti-Rome}.

{p. 169} CHAPTER XXI

JESUS IN CONFLICT WITH JUDAISM

The object which Jesus had in view was to purify Judaism and, through Judaism, the larger society in which it was everywhere intermingled. There was everything to lose and nothing to gain by provoking a controversy between Judaism and the Roman Empire. Such a project was practical, though it called for infinite patience and self-command. **The Jewish conception of one righteous God was attracting converts in growing numbers. But the force of**

{p. 170} **this great conception was maimed by the limiting doctrine that God was interested in Israel only.**

{p. 171} **No one building has ever counted for so much to a people as the Temple at Jerusalem to the Jews.** Though prayer and worship might reach Jehovah at a distance, the offerings due from his people must be brought to the Temple. The priests had reason to regard as a mortal enemy anyone who called these ideas in question. From the story of his talk with the woman of Samaria it would seem that **Jesus had openly challenged them.**

{p. 174 } For the next few days **Jesus was able to use the Temple as a centre from which to attack the whole fabric of orthodox Judaism. Unlike Paul thirty years later, he refrained from any attempt to conciliate the Pharisees or enlist their support in his struggle with the priests.** Their blind attachment to the principle of authority and the rigid legalism of their scribes was a worse, because less obvious, evil than the greed and corruption of the hierarchy.

{p. 253} When Roman legions invaded them the Celtic tribes had acquired no semblance of national union. They were easily conquered and by the end of the fourth century had adopted the civilisation and language of Rome and also the Christian religion.

St. Augustine had scarcely finished his *De Civitate Dei* when in A.D. 430 Rome was withdrawing her legions and **abandoning Britain to the rising tide of**

{p. 254} **savage** invaders. It may even be that the general disturbance caused by the Hunnish invasion of Europe may have set in motion this westward thrust. To pass from guess-work to fact, we know that **Anglo-Saxons from Schleswig-Holstein** swarmed to these shores and conquered the island so far as Devon and the mountainous regions of Scotland and Wales. **Wherever they conquered and settled the Christian religion was extinguished. The culture and language of Rome was submerged.** No contemporary records exist from which the history of this period can be framed because these barbarians were unable to write them. From evidence which the spade is constantly yielding we know that **they everywhere burned the houses of the Romanised Britains and put their inhabitants to the sword.** They had no desire to use for themselves the solid and comfortable dwellings of civilised men. They simply destroyed the traces of civilisation wherever they found them. As they reached these shores, our Saxon fathers were savages in the ordinary sense of that word.

We all know from our school-books how some English captives, exposed for sale in the Roman slave-market, attracted the notice of Gregory, Abbot of St. Andrews. Touched by their youth and their beauty, the Abbot was led to conceive the idea of converting England from heathenism. He had actually started on his mission when he was recalled and raised to the Chair of St. Peter. In A.D. 596 he commanded Augustine, his successor to the abbacy, to fulfil his still unaccomplished purpose. The mission was successful and in A.D. 601 Augustine was consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury. The Church in the south of England thus owed its foundation to the Papacy more directly than most in that age and the early English churchmen were eager champions of the papal claims. Geography was in time to prove stronger than history.

{p. 255} In Wales Christianity had survived the Saxon invasion. St. Patrick, a Welsh missionary, had carried it to Ireland in the fifth century. In A.D. 563 St. Columba carried it from Ireland to Scotland, whence it spread to Northumbria about A.D. 635. **These Celtic churches and their English converts were less ready to acknowledge the authority of Rome than the church founded in the province of Canterbury.**

The seeds of civilisation were thus replanted by Christianity. Churchmen were able to write. To them we owe it that once again we begin to know what was happening in England.

