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Scipio Africanus: Defender of the Roman Republic

Just as Themistocles had saved Greek civilization at the Battle of Salamis in 480 B.C., so Scipio Africanus saved the Roman republic at the Battle of Zama in 202 B.C. Because of Scipio's victory, Rome, rather than Carthage, would dominate the Western world. It was the Romans who modified and spread Greek culture and, eventually, Christianity throughout the Mediterranean world and western Europe. But the Romans should not be viewed exclusively as the disseminators of the achievements of other peoples. They themselves contributed substantially to Western civilization. Their language, law, and architecture still exert a powerful influence over every Western nation.

THE REASONS FOR ROMAN SUCCESS

How is it that a small people possessing relatively poor soil and harbors came to rule over the largest empire in the world, spanning several million square miles and containing fifty million people? The Romans' geographical advantages and cultural traits account for much of their success.

Location, Location, Location

Around 1000 B.C., various Latin tribes migrated from the Balkans into central Italy and intermarried with the locals. Though familiar with iron, the Latins were mostly shepherds and herdsmen. During the ninth century B.C., some of these tribesmen settled on the Palatine and Esquiline Hills, two of

Rome's famed seven hills, overlooking a convenient crossing of the Tiber, the second largest river in Italy. Twenty miles from the sea, Rome was close enough for transportation and communication but distant enough to have warning of raiders. Located near valuable salt beds, Rome's hills were easily defensible and free from flooding. Most significantly, Rome was located at the crossroads between the Etruscans to the north and the Greeks to the south. The Romans learned much from both of these peoples.

By 700 B.C., the Etruscans had settled in Etruria, the land northwest of Rome. The Greeks called the Etruscans "Tyrrhenians," whence comes the name "Tyrrhenian Sea" for the gulf that separates Italy from Corsica and Sardinia. The precise origins of the Etruscans are not known for certain, but their language was not Indo-European, and in all probability they came from Asia Minor. The Etruscans were famous for their music and love of war. They also enjoyed dancing, hunting, wrestling, juggling, and feasting. Initially, the Etruscans cremated their dead, but in the late eighth century B.C. they began burying the deceased in stone coffins. In the following century, they hewed massive, lavish chamber tombs out of subterranean rock, often covering them with large mounds of earth. The walls of the tombs were painted. The dead were laid on benches or interred in sarcophagi, on the lids of which reclined stone images of the deceased. The Etruscans became fairly wealthy through agriculture, iron mining, and piracy. They traded fine pottery, candelabra, jewelry, mirrors, chariots, and leather for luxury goods from Greece, Phoenicia, and Egypt. Their cities were well planned and fortified. They were the first people to use a dental bridge (made of gold) to anchor a false tooth (made of wood or ivory) to the two adjacent teeth. Their women possessed a relatively high status, socializing with men to an extent impossible for a respectable Greek or Roman woman.

The Etruscans expanded southward to the Bay of Naples, intermarrying with the locals and organizing much of northern and central Italy and some of southern Italy into three different confederations of Etruscan-dominated city-states. By about 625 B.C., an Etruscan adventurer from Tarquinia, the wealthiest and most powerful of the Etruscan cities (forty miles north of Rome) had become king of Rome. Tarquinia's control of Mount Tolfa, which contained large deposits of iron, tin, and copper, contributed greatly to its wealth and power. This city of 25,000 people also produced metalwork, pottery, and linen, and traded widely. At that time, there was much freedom of movement between cities, and intermarriage between Etruscan and Latin aristocrats was common. In fact, more than a few Roman family names were Etruscan in etymology.

The Etruscans contributed much to Roman civilization. Etruscan kings transformed Rome from a collection of huts into a real city possessing streets, public buildings, markets, and temples. The Etruscans furnished such words as "Roma," "Italia" (meaning "calf-land"), "Tuscany" (from "Etruscan"), and

