THE ALPHABET

et in conspectu agni amicti stolis albis et palme in manibus eorū. Et clamabāt voce magna dicentes. Salus deo nr̄o: qui sedet sup thronū et agno. Et oēs angeli stabant in circuitu throni et seniorū et quatuor animalium. et ceciderūt in conspectu throni in facies suas. et adorauerūt deū dicentes amen. Benedictio et claritas et sapiencia et gr̄arum actio: honor et virtus et fortitudo deo nr̄o in secula seculorum amen.

Secundum Matheum

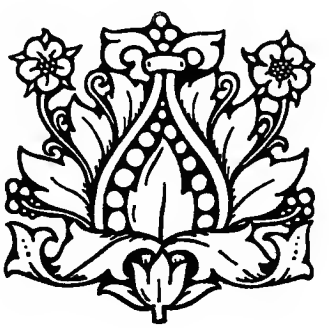
THE Alphabet

FIFTEEN INTERPRETATIVE DESIGNS

DRAWN AND ARRANGED WITH EXPLANATORY TEXT AND ILLUSTRATIONS

BY

FREDERIC·W·GOUDY



NEW YORK
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To his wife

BERTHA M. GOUDY

his friend, companion and co-worker, this volume is affectionately inscribed by the author

Whatever success he may have achieved in the fields of typography and design has been made possible by her unfailing patience, counsel and intelligent craftsmanship

CONTENTS

THE ALPHABET

INTRODUCTION

THE *number of books dealing with lettering is now fairly large, some going more or less deeply into the history and development of letter-forms, while others principally present models or facsimiles of existing alphabets for suggestion or copying. The student craftsman will do well to possess, and use, the volumes by Day, Strange, Brown, Johnston and Stevens, together with the several portfolios of alphabets,* [*Rhead, Smith, Johnston*], *as they contain matter not within the scope of this work.*

Naturally, the author who attempts a contribution in a field already well cultivated, should either offer new material, or present what he has garnered here and there in a novel and undeniably useful way. For the present essay, the writer claims no fresh discoveries in paleography; but he does feel that he has presented his material in a distinctive and helpful form.

As regards the text, he has taken his own wherever he has found it, and has incorporated the conclusions drawn from twenty years' work and study. He has not attempted to do more than outline briefly the results of his experience and explain the examples given; nor has he tried to produce a handbook of paleography. He trusts, however, to find his account with the artist and craftsman who has real need in his work for letters that are legible and correctly drawn, and that possess character and dignity as well as beauty.

The letters shown have not in every instance been selected from identical sources; but, in the case of composite forms, he has endeavored to bring them into exact harmony with the family into which they have been introduced. They serve also to trace the development of lettering, although there has been no intent to present the forms in exact chronological order. They indicate,

further, how letters have been influenced by the tool used in producing them, and should suggest some of the endless variations which the craftsman may play upon traditional outlines.

Among the designs are free renderings of letters from sources not easily available to many who require to use lettering in their work. No attempt has been made to present quaint or peculiar forms, but rather to select the most legible and characteristic, which will readily lend themselves to the needs of designers who wish to develop their lettering on a sound basis. The author has not in every instance been able to find forms sufficiently legible or decorative, or easily adaptable to the student's use. In such cases, he has not hesitated to interpolate his own conception of the characters, reserving to himself, as it were, the same rights that the early artists exercised.

Some of the examples presented in collections of alphabets give the form of the letters, but wholly lose the feeling that is an essential quality. In this work, therefore, special pains have been taken to convey the feeling and preserve the delicate irregularities—practically lost in most reproductions—which contribute so largely to the character of the page in mass. In typefaces, it should be understood that the feeling and spirit of the letter have been sought, rather than absolute fidelity to precise form, though the drawing, of course, has been done very carefully.*

Most facsimiles of early manuscripts or printed books are unsatisfactory because the reproductions are too small to exhibit the subtle variations clearly enough to enable the forms to be studied intelligently. The examples herein have therefore been drawn on a large scale, to ensure easy analysis and comparison. The author feels that the plates will compare creditably with many others whose chief characteristic is that of uninspired conventionality.