The Saxon settlers had lost their taste for the sea and were mainly devoted to farming. The lands they had left vacant in Denmark had been occupied by settlers of a kindred race from further north. In the course of ages the character of these Norsemen had been moulded in the fiords of Scandinavia, valleys of a mountainous country partly submerged at the close of the glacial age. On the edge of these fiords the Norsemen had settled wherever ground could be ploughed and cattle could be grazed on the slopes above. They could hunt in the forests and fish in the sea. As a rule the fishermen's boats were the only means of communication between the villages. In these stormy latitudes the **primitive Norsemen** became the most skilful and daring of mariners. At the period with which we are now dealing they were learning to build vessels which could traverse the open seas and thus to embark on distant adventures. They **crossed the Baltic, founded the Russian Empire at Novgorod, descended the Dnieper and occupied Constantinople. They planted colonies in Iceland, Scotland, England and Ireland, in Normandy, Sicily and Calabria.** They visited Greenland and Labrador.

{p. 256} **In Sicily they ruled a medley of races, languages and creeds, much as England ruled India in the nineteenth century. The despotism they founded in England was the crucible in which its refractory races were fused.**

{Curtis now describes the Viking-Norman origins of the British Empire}

In the eighth century the heathen Norsemen began to plunder, conquer and occupy Christianised England from Denmark, much as the Anglo-Saxons had done three centuries earlier. At the close of this century the Saxon Alfred stopped their advance and drove them into the north-east. **To the south of this 'Danelaw' Alfred established his power as king. The Danes were converted to Christianity** and rapidly fused with the kindred Saxons. **They had brought with them the word 'law' and some of the ideas which that word connotes.** They had also established fortified towns on the rivers, often repairing old Roman walls. The English began to copy this practice in Wessex and, as they reconquered the Danelaw, parcelled it out into shires - military areas surrounding fortified towns.

For a brief period **at the opening years of the tenth century a great part of the Viking world, Denmark, Norway, the Hebrides and England, was organised as an empire by the Danish king Canute.** He conquered England and was elected as its king in A.D. 1017. Thereafter he ruled Saxons and Danes alike on a footing of equality. It is idle to speculate what might have happened if this great Norsemen had

{p. 257} lived longer and left competent successors. When he died at the age of forty in A.D. 1035 his Empire dissolved and Edward the Confessor, of the House of Alfred, was elected by the English as king.

In the ninth century the Norsemen had preyed on both sides of the English Channel. They had pushed up the Seine as far as Rouen and had ravaged the country surrounding it. In the early years of the tenth century one of them, Rollo by name, had decided to settle there with his followers. By a treaty with Charles the Simple, king of France, he acquired a considerable area surrounding Rouen as duke of Normandy. He himself was baptized and ere long the Normans had adopted the French language, the feudal system as developed in France and the art of fighting on horseback. In his youth Edward the Confessor was trained in a Norman monastery and as king of England depended largely on Norman advisers. The Saxon earl Godwin had expelled these advisers and, when Edward died, Godwin's son Harold was elected to succeed him.

In A.D. 1035, the year of Canute's death, Robert the Devil, duke of Normandy, had also died on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, bequeathing his dukedom to William, a bastard born to him by the daughter of a tanner. In A.D. 1064 Harold was wrecked on the Norman coast and fell into the power of William, who made him swear to support his claim to the throne of England on the death of Edward the Confessor. When Harold, ignoring his oath, was elected to the throne, William prepared to assert his claim. Through the influence of Hildebrand he secured the approval of the Pope for his enterprise. This was strictly in accordance with the theory of world sovereignty, which Hildebrand claimed for the Papacy. He was thus helping to temper the axe which, centuries later, would be laid to its root. The death of Edward had fired the king of Nor-

{p. 258} way, Harald Hardrada, with the hope of reviving the Empire of Canute. He landed in Yorkshire, where he and his host were destroyed by Harold at Stamford Bridge on September 28, A.D. 1066. Harold marched rapidly to the south to meet William, who had landed at Hastings. On October 14 their armies met; but the Saxon infantry were no match for the Norman cavalry and Harold was defeated and slain.

Within five years William had mastered the country up to the Cheviots and Wales. For the first time an executive political unity was forced on the English and was afterwards maintained, until it had become to them a habit of mind. This unity made the island impregnable and the conquest which

created it was therefore the last to which it submitted. Henceforward English society acquired the character of a lake which is troubled only by the winds that reach it. In the atmosphere of Europe any local disturbance could raise a swell which spread through society to its furthest limits.

