he De Civitate Dei is of necessity brief and selective. He gives special attention to St. Augustine's discussion of the populus in Book xix; and to his treatment of virtus and gloria in Book v. St. Augustine's 'is a very Roman heaven' the author concludes.

The mighty spirit of the Bishop of Hippo renders it singularly difficult for commentators to keep up with him. Dr. Earl may not have said the last word on this subject, but he is more successful than many commentators, and this because of his thorough preparatory work on Roman tradition.

Notes, bibliography and index complete a work which lifts our understanding of Roman history from the pedestrian paths to which we have for so long been accustomed, and sets us on a height worthy of the theme.

G. W. R. Ardley.


This book contains two works, Die Nobilität der römische Republik, first published in 1912, and Die Nobilität der Kaiserzeit, originally an article in Hermes, 1915. Astonishingly, particularly in the case of the former, they have never before been available in English.

The hold which a mere handful of noble families exercised on the chief offices of the Roman Republic has always been a problem to the student of Roman history. As Gelzer points out, 'The principle that not every citizen should be allowed to take part in government was to the Romans so self-evident that there was no law on the subject and they never enunciated it.' But who were those allowed to take part, what was the concept of nobilitas, and how were the restrictions perpetuated? These are the questions treated in this book, and a clear picture emerges of the mechanics of power.

The fact that magistracies were open to none below the equestrian order produced a certain timocratic limitation; however, the 400,000 sesterces required for the equestrian census did not, at least in the first century B.C., constitute anything like wealth. Within this wide classification smaller groups can be found, such as the senatorial order, the nobiles, clarissimi and principes civitatis, only the first of which was legally defined. It was Gelzer's achievement to prove that membership of the senatorial order was by no means
co-extensive with *nobilitas*. His basis is the use of the word by Cicero, from which he concludes that the term *nobilitas* was restricted to families that had held the consulate. Support comes to the argument from the usage of other authors. The epithet *clarissimus* is similarly restricted to *nobiles* or consulars; and *principes civitatis* are almost without exception of consular rank themselves.

The ranks of the senate often needed renewing, and recruitment was from families of equestrian rank. So closely, however, did the *nobiles* guard the highest offices that in a period of 300 years (366-63 B.C.) only fifteen *novi homines* succeeded in attaining the consulate; many more, of course, must have reached the lower magistracies, rendering advancement easier for their children. The second main section of Gelzer’s book examines the social foundation of this predominance of the nobility, which made it so difficult for the outsider to break in; we see how the network of connexions and obligations that controlled election to magistracies was built up and maintained. A useful document here is Q. Cicero’s ‘handbook’ for his brother’s use in the election campaign of 64 B.C., the *Commentariolum Petitionis*. Cicero’s reputation as an orator will be a great help to him in seeking the consulate; apart from this, he must have as wide a circle of friends as possible, from all levels of society. He must also make sure that he is well known to the people; strangest of all, he must avoid committing himself on political questions, so that all groups will hope for his favour. Greatest in importance is the complex of relationships described by the words *fides* and *patrocinium*. These might be hereditary or of quite short duration; somewhat vague or more clearly defined, as with patronage in the courts. By the defence of the right people, those who could carry with them a number of votes, a highly educated *novus homo* such as Cicero might win himself advancement. In a society where the advocate’s services were unpaid, his reward was the political support not only of the client himself but of all his circle. A man might be the patron of a group; this could be a family tradition or a purely personal arrangement. There were many groups, such as towns, guilds or collegia, which needed representation, whether in the courts or the senate; and they all possessed voting power. So Cicero was careful to keep on good terms with the *publicani*; and the respect in which he was held by provincial communities was also important. Such were the workings of the system of *patrocinium*, a network of relationships between stronger and weaker. *Amicitia* often involved much the same relationship, as when a young man, as his first step on the
political ladder, would join a general or provincial governor, not in any formal capacity, but simply as an *amicus*.

Money was a problem; much had to be spent on the aedileship, and senatorial wealth was mainly tied up in land. Other less reputable expenses were incurred in the cause of winning elections. Money might be lent against the expected revenues of a province, and such transactions created another two-way relationship. Caesar in particular was remarkably skilful in making political profit out of both his borrowings and his lendings.

Another tool of political power was the faction, made up of equals rather than of patrons and clients. Evidence is frequent for the existence and influence of these combinations at least from the beginning of the second century B.C., and much of the power of great families such as the Scipiones rested on the operations of factions - although, as one of Sallust's characters says, what is *amicitia* among good men is *factio* among bad; the word was not complimentary.

The practical functioning of the Roman political system was dependent upon relationships such as these, and Gelzer's account of them is fascinating reading.

*Die Nobilitat der Kaiserzeit*, a short but important paper, demonstrates from the use of the word by the writers of the period (in particular Tacitus) that *nobilitas* during the first century of the Principate was confined to those families whose ancestors had earned it under the Republic, though at times descent through the female line is taken as grounds for a claim. The old nobility was still held in respect, but it inevitably declined. Economic reasons for this were strong; while a crowd of clients was still a thing to be sought for, the rewards of office, whether financial or political, were far less. During the second century A.D. the nobility quietly vanished from the scene.

It need hardly be said that this work is as thoroughly documented as could be wished (to the extent of over 1,100 footnotes in some 160 pages, mostly references), and details have been brought up to date where necessary. The translation by Robin Seager is admirable and easy to read. *The Roman Nobility* is a book of the first importance, as much so now as when its two constituent parts were first produced; though much of its message has been absorbed in subsequent work, readers will find it an invaluable background to the complications of Roman politics.