The field of typography and type-design can only be touched upon in a

**A letter copied from one of Jenson's types by an artisan skilled in the use of bow pen, straight edge and compasses might be an exact facsimile of that letter, but the same letter drawn free-hand by an artist trained to see the subtleties of line and form, would possess a feeling and character that no mechanical construction can impart.*

book like this, but it may be stated that in addition to the text and plates, the type in which the text is printed, the arrangement, decorations and initials, are the work of the author, and the whole volume, which has been printed under his care, represents concretely the principles of typography which he follows. The type composition itself is due to his wife.

It is the sincere hope of the author that this handbook of the alphabet will appeal not only to craftsmen and students, but to book-lovers too, and prove to be a practical and useful contribution in its field.

F. W. G.

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 1918

FIG. I FROM THE ARCH OF TITUS AT ROME [ABOUT A. D. 72]. SET IN 'FORUM' TYPES

The Alphabet

Chapter I. *What Letters Are*

LETTER is a symbol, with a definite shape & significance, indicating a single sound or combination of sounds, and providing a means, through grouping, for the *visible* expression of words—that is, of thoughts. Originally, letters were adaptations of natural forms employed in picture-writing, but by a process of evolution, [actually degradation,] they have become arbitrary signs with little resemblance to the symbols from which they are derived. These arbitrary shapes have passed through their periods of uncertainty and change; they have a long history and manifold associations; they are classics, and should not be tampered with, except within limits that just discretion may allow.

An ornamental form once found is repeated, the eye grows accustomed to it and expects its recurrence; it becomes established by use; it may be associated with fundamental ideas of life and nature and is handed on and on, until finally its origin and meaning are, perhaps, lost. Just so, the pictorial significance of individual letters is so deeply buried in oblivion that special study and research would be necessary to resurrect their original form or meaning—an undertaking not essential here.

Language itself, as an organized system, was of necessity slow in developing; the next steps, the approaches toward a more or less phonetic alphabet, were equally lingering; for speech existed long before it was discovered that the human voice could be represented by symbols—thus

 informing the brain through the eye as the voice did through the ear, the most fruitful of all achievements of the human intellect.

The main purpose of letters, then, is the practical one of making thoughts visible; yet they have as well a decided decorative quality, quite apart from any ornamental treatment of the separate characters. This decorative quality is one which intimately concerns the craftsman and it will be considered later, not however with reference to the use of letters *in ornament*, but as constituting the graphic art itself. The ornamentation of the page is a subject entirely distinct.

Ruskin says that "all letters are frightful things, and to be endured only upon occasion, that is to say, in places where the sense of the inscription is of more importance than external ornament." This is a sweeping statement, from which we need not suffer unduly; yet the writer doubts whether there is *art* in individual letters, although a delicately drawn D, O or S may be as beautiful as any abstract lines can be. Letters in combination may be satisfying and in a well composed page even beautiful as a whole, but *art in letters* consists rather in the art of arranging and composing them in an appropriate and pleasing way. The letters themselves need only to be simple, well shaped and well proportioned forms, well spaced and suited to the purpose intended. Nor is beauty to be sought at the expense of practical use; lettering may be beautiful and legible too, since beauty does not necessarily imply elaboration of letter-forms or their ornamentation. As there is no recipe for design, neither is there one for the making of letters; but some knowledge of their history and development is necessary, as well as a taste enlarged by study and analysis of beautiful forms, together with the ability to *feel* the charm of well designed legible pages.

All writing or lettering is a form of drawing, simple of course. As stated before, the characters of our alphabet were originally pictures or symbols of which lettering now stops short, since the acquisition of the ability to frame words from abstract forms makes unnecessary the ideographic or pictorial means of expression. The difference is merely one of degree.

As decoration is not an end in itself and must be adapted to the purpose and place for which it is planned, not being separated from the whole

of which it is a part, so the individual letter-form should not be considered by itself, apart from its kinsmen; for until letters are employed to form words conveying thought they are mere abstract forms with no particular significance. Theoretically, a letter may be discussed independently, but practically only as a part of the alphabet to which it belongs.