William brought to the task of government the superlative energy of his race and also their genius for organisation. While the feudal system as developed in France was imposed in its leading features, William made it clear that holders of land owed a duty to himself prior to the duty they owed to their lords. The duties imposed by the feudal system as well as the rights were accurately specified in a vast cadastral survey which bears comparison with the land settlement applied to India centuries later under William's successors. By making it clear that the king was paramount in the feudal system he prepared the way for its supersession.

The word 'feudalism' coined in the eighteenth century was unknown to the people who lived under that system. It developed, when the government provided by the Roman Empire had collapsed, as a

{p. 259} means whereby the people in each locality could obtain some kind of security for life and property. A barbarian chief, who had seized the land, parcelled it out amongst his followers, to be held by them in return for military service and certain dues. He was thus provided with a force with which to resist the encroachments of neighbouring chiefs. His tenants allowed the people who lived on their land specified rights, again in return for military service, and also dues to be paid in cash, in kind or in actual labour. The labourers at the base of the system were serfs attached like chattels to the land. One chief, more powerful than the rest, would claim their allegiance and assert his title to be recognised as king. His nobles, tenants in chief, would then try to assert the principle that the royal authority could only be exercised through themselves. When justice had to be done between their henchmen it was they who must do it in courts of their own. The king could only do justice as between the tenants in chief. A strong king, on the other hand, was always seeking to extend his direct authority over the henchmen of his tenants in chief, to assert his right to decide their disputes in courts of his own, to make laws which applied to them all and commanded their obedience as against a lord in rebellion against him. **In course of time he would claim that everyone in his dominions was liable to pay taxes to him direct and not to his lord only. It was only in so far as kings succeeded in establishing these rights that states in the real sense of the word were brought into being.** Feudalism, based on the principle of contract, was incompatible with the principle of sovereignty, which is founded on dedication; and sovereignty is the essence of the state. As contrasted with systems like caste or feudalism the state is a vertebrate structure. The Norman and Plantagenet kings provided England with the backbone of a genuine government, a paramount

{p. 260} authority which all their subjects had, in the last resort, to obey, even as against their local lords. In parcelling out the land he had conquered to his barons or tenants in chief William the Conqueror was careful to see that he put no one of them in the kind of position which his ancestor Rollo had established for himself as duke of Normandy. To each of his barons he allotted a number of manors, but in different parts of the country. Great earldoms like Wessex, Mercia and Northumbria vanished under his system. He adopted the shires, which were relatively small, as administrative units.

{p. 270 ... with the aid of printing, representative bodies have acquired an unlimited power of moulding law in the light of common experience. **Acts of parliament are no longer confined to brief declarations of general principles for judges to interpret. A modern statute is sometimes a volume in itself.** Its chapters and sections are a complicated mechanism which reflects the intricate delicacy of the human relations to which it is

applied. ... We must now go back to the early stages when the commons had framed a bill behind

{p. 271} closed doors in the chapter-house of Westminster for their speaker to present to the king in council. When this happened the peers summoned to the council in their own right naturally wished to discuss in private what attitude to adopt towards the measure proposed by the commons. They also developed the habit of meeting without the king under the presidency of the lord chancellor. They often differed from the commons as to the principle of the measure or as to its details. If they could not agree as to the principle it was not presented to the king for his approval. If they differed only on details the lords and commons had then to agree on the terms of amendments. The procedure whereby this is done by the two houses sitting apart was developed. When both were agreed on principle and detail the bill was submitted to the king and enacted as law.

...

The commons, however, asserted their exclusive right to settle the details of supply.

The high court of parliament had thus developed from the great council of the Norman kings and was destined in course of centuries to become a legislature with complete control of supply. Its judicial work, except for ultimate appeals, was devolved on separate courts, which also asserted their independence of royal interference. Executive matters remained in the hands of the king, and were dealt with by him and his privy council, a body which peers claimed a technical right to attend.