"Adriatic" (from the Etruscan settlement of "Hatria"). The Etruscans also contributed a few gods, the custom of making statues of deities, and the practice of prophesying by examining the entrails of sacrificial animals, by monitoring the flight of birds, and by following the positions of heavenly bodies. The Etruscans taught the Romans the art of construction, including the use of the arch. Their temples, shrines, private homes, aqueducts, and roads greatly influenced Roman architecture and engineering. When one of their kings drained the Forum, Rome's marshy central valley, which had previously been used as a burial site, it was the first step toward the Forum's eventual fame as the greatest marketplace in the world. The Etruscans also furnished the toga and introduced the *fasces*, an ax bound by a bundle of wooden rods tied together, as a symbol of executive authority. (The ax symbolized the power to put to death, the rods the power to whip. Seeking to use Rome's ancient glory to his advantage, Italian dictator Benito Mussolini later used the fasces as his symbol, whence comes "fascism." A century and a half before Mussolini, Thomas Jefferson had proposed using the fasces as Virginia's state symbol.) The Etruscans were also responsible for the Roman use of the color purple, which was the Etruscan state color, as a symbol of royalty. Finally, the Etruscans introduced chariot races and gladiatorial contests.

Between 750 and 500 B.C., the Greeks colonized southern Italy and Sicily, converting parts of these regions into what the Romans called Magna Graecia (Greater Greece). From these Greeks, via the Etruscans, the Romans learned the Greek alphabet, which they adapted into the Latin alphabet now used throughout the Western world. The Romans assimilated virtually the entire Greek religion (also via the Etruscans), merely changing the names of the gods. Zeus became Jupiter, Hera became Juno (whence comes the month of June), Hermes became Mercury, Aphrodite became Venus, Athena became Minerva, Ares became Mars, Hephaestus became Vulcan, Kronos became Saturn, Poseidon became Neptune, Artemis became Diana, Demeter became Ceres, and the demigod Heracles became Hercules. Only Apollo remained Apollo. Even more than the Greeks, the Romans tied religion to patriotism. Roman gods seemed to exist for no other reason than to strengthen and protect Rome. Appointed by the state, Roman priests were much more powerful than their Greek counterparts. The Romans also adopted Greek-style coins and pottery early in their history. Of course, the Romans would later assimilate Greek art, literature, science, and philosophy as a result of their conquest of the eastern Mediterranean.

Cultural Traits

The Romans possessed important cultural traits that also contributed to their success. The Romans were staunch pragmatists. Cicero once declared: "Whereas our ancestors respected tradition when Rome was at

peace, they were invariably guided by expediency in time of war." The pragmatism of the Romans not only proved crucial to their military success, but also made them the greatest engineers of the ancient world.

The Romans were also tough and frugal. They prized strength over delicacy, power over agility, and utility over grace. They preferred *gravitas* (seriousness) to *levitas* (frivolity). They acquired this toughness the hard way, by scratching out a living on rocky, barren soil.

Romans subordinated themselves to the family and to Rome. In the recesses of the central hall of their houses, aristocrats kept wax busts and masks that realistically depicted the faces of illustrious ancestors. When a distinguished member of the family died, each mask was worn at the funeral by the family member most resembling the ancestor whose face was depicted in the mask. The family member even dressed himself according to the rank the ancestor had held. The eulogy was delivered by the most prominent living family member, who not only listed the achievements of the newly deceased family member, but also painstakingly recounted the achievements of the whole group of ancestors, who were understood to be present in the form of their masks and borrowed bodies. This ritual instilled in young men a desire to endure hardship and even death in order to win the glory of such a eulogy for themselves one day.

The doctrine of *pater familias* (the father of the family) dominated Roman family law. The patriarch of an extended family possessed absolute authority over the entire clan. Theoretically, he could even kill any member of the family and could sell his children as slaves, though such acts were exceedingly rare. (Regardless, it was not a good idea for a Roman son to tell his father he had wrecked the family wagon.) As in many other cultures, the worst crime was parricide. Anyone guilty of so heinous a crime was sewn up in a sack with a dog, a cock, a snake, and a monkey and hurled into the river or sea. Rome was regarded as an extended family, and it was but a small step from the doctrine of *pater familias* to the doctrine of *pater patria* (the father of the country) that later legitimated the reign of the emperors.

