

To begin with the Chaldean ascendancy, 1600 B.C., we may trace these preparations during the Egyptian ascendancy that followed for the next three hundred years, till Nineveh was founded, 1300 B.C., and the Assyrian ascendancy began which lasted for more than six centuries, 1288-610 B.C. Nineveh was then destroyed, after having been the mistress of the nations for nearly seven hundred years. But how far this Assyrian empire was from realizing even a true political unity or vitality! The bond was of iron, and might was the only right. The intercourse with surrounding nations was limited, and when it went beyond conquest was commercial only, not fraternal. The sceptre of the Orient is first transferred to Babylon, more central and accessible. Cyrus takes Babylon 538 B.C., and now begins the Persian ascendancy, which lasts for two hundred years. Now, for the first time, a great dominant empire reaches out the hand to neighboring nations; he is the first great emperor dignified in prophecy as God's "anointed" servant, and in a double sense he opened the two-leaved gates and brought the nations of the East and West together.

Just at this point, strangely enough, the course of empire takes its way westward, never again to return to the East. Alexander the Great, of Macedonia, which lies just beyond the Bosphorus, crosses the Hellespont 334 B.C., and after a career of conquest unparalleled in history, extending over less than ten years, dies at the age of thirty-two. This Greek ruler, taught by Aristotle, had for a few years held in his mighty grasp the whole intellectual vigor of the Hellenic race, combined with the whole material resources of the East. In him Europe for the first time rises to civilization and empire. The sceptre has swept round a circle—from Egypt in Africa to Nineveh and Babylon in Asia and to Greece in Europe, and we have now a system of Hellenic-Asiatic States.

Behold in all this the hand of God! Asia strongly contrasts with Europe both in physical features and social life. One word describes its general character—*monotony*. Look at the map; see the vast plateaus of the Deccan in India and of Thibet, a thousand miles in extent, the great sandy desert of China, three thousand miles long, and the still vaster plains of Siberia. The races correspond to their home. Everything is fixed, inflexible, immobile. There ancestral worship prevails; there caste rears its impassable barriers; there vast multitudes of men are massed on a dead level, hemmed in by social bounds which they cannot overstep or overclimb. There the employment is mainly *pastoral*, and it is typical, for the Asiatics themselves exist in great herds or flocks—the individual lost in the mass. Asia has always been the "mother of despotisms," and it is the characteristic of despots that, as the name implies, they lord it over others; the individual will swallowed up in the master's.

Turn to the map of Europe. There the only extensive plain is the Sarmatian, with the Germanic, its Western arm. Past the Baltic are the mountains of Norway and Sweden; across the Elbe, vast ranges reach