Legislative, judicial and executive functions were thus to a great extent distributed into three separate organs. Montesquieu, with his logical French mind,

{p. 272} **announced that this separation of powers was the essence of the British constitution, and indeed the secret of freedom itself, obscuring thereby the fact that the making, interpretation and enforcement of law are merely three aspects of sovereignty which can never be wholly divorced one from the other.** Lord Haldane once opened an official interview with a government servant by saying, "I need hardly tell you that the judges have nothing to do with making or altering the law. They have only to interpret the law." "We are all familiar with that legal fiction", the government servant replied. "You, lord chancellor, know better than I do that where there are no precedents to follow the judges decide and in deciding they make the law." The official expression on Lord Haldane's face relaxed in a smile. "Within the four walls of this room I had better admit then that we judges are constantly making the law, and in fact legislate. So now let us talk of this matter on the basis of realities."

Of greater importance is the intimate connection between legislative and executive functions. The man or men responsible for administering the law will, as a rule, know better than any body of elected legislators what changes in the law are necessary to secure the safety of the realm. This applies especially to those laws which decide from year to year the contributions which each citizen must make to meet the expenses of government.

{p. 273} **The king, though he could not legislate without parliament, could stop legislation** and could, therefore, be removed only by another revolution. The cause of most revolutions is a deadlock in government, not oppression. In England the problem was solved, almost unconsciously, by transferring the executive power from the king to the minister able for the time being to command a majority in the house of commons. Such a minister could ask the house to frame the laws and vote the supplies which he deemed necessary for the safety of the realm. If they refused to support him, his

place would be taken by a leader whom parliament was prepared to support; or else the defeated minister could dissolve parliament and ask the country to return one prepared to support him and abide the result. **In the British constitution of to - day the real heir to the sovereignty of the Norman and Plantagenet kings is the prime minister**, who is brought to office or can be removed from it by the will of parliament or else of the electorate. But, so long as he holds office, parliament must in the last instance do what he says or else remove him. **Under British institutions the executive thus controls the legislature, so long as it is the executive.**

By this process the lineal descendants of the Norman and Plantagenet kings have become the hereditary presidents of a republic. Just when the change had been made in England **the founders of the American constitution**, misled by the theories of Montesquieu, **established an elective monarchy in**

{p. 274} **the United States.** The king who sits on the throne of Washington can only be changed every four years. In the interval the safety of the state may be jeopardised by a deadlock between the executive and legislature.

{p. 471} THE GRAND ALLIANCE {1815, after the defeat of Napoleon}

AT Vienna the concert of Europe had come into being. When the Congress closed the dominant figure in its counsels was the Tzar, whose position in some ways resembled that which President Wilson afterwards filled at the Conference of Paris. Like Wilson he dreamed of creating a body to order the general affairs of mankind. In September 1815 he invited the governments of Europe to recognise that all human authority is derived from God, and to join in 'a Holy Alliance' to assert that principle. Great Britain declined to respond. The Pope stood aloof; but all other sovereigns in Christendom signed. **In November, however, Alexander persuaded Great Britain to unite with Russia, Austria and Prussia in a Grand Alliance, the terms of which were less in the air.** Its immediate object, with which Great Britain was in genuine accord, was to prevent any further outbreak in France which might threaten the peace of Europe. But the treaty went further than this. By Article 6 the allies agreed that in order

{quote} to consolidate the connections which at the present moment so closely unite the four Sovereigns for the happiness of the world, **the High Contracting Parties have agreed to renew their meetings at fixed periods**, either under the immediate auspices of the Sovereigns themselves or by their respective Ministers, for the purpose of consulting upon their common interests, and for the consideration of the measures which at each of these periods shall be considered the most salutary for the repose and prosperity of nations and **for the maintenance of the peace of Europe** {end quote}

Alexander hoped through this Article to realise the

{p. 472} **dreams of a world-government foreshadowed in the Holy Alliance**, and Castlereagh must have accepted it only to avoid giving him offence.

{Note that Alexander's text did not explicitly canvas world government, but the meaning was clear to Curtis; in the same way, the League of Nations

and the Baruch Plan disguised their intentions}

{p. 529} CHAPTER XLI

AUSTRALIA

On the ships which sailed to these settlements from England colonists who had not been convicted of crimes began to find their way to Australia, and to open up the interior. The more orderly convicts were allowed to serve them as labourers on ticket-of-leave. This explains why Australia was never developed like the southern colonies in America, or

{p. 530} like South Africa by imported negroes or Asiatics.