The signs which compose the alphabet with which we have most to do came from Italy about two thousand five hundred years ago, and differed but little from the Greek forms from which they are derived. The Greeks were the first to receive the Phoenician alphabet in its westward

FIG. 2 GREEK LETTERS FROM THE TEMPLE OF POSEIDON ON LAKE TAENARUS IN LAKONIA. [473-476 B. C.]

course.* They added separate letters to represent the vowels and changed the character of other signs, ultimately transposing the Semitic mode of writing from right to left. These changes were made slowly and the new alphabet, known as the Hellenic, is the source of the modern European alphabets, Greek and Latin, Russian and Coptic.†

The Romans added to the Greek alphabet and simplified it by dropping compound consonants and devising single letter-forms for sounds previously requiring two; F instead of PH, Q for CV, etc. The Greek G became C in the Roman, and G came later as a separate letter distinct from C, C in turn being used for K. The Greek H stood for long E, but at the

*The current legend, as told in a passage from Herodotus, says that Cadmus introduced the Phoenician alphabet into Greece, but no certain date is known at which the mythical Cadmus did so.

†The Greek letter was adopted by Athens B. C. 483. Greek manuscripts were usually written in square capitals without spaces between the words, and with but few points of punctuation. The Russian alphabet is a modification of the Cyrillic alphabet of 38 characters and remains still the most cumbersome and ungainly of modern alphabets. The Coptic is now supplanted by Arabic and but little used except for liturgical purposes.

 beginning of a word answered the purpose of an aspirate, the Romans using it as an aspirate only, as we now do.

A study of the alphabet leads into so many byways that it is necessary to omit much of interest to the student, but of no great service to the craftsman in forming a style. To trace the derivatives of the Greek involves research into languages—Coptic, Runic, Slavonic—which bear but indirectly on the shapes of the Roman characters we now use; and this work is

FIG. 3 GREEK LETTERS FROM AN INSCRIPTION IN THE TEMPLE OF ATHENE POLIAS. [THIRD CENTURY B. C.] ALMOST EXACT SIZE. LETTERS WERE FILLED IN WITH RED AFTER CUTTING

intended primarily to deal with forms useful to the present-day craftsman.

The Latin alphabet, to us the most important of all, naturally shared the growing dominance of the Romans. The great Empire carried its speech, and the means of recording it, to the confines of the civilized world; and the alphabet which followed the Eagles was firmly rooted by the Cross. The decadence of the Empire saw the expansion of the Church, and the new and changing divisions of Europe were still moulded by the influence of the dead and living Rome. Languages, clashing and reacting, moved toward their modern forms; 'national' scripts were developed; but the symbols borrowed from the early Chalcidian Greek colonists in Italy and adapted to the needs of the Latins, were established securely as the supreme alphabet of Christendom.

FIG. 4 ROMAN STONE-CUT CAPITALS, PROBABLY SECOND CENTURY. EXACT SIZE. RUBBING, MADE BY THE AUTHOR, FROM A TABLET IN THE LOUVRE

Chapter II. *Letters Before Printing*

AT first the Romans used two varieties of characters, capitals and cursive. The capitals were square shaped and were used for inscriptions, and for lines requiring emphasis or prominence, as we use capitals nowadays, and for writings of importance. Fig. 5 shows some square capitals carefully drawn from a fragment of the Aeneid of Virgil, written on vellum about the end of the fourth century. The letters are rather heavy and

FIG. 5 SQUARE CAPITALS, FROM VIRGIL'S AENEID, FOURTH CENTURY

not very compact, with but little spacing between the words. The only mark of punctuation is a kind of comma raised to the top of the line of writing. F is made slightly taller than E, as also L and occasionally I.*

The cursive or running characters which are the originals of our lowercase types or minuscules were used for correspondence or for documents where more formal writing was not necessary or desirable. The cursive script offers little of practical use to the modern craftsman; therefore no example is given.

From the fourth to the seventh centuries, four principal types of character were in use—the capital of the earliest documents; the uncial, almost exclusively predominant after the fifth century; the cursive script in its various modifications as employed for purposes of everyday use; and finally a modified uncial, which prepared the way for the later minuscule.

*The early Roman scribe based his written forms on the stone-cut letters. Note the similarity of such letters as B, C, P, R, in fig. 5, and the same letters in Hadriano type [fig. 24].

[14] The early form, whether Greek or Roman, was the square capital with its relatively few curved lines, which, when rounded, was used for manuscript writing and called 'rustic,' [fig. 6] as it was somewhat more fanciful or flexible than the form used for cutting in stone or for fine writing.

The square capital has persisted in the lines and proportions crystallized in its first use; it is the monumental letter, simple, direct and bold. The

FIG. 6 RUSTIC WRITING OF THE FIