

Document The Five States of Society

The following excerpts, taken from William Channing Woodbridge's *Rudiments of Geography* published in 1822, delineate the accepted definitions of the five states of society in the world, from the perspective of the United States in the early nineteenth century. Other excerpts include some related comments about government and religion. The last excerpt from Woodbridge's volume is a map.

Men are found in five different states of society, the Savage, Barbarous, Half-Civilized, Civilized, and Enlightened.

1st The Savage state is that which men gain their support chiefly by *hunting, fishing or robbery*, dress in skins, and generally live in the open air, or in miserable huts. They have little knowledge of agriculture or the mechanic arts, no division of lands or system of laws, and they seldom collect in towns or villages.

2nd The barbarous state is that in which men subsist by agriculture, or the keeping of cattle and sheep, with some knowledge of the mechanic arts; they collect in villages and have some laws, but are ignorant of the sciences, and without longer progress.

3rd The half-civilized state is that in which men are ignorant of the sciences, but have some knowledge of the mechanic arts, and live in towns or villages.

4th The Half-Civilized state is like that of the Chinese, and other nations in the south of Asia, who understand agriculture and many of the arts as well, and have *some books and learning*, with established laws and religion. Still *they treat their women as slaves*, usually keeping them in confinement, and have many other customs like those of barbarous nations.

5th The Civilized state which is found in Poland and South America. Civilized nations are those in which the sciences and arts are well understood, especially the art of printing, and *people are treated as companions*. Many of the inventions of civilized nations are now known to the ignorant nations.

6th The Enlightened state is that in which men are well educated, and the sciences and arts are well understood, and the people are treated as companions. The Enlightened state is the highest state of society.

GOVERNMENT

The first kind of government in the world was the *Patriarchal*, in which every father, or *patriarch*, governed his own family and servants. Some patriarchs became governors of many kindred families, or a tribe, and were called *chiefs*. The government of savage and barbarous nations is usually that of patriarchs, or chiefs. (p. 50)

RELIGION

It is supposed that there are more than 700 millions of people on the earth, of whom 400 millions are Pagans, 200 millions Christians, 50 or 100 millions Mahometans, and 8 or 10 million Jews. The savage, barbarous and half-civilized nations of the world are either Pagans or Mahometans; except the Abyssinians, who profess to be Christians; but their religion is very corrupt. (p.52)