{p. 531} **In 1846 Earl Grey, who had been a member of Wakefield's group, became Secretary of State for the Colonies and War. In 1850 he submitted to parliament a bill to allow Victoria, Tasmania (Van Diemen's Land), South Australia and Queensland to be organised as colonies separate from New South Wales. The bill also included provisions for a federal government for all Australia, with a governor-general and a general assembly elected from all the colonies** {Federation was a British proposal}. In committee the federal provisions were dropped. The act as passed merely enabled the four younger colonies to be separated from New South Wales, and empowered the colonists to draft constitutions for themselves

{p. 533} CHAPTER XLII

NEW ZEALAND

The native inhabitants, whom Captain Cook found in Australia ... were too primitive to offer any serious resistance to colonisation, or acquire the arts of civilised life. They retired in rapidly dwindling numbers into the arid and tropical interiors where Europeans were unable to settle.

{p. 534} Museums in Europe were eager to obtain specimens of Maori heads for the sake of the beautiful patterns tattooed on the skin, and were willing to pay as much as £500 for a head. The tribes were, therefore, encouraged to fight each other, for the sake of the heads they cut from their enemies killed in battle.

{p. 621} CHAPTER LIII

PROBLEMS RAISED BY THE GROWTH OF RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

{p. 623} **The idea of the Empire as a beneficent power, spreading the blessings of civilisation to races which could not govern themselves, was carried to a wide circle of readers by the writings and poems of Rudyard Kipling, a young journalist born and largely brought up in India.**

{p. 626} ... **the growth of Dominion nationalism was marked by the fact that Canada and Australia declined to contribute to the cost of British defence, and decided to organise separate fleets of their own.**

From time to time **these questions were discussed at imperial conferences.** The movement started by Seeley's book had led to the first of these conferences, when premiers from all the colonies were assembled in London to celebrate the fiftieth year of Queen Victoria's reign in 1887. **A second met in 1897**, after the Jubilee held to celebrate the longest reign in English history, an event which marked the springtide of imperial enthusiasm. **It was at this conference that Joseph Chamberlain realised that colonial statesmen would have nothing to do with Seeley's idea of organic union with England, and began to accept their alternative idea of uniting the Empire by a system of tariffs.** The spontaneous share taken by the colonies in the South African war led to a third conference in 1902, and it then became a recognised institution. A fourth was held in 1907, a fifth in 1909 and a sixth in 1911. **At this last conference the question of foreign affairs thrust themselves into the foreground.** For the first time the secretary of state for foreign affairs, **Sir Edward Grey**, gave the assembled premiers, in secret, a full exposition of the whole foreign position.

For the first time also attention was drawn to the fact that the so-called self-governing Dominions had no control of foreign affairs. The question was **raised by Sir Joseph Ward, the premier of New Zealand.** To his crude **proposal for transferring the control of foreign affairs to an imperial council** on which the Dominion governments would be represented, the British prime minister, Mr. Asquith, replied:

{p. 627} {quote} **It would impair if not altogether destroy the authority of the Government of the United Kingdom** in such grave matters as **the conduct of foreign policy, the conclusion of treaties, the declaration and maintenance of peace, or the declaration of war**, and, indeed, all those relations with Foreign Powers, necessarily of the most delicate character, which are now in the hands of the Imperial Government, subject to its responsibility to the Imperial Parliament. **That authority cannot be shared**, and the co-existence side by side with the Cabinet of the United Kingdom of this proposed body - it does not matter by what name you call it for the moment - clothed with the functions and the jurisdiction which Sir Joseph Ward proposed to invest it with, would, in our judgment, be absolutely fatal to our present system of responsible government. {end quote}