The Romans utilized a large collection of stirring myths to instill courage, selflessness, honesty, and patriotism in their children. According to one popular legend, around 506 B.C. Horatius Cocles saved Rome from an Etruscan army by single-handedly holding off the Etruscans while his comrades destroyed a bridge spanning the Tiber. Having no bridge left behind him, Horatius then recited a quick prayer to Father Tiber and hurled himself into the river. According to another legend, around 462 B.C. a delegation of Roman officials asked Cincinnatus, a Roman farmer who was busy plowing his three-acre farm, to assume dictatorial power over Rome for six months in order to expel the Aequians, a Latin tribe threatening the village. Wiping away the sweat and grime, Cincinnatus put on

his toga and set about defeating the Aequians in only fifteen days. Cincinnatus immediately resigned his dictatorship and retired to the plow. (George Washington later modeled himself on Cincinnatus and encouraged the comparison. Lord Byron called Washington the "Cincinnatus of the West.") According to yet another account, in 340 B.C. Titus Manlius ordered the execution of his own son for leading a reckless attack on the enemy against orders. Manlius declared: "You have . . . subverted military discipline, on which the fortune of Rome has rested up to this day. . . . It is a harsh example we shall set, but a salutary one for the young men of the future." In another legend, around 250 B.C. Marcus Atilius Regulus, a Roman consul captured by the Carthaginians, was allowed to return to Rome to discuss peace terms and to negotiate the exchange of Carthaginian prisoners for himself; the Carthaginians made him pledge that he would return to Carthage if he failed. After arriving in Rome, Regulus urged the Senate to continue the war and dissuaded it from making the prisoner exchange, declaring that the Carthaginian prisoners were young and capable officers while he himself was old and worn out. True to his word, Regulus then returned to Carthage, though he knew that the enraged Carthaginians would torture him to death. In fact, they killed him through sleep deprivation.

But the greatest of all the Roman patriotic myths was the poet Virgil's myth of the founding of Rome. According to Virgil's *Aeneid*, Aeneas, son of the Trojan aristocrat Anchises and the goddess Venus, had led a few refugees out of Troy before it fell to the Greeks. The refugees experienced numerous adventures and encountered many hardships before reaching Italy, where they settled down with local Latin tribesmen. Thirteen generations later, two of Aeneas's distant descendants, Romulus and Remus, established Rome. Romulus and Remus were the sons of the war god Mars and Rhea Silvia, a priestess sworn to chastity. Rhea Silvia's uncle, the king of Alba Longa, angry with her for breaking her vows, rejected her claim that the father was Mars, imprisoned her, and had her infant sons exposed on the banks of the Tiber. But a wolf found and nursed Romulus and Remus until a herdsman discovered and raised the brothers. According to the myth, in 753 B.C. the brothers returned to the site where they had been exposed as infants and Romulus traced the outlines of Rome with his plow. Romulus killed Remus in a fit of rage over an insult and became the first king of Rome. This myth gave the Romans a noble origin and lineage; they were descended from Trojan heroes and from the god of war himself.

From such myths the Romans learned courage, discipline, persistence, patience, self-restraint, hard work, endurance, honesty, piety, dignity, and manliness. The last of these qualities was *virtus*, whence comes the English word "virtue." Indeed, most of these English terms are derived from Latin words. Many of the qualities they express were those of the farmer-soldier, who had

to endure boredom, harsh weather, unforeseen calamities, and hard labor. Soldiers did not just fight; they had to dig ditches and build roads as well. Such traits were essential to success in the early struggle against nature and neighbors. In fact, Mars had begun as an agricultural god; it was Roman farmer-soldiers who converted him into the god of war.

Most importantly perhaps, the Romans possessed a sense of invincibility. The Roman historian Livy wrote: "It is as natural for Romans to win battles as for water to go downhill." This feeling of invincibility stemmed from the Roman belief that the gods would support them completely as long as they performed the proper rituals. Each Roman house possessed its own small shrine containing statuettes of the Lares, the household gods. Like the citizens of many other empires throughout history, the Romans possessed a sense of divine mission. When a Roman general celebrated a triumph, he proceeded through the city to the temple of Jupiter (later to the temple of Mars) and offered up to the god "the achievements of Jupiter wrought through the Roman people."

For this reason, perhaps no other people has ever been so obsessed with rituals. When the Romans declared war on another people (a frequent occurrence), one of the *fetiales*, a special group of priests, performed an ancient ceremony. After the enemy had rejected Roman demands, which were sometimes exorbitant in order to ensure their rejection, the fetial went to the enemy's border and, in the presence of at least three men of military age, announced to the gods: "Whereas the X have committed acts and offenses against the Roman people, and whereas the Roman people have commanded that there be war with the X, and the Senate of the Roman people has ordained, consented, and voted that there be war with the X: I therefore and the Roman people hereby make war on the X." The fetial then hurled a spear across the border into the enemy's territory, to symbolize the beginning of a state of war. When the Roman Empire became too large to accommodate such a practice, the Romans set aside a special, enclosed area outside the gates of Rome called the Campus Martius, which symbolized the enemy's territory in the war-making ritual. The Romans never went to war without performing this rite.

If a mistake was made during any ritual, however time consuming, the Romans began again from the beginning. They were willing to perform the same ritual as often as necessary until it was performed without error. It did not even matter that, in some cases, the meaning of the ritual had been completely forgotten.

Many of these rituals originated in elaborate family rites, handed down from father to son, for the purpose of appealing to Ceres (the goddess of agriculture), Vesta (the goddess of the hearth), and the Lares. Even the family meal was a religious ceremony during which the Romans offered prayers, incense, and libations to the gods. Other household rituals ex-

pelled evil spirits and pleased friendly ones. Legend even has it that a Roman once marched past the astonished Gauls besieging Rome and over to Quirinal Hill in order to perform a traditional family sacrifice that had to be performed on that day. After the Gauls left the city in rubble (c. 390 B.C.), there was a great cry to immigrate to the nearby town of Veii, but Camillus convinced the Romans that it would be impious to abandon the places in Rome where rituals must be performed. According to Livy, Camillus declared: "Surely it would be nobler to live like country shepherds amongst everything we hold sacred than to go into universal exile, deserting the gods of our hearths and homes."

Military victories reinforced the Roman sense of invincibility, which, in turn, produced more victories. On the few occasions when the Romans lost battles, they believed that the gods were merely teaching them a lesson in order to keep them from becoming too proud. Nearly all Roman authors cited piety as a crucial factor in the city's success.

THE ROMAN CONQUEST OF ITALY

Between the sixth and third centuries B.C., the Romans conquered all of Italy and established a republic. These two momentous developments were interrelated. The growing recognition of the rights of commoners created the internal harmony necessary for the defeat of external enemies, and the constant warfare highlighted the need to keep commoners happy by recognizing their rights.

The last of the seven kings who ruled Rome from about 625 to 509 B.C. was Tarquin the Proud, an Etruscan who had seized power and who ruled without Senate consultation. In 509 B.C., Tarquin was expelled from Rome. According to Roman legend, Lucius Junius Brutus (an ancestor of Caesar's assassin) and Publius (a name the authors of *The Federalist* later selected as their pseudonym) led the rebellion. Legend held that the Romans rebelled against Tarquin when Lucretia, the married daughter of a prominent Roman nobleman, stabbed herself through the heart after being raped by Tarquin's son. After the fall of Tarquin, Lars Porsenna, king of Clusium, took advantage of the turmoil to capture Rome, but a coalition of Latins and Greeks under Aristodemus decisively defeated Lars' son, Arruns, near Aricia, thus allowing Rome to resume its independence. In any case, the Romans so hated Tarquin that the very title of "king" became odious to them. Even centuries later, the Roman emperors, who had more power than Tarquin ever dreamed of possessing, adopted the designation "emperor" (*imperator*) to avoid the title of "king" (*rex*).

In 496 B.C., the Roman infantry suppressed a rebellion of the other Latin tribes that formed the Latin League, defeating a force composed mostly of

cavalry at Lake Regillus. In 396 B.C., the Romans, under Marcus Furius Camillus, tunneled into the citadel of Veii, the Etruscan city with which they struggled for control of the salt beds at the mouth of the Tiber. The Romans captured and destroyed the rival city. Situated at a river crossing from which roads radiated in all directions, Veii was a trade and craft center located only nine miles from Rome. In capturing Veii, the Romans doubled the extent of their territory. By 390 B.C., the Latin League dominated central Italy.

That same year the invasion of Italy by 30,000 Gauls, fierce Celtic warriors from what is now France, threatened Rome's very existence. Having crossed the Alps and marched southward into Italy, the Gauls routed the Roman army, who escaped to Veii, leaving Rome open. Though a small Roman garrison held out on Capitoline Hill, the Gauls burned most of Rome. After seven months, the Roman patricians were able to bribe the Gauls into leaving the city. (The Gauls also left because other tribes threatened their northern territory. Naturally, Roman legend declared that they left because Camillus defeated them in battle.)

Though it took the Romans half a century to recover fully, they rebuilt their city and protected it with a new wall so sturdy that part of it still stands. The wall enclosed an area of 1,000 acres. By necessity, the city was rebuilt quickly and haphazardly, which was why, according to Livy four centuries later, "the general lay-out of Rome is more like a squatters' settlement than a properly planned city." But the Romans swore that never again would a foreign army enter Rome. Indeed, it was another eight centuries before one did.

The Romans' determination to resist conquest combined with population pressures to produce a policy that some historians have termed "defensive imperialism." In the quest for ever securer borders, the Romans eventually conquered all of Italy.

Four peoples, the Latins, Samnites, Etruscans, and Greeks, blocked the Roman conquest of Italy. Though plagued by disunity, the Latin tribes repeatedly rebelled and fought the Romans tooth and nail; the last tribe was not subdued until 338 B.C. The Romans dissolved the Latin League and forced each tribe to sign a separate peace treaty with them. The Romans then conquered Tarquinia by 311 B.C. Meanwhile, from 343 to 290 B.C., the Romans engaged in three fierce wars against the Samnite tribes of the hills of Campania (in southwestern Italy), who were distant relatives of the Latins. Though the Samnites possessed few towns, they were highly organized and disciplined, possessed twice the population and land of Rome, could retreat to mountainous country when in distress, and received some aid from the Etruscans and Gauls. Nevertheless, the Romans overcame numerous setbacks and defeated the Samnites and their allies decisively by 290 B.C.

It was during the Samnite Wars that the Romans moved from the phalanx, learned from the Greeks via the Etruscans, to the more maneuver-

able formations that later enabled them to conquer the entire Mediterranean basin and all of western Europe. Roman armies were now organized around small units called *centuries* led by *centurions*. A century equaled sixty to one hundred men. Two centuries equaled a *maniple*. Three maniples equaled a *cohort*. Ten cohorts (4,000 to 6,000 men) and 300 cavalry equaled a *legion*. When a Roman legion marched into battle, its sixty centuries did so in three lines, each able to coalesce into a mass or disperse into smaller contingents. Two lines (the *princeps* and the *triarii*) watched the front line (the *hastati*) intently, preparing to exploit success or prevent collapse. Roman soldiers generally cast seven-foot javelins, then ran to meet the enemy with a razor-sharp, double-edged short sword (the *gladius*). They often used their rectangular shields offensively as battering rams. The second line cast their javelins over their friends' heads to impale the enemy before them.

The Roman conquest of the Samnites left only the Greeks of southern Italy to conquer. In 282 B.C., the Greek city of Tarentum, fearful of the growing Roman power, sank part of a Roman flotilla and called on the brilliant Greek general Pyrrhus of Epirus for aid. In 280 B.C., Pyrrhus brought 25,000 troops and 20 Indian war elephants to add to Tarentum's 15,000 soldiers, mercenaries, and large navy. After seeing the Romans in action, the sharp-witted Pyrrhus declared, "These may be barbarians, but there is nothing barbarous about their discipline."

Nor did it take long for Pyrrhus to see the superiority of the Romans' more flexible formations over the more rigid Greek phalanx. By then the phalanx employed mutually supporting rows of twenty-one foot spears. While it was highly effective in opening charges, it required level ground without obstructions and lost its effectiveness in subsequent fighting, because the soldier in the phalanx could not operate either singly or in small units, like the Roman maniples, which could wheel about to face danger from any direction.

Nevertheless, in 280 B.C. and again the following year Pyrrhus defeated the Romans, losing far fewer men than the Romans each time. But Pyrrhus could not afford his losses as well as the Romans. He could rely on far fewer reinforcements than the Romans, and each defeat seemed only to leave the Romans angrier and more determined to prevail. When a friend congratulated Pyrrhus on his second victory, he declared, "One more victory like that over the Romans will destroy us completely." This is the origin of the term "Pyrrhic victory," a victory that is so costly as to constitute defeat.

Pyrrhus withdrew to Sicily for three years, where he helped the Greeks rout the Carthaginians. Following his return to the mainland, his attempt to bribe the Roman general Fabricius failed, and he was forced to fight again. (Fabricius was so ethical he even informed Pyrrhus when Pyrrhus's physician offered to poison him for money.) This time the Romans defeated

Pyrrhus, and he returned home with only one-third of his original force. Three years later Pyrrhus was killed in a battle at Argos, when an old woman, alarmed at the sight of Pyrrhus engaging her son in combat, hurled a heavy roof tile at Pyrrhus and struck him below the helmet, knocking him unconscious. An Argive soldier then cut off his head.