For the moment this question was thus left in the air. **But to those who believed that the British Commonwealth must in the end stand or fall by the principle of self-government, the upshot was difficult, but clear. The line which divided domestic from foreign affairs was unreal.** A Dominion could not achieve self-government in the real sense of that word unless or until it achieved control of external affairs and with it the right to say whether the Dominion was at war, apart from the government of Great Britain. **To assert this right was to place the Dominion in the same position as the American colonies when they had declared their independence. The only alternative was for the British and Dominion electorates to establish a government responsible to them all, charged with the issues of peace and war.** The difficulty could not be met, as Seeley had proposed, by a national state on the largest scale, modelled on the United States. The existence of the Dominions ranking with countries like England or America as nations must be recognised. **The British Commonwealth, to endure, must develop a conception new in the experience of mankind, an organic polity large and flexible enough to embrace in one**

{p. 628} **commonwealth national states on the largest scales, divided by oceans from one another.**

{p. 647} CHAPTER LVII

EVENTS LEADING TO WAR

The war which engaged the armies of Russia in eastern Asia had affected the balance of power in Europe from its outset. France, immediately driven to look for support nearer home, had turned to Great Britain, who after the war in South Africa was feeling isolation.

{p. 648} In England public attention was now drawn to the rapid growth of the German navy ... the mechanised industries of the German people were fast outstripping the productive powers of Great Britain.

{p. 649} When Russian ambitions in the East were defeated, her attention was turned once more to the Balkan peninsula. England, embarrassed by the war in South Africa, had tried in vain to settle the questions which had long embittered her relations with Russia, in Persia and China. In 1907 the Russian bureaucracy realised the mistake it had then made. In August an Anglo-Russian agreement was reached over Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet. **In three years the growth of German power by land and sea had thrown England into the arms of France and Russia, her two traditional rivals. Had peace been maintained for the first third of the twentieth century, as it was for the last third of the nineteenth, Germany by now would be rivalled in wealth only by the United States,** so high is the vigour and intelligence of her people and their natural capacity for production.

{p. 701} CHAPTER LXV

THE COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS AFTER THE WAR {After World War I}

The landscape, as Mr. Asquith had seen it, was changed when both the Dominions and India were throwing their strength into the war. Their ministers were included in a cabinet created by Mr. Lloyd George. **The idea that this cabinet could be made**

{p. 702} **responsible to a parliament elected by the Commonwealth as a whole was under discussion.**

We are now learning what national sovereignty means when carried to its practical conclusion in a highly mechanised world. Political thinkers are beginning to say, and almost to say with one voice, that **the cause of civilisation is lost unless national states will agree to abandon some part of their sovereignty. ... If a government once concedes the right to the League of Nations to issue commands to its own subjects over its head it has merged its sovereignty in the League of Nations and is sovereign no longer.** Some thinkers, and even some statesmen who see where the principle of national sovereignty is leading, have suggested practical steps for restricting it. They urge that the League of Nations must have a 'police' of its own, a fleet, an army and an air force strong enough to enforce the Covenant on any recalcitrant member, just as a national government has police to enforce its law on rebellious citizens. But they shrink from stating the necessary consequence of their proposal. A League police must be recruited

{p. 911} from subjects who owe allegiance to states which compose the League, from most if not all of them. Its **members must all be pledged to**

obey, if necessary by giving their lives, the League of Nations, not the government of the national state to which they belong, if the two are at odds. The unlimited devotion of these men at any rate must be transferred from their national states to the League.

To have any effect such a force must be on a scale commensurate at least with any one of the national forces. Its cost will be comparable to that which the larger nations spend on their armaments. **The League of Nations will require a budget comparable to that of one of the leading Powers.**

{p. 912} **The League would have to be given power to go over the heads of the governments of the states and raise the revenues it needed by taxing their subjects**, where necessary by distraint.

{p. 916} Though I think that a league of nations based on realities can do much to reduce the risks of war, I do not foresee any process whereby it can be moulded little by little into a genuine government of the world. Yet **I have not shrunk, and I do not shrink, from upholding the creation of a world commonwealth, of a genuine government of mankind, as the practical goal of human endeavour.** I believe that, unless conscious and effective steps are taken towards that goal, the level of civilisation we have now reached cannot be maintained. It is even in danger of falling in ruins, as it fell in the Dark Ages. **But the project of a world government is not in sight till two or more commonwealths**, more advanced than the rest, have recognised these truths, and by some immense spiritual effort **have consciously merged their sovereignties in one international commonwealth.** In order to do this they must create one government more competent than their separate

{p. 917} governments to control the relations of the people it represents to the rest of mankind. **That government must handle the issues of peace and war, and must have the forces necessary for that purpose. It must, therefore, have power to tax not the national states which compose it, but the citizens of those states.** It must draw its authority to levy these taxes from the citizens themselves and not from their national governments.

Such an international state will not be established merely by the framing and acceptance of a federal constitution designed to accomplish these objects. It must prove its reality and efficacy to itself and the world. But **if such a commonwealth were established and survived for some generations, the spirit which gave it reality would grow**, as the spirit which now makes the United States the strongest national commonwealth in the world has grown. The transference of American loyalty from the state to the Union was a gradual process. Having adopted the constitution, they elected their president and members to Congress, they obeyed its laws and paid its taxes. **All unconsciously as years went by they came to think of the Union rather than the State as the unit for which they were called on to live and to die. They awoke to the fact that the larger loyalty had raised their life to a higher plane**, which was not consistent with slavery in their midst. In the end the great majority were found willing to devote their property and their lives to destroying slavery for the sake of the Union. And **so it will be with the first international commonwealth which survives for one or two generations. It will silently draw to itself the devotion of the peoples who agree to form it. They will recognise in time, and the world outside them will recognise, that their national life has not been impaired by the transfer of sovereignty to a larger unit**, but has, in fact, been raised to a higher plane. **The possibility of**

{p. 918} **an international state composed of nations separated by oceans will have been demonstrated to the world.** The gulf which at

present exists in men's minds will have been bridged.

{p. 927} **Can the national states of the world even if all of them were commonwealths, ever be transformed by one act into a world state, so that all men owe their allegiance, in the last analysis, to a single sovereignty?** Is it not in the nature of things that two or more, and those the most advanced commonwealths, would have to make a beginning by

{p. 928} merging themselves into one international sovereignty?

{p. 934} **The United States was conceived as the nucleus of a commonwealth destined to include states other than those who founded it. "New States may be admitted by the Congress into this Union" were words written into the constitution.** The terms of admission were wisely left to be settled whenever the occasion should arise. **Here is a precedent to be**

{p. 935} **followed wherever the first international commonwealth is called into being.** It must from the nature of the case be founded as the nucleus of something destined to grow, as a state always ready to consider the inclusion of other states which from time to time may desire to join it. But no state should ever be admitted on terms which would tend to destroy its character as an international commonwealth.

A proposal to unite in one international commonwealth communities living on opposite sides of the globe, the commonwealths most remote from each other, as the first step to uniting all the peoples who inhabit this globe may seem paradoxical. But the very distance between them creates one of the major interests common to both. Their supreme interest in common consists in protecting the principle of freedom for which they stand. But inseparably connected with this is the heavy task of protecting the routes which connect them by sea and by air. Such an international commonwealth as I ask the reader to imagine would find its first material interest in safeguarding the routes on the maintenance of which its continued existence must always depend; the routes through the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal and the Red Sea.

I am holding in mind that other countries are vitally concerned in the maintenance of these routes, more especially Egypt and India. In course of time the millions of India will learn to govern themselves, but I also think they will only do this by a long and painful experience. It is easy to conceive, on the other hand, that **the statesmen of India or Egypt might seek to enter an international commonwealth which controlled the route which connects the eastern and western hemispheres** long before they have reached the stage of self-government which countries like England, Australia or New Zealand have attained. I can also conceive their accepting admis-

{p. 936 } sion on terms which would not endanger the stability of the international commonwealth we are picturing, and which would not destroy its character as such. And if this were found possible, a step would have been taken towards the ultimate goal of incomparable value. **A real international commonwealth in being, which included countries like India and Egypt, as well as countries like England, Australia and New Zealand, would once for all establish the idea of a world commonwealth including all nations and kindreds and peoples** as the practical goal of human affairs. The impulse of other nations to join it would be greatly increased.