By 275 B.C., the Roman army had subdued all of the Greek city-states of Italy. Only the conquest and colonization of the Po River valley, shortly after 200 B.C., remained to complete Roman control of the Italian Peninsula.

Roman Treatment of Conquered Italians

The Romans won the loyalty of the conquered Italians through lenient treatment. Although most subject states had to adhere to Rome's foreign policy, to supply troops for the Roman army, and to surrender 20 percent of their land (twenty-seven small Roman colonies were established in these lands by 250 B.C., thereby reducing Rome's population problems), the Romans demanded no tribute and allowed each state to retain its local self-government. Some cities were even allowed full Roman citizenship and given loot and land. Such leniency was extremely uncommon in the ancient world. As we have seen, the "enlightened" Greeks often slaughtered or enslaved conquered peoples. But Roman leniency in Italy proved extremely wise. During the Second Punic War (218–201 B.C.), when Hannibal and the Carthaginians invaded Italy, their failure to entice Italians into widespread rebellion saved Rome and proved fatal to Carthage. As Camillus had once put it, "By far the strongest government is one to which men are happy to be subject."

THE GROWTH OF REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENT

Until 509 B.C., the Romans were ruled by monarchs selected by the Senate and approved by the people. The Senate was a council of 300 former officeholders called *patricians* (fathers) who advised the king. Nearly all of the senators were landed aristocrats.

After the Romans expelled Tarquin, they established an oligarchy. In theory, two *consuls* (colleagues) replaced the king as the city's executive and legislature. (Tarquin's reign had produced the fear of a single executive.) The consuls were elected annually from the patrician class by the people, subject to ratification by the Senate. But, in reality, since the consuls were fatally weakened by their fractured power (they could veto each other's decisions) and exceedingly short terms, the real power in the Roman republic was held by the life-tenured Senate, which decided public policy and controlled the treasury. The Senate could veto any actions taken by the consuls. If the consuls disagreed with each other, the Senate could make

executive decisions. The Senate also served as the supreme judicial body. During a time of emergency, the Senate had the power to substitute a dictator for the consuls for a period of six months. Common Romans, the *plebeians*, possessed very little power.

Republican Reforms

Within a few centuries, however, Rome moved from an oligarchy to a more republican government, a system in which common people possessed a greater voice. In 494 B.C., short of grain and tired of fighting wars for the benefit of the patricians, the plebeians withdrew to Aventine Hill. They threatened to secede and establish their own city. As a compromise, the patricians then allowed the plebeians to elect two *tribunes*. Eventually, these tribunes, whose persons were sacrosanct (to strike them was considered both a political and a religious crime), were granted the authority to halt any Senate measures they considered unfair by walking into the Senate chamber and shouting, "Veto!"—Latin for "I forbid!" They could block any magistrate from exercising his office. They were required to maintain an open house and were prohibited from leaving Rome overnight, so that plebeians could request their aid at any hour. The number of tribunes was gradually increased from two to ten.

In 451 B.C., the plebeians demanded a written code of laws, so that consuls could no longer interpret Rome's customary law to suit their own interests. Drafted by ten aristocrats called the *decemviri*, the legal code was inscribed on twelve tablets and set up in the Forum for all to see the following year. Roman children memorized the laws. The Law of the Twelve Tables was the first landmark in the illustrious history of Roman law. Like most of its contemporaries, the code, which was largely formalized from existing oral law, was harsh, allowing enslavement for debt. But its terse sentences represent the first indication of the Romans' uncanny talent for legal definition.

In 445 B.C., plebeians were granted the right to marry patricians. (In practice, only a plebeian who had acquired some wealth would be acceptable to a patrician woman.) In 421 B.C., the office of *quaestor* (the consuls' finance manager) was made elective and opened to plebeians, and the number of quaestors was increased to four. (Previously, the consuls had appointed them.) In 367 B.C., one of the two consulships was reserved for the plebeians; in 342 B.C., the other was opened to them. In 326 B.C., confinement and enslavement for debt were abolished. Livy later referred to this measure as "a new birth of freedom," a phrase later immortalized in Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

In the mid-to-late fourth century B.C., new offices were created and opened to the plebeians. Most of the new offices possessed powers previously held by the consuls. One office was that of *aedile* (supervisor of the