There are states in Europe as directly interested in the route from the west to east as India, Egypt, Australia, New Zealand or England herself. I am

thinking of a country like Holland, and in a lesser degree Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Iceland. I can scarcely conceive statesmen from all these countries with their various languages meeting in convention with those of England, Australia and New Zealand to found a new international commonwealth which would, among other functions, control the routes which connect the western and eastern hemispheres. But if England, Australia and New Zealand had once established a stable commonwealth which controlled that route, with or without the inclusion of India and Egypt, I can well conceive that Holland might wish to enter that commonwealth. I can also conceive her being admitted. And if something of this kind should happen, Belgium and the Scandinavian countries would quickly follow. **That diversity of language would offer no insuperable obstacle has already been proved by the League of Nations. If, in spite of language difficulties, these nations can now transact their business in the Council and Assembly of Geneva, so could the business of a commonwealth be transacted in a polyglot cabinet**

{p. 937} **and parliament.** The inclusion of powers like France would then be in sight.

If an international commonwealth built from countries within the British Empire came to include countries in Europe which had never been part of that Empire, the most difficult stage in its growth to a world commonwealth, after its first foundation, would have been crossed. So the British Empire would have done its work and passed into history. ...

When the British Commonwealth had been transformed into something which, beyond dispute, was an international commonwealth, the time would at last be in sight when the United States would become an integral part of it. I think that before this would happen South Africa, Ireland and Canada would have found their way into the international commonwealth. In doing so, Ireland might solve the problem of her own national unity. **It may well happen that Canada may prove the bridge whereby the people of America may pass from national isolation to partnership in a world commonwealth. Whenever that happens the peace of the world will be finally secured.** The more difficult nations would then be eager to join it, and the world commonwealth will be more than strong enough to contain and to mould them.

I think, too, that long before this had happened the countries which had merged their sovereignties in an international commonwealth would also have **transferred their control of backward peoples to the government of that commonwealth. I can think of it controlling the natives of Africa, New Guinea and Java with a policy consciously directed towards fitting these peoples to govern themselves and to join**

{p. 938} **in the government of the commonwealth as a whole.**

{p. 946} CHAPTER XII

CONSTRUCTIVE RELIGION

{p. 948} While **our Lord** accepted much of their view his teaching went far beyond it. In his mind the Kingdom of God was not an order in which men, as the subjects of God, were mainly concerned with keeping his laws, with avoiding their breach. **In his mind the work of creation had never ceased.** It would always go on. Men were called to join as partners with God in making new things. **The material world was the sphere in which men were called to cooperate with God in work of spiritual creation. The Kingdom of God on this earth was a system of society to be**

ordered by men themselves in accordance with the mind of God.

{p. 949} The reactions produced by such teaching can now be gauged by the millions who bow their knees in the temples erected by Marx and Hitler.

{p. 953} **I feel that when once the Protestant churches had learned to regard the creation of a world commonwealth as an all-important aspect of their work in realising the Kingdom of God, an international commonwealth in the English-speaking world would come into being in a few generations.** {end of selections}

Curtis' view of history was typical of the ideology of the British Empire. What of current World-State movements? Do they show continuity and similarity, or are they hostile to Curtis' conception?

The Tory, Republican and Liberal Parties maintain continuity, but the Labour, Democratic and Labor Parties have embraced the World-State conceptions of H.G. Wells.

Curtis' World-State is built around the British Commonwealth; its core is a bond linking Britain, the United States and the Dominions in a single block. Today, such a movement would keep Britain out of a united Europe and Australia out of a united East Asia, whereas the Left world-staters embrace the latter blocks.

Culturally, Curtis' World-State is based on Christianity of a Protestant but not fundamentalist type, and looks to Ancient Greece and Rome. Yet Latin and Greek are now not taught as regular school subjects (as they were in the 1950s & 60s), Ancient History is rarely taken as a subject, and Christianity is largely ignored in schools. Culturally, Wells' Left World-State movement is dominant.

Curtis quotes Wells on p. 446, on the question of how to adapt our thinking to a one-world conception, abandoning tribal and nationalist sentiment. He by no means endorses Wells' whole scheme, although he must have been familiar with it.

Lionel Curtis book *The Commonwealth of Nations*, mostly written around 1911, but published in 1916: [curtis1.html](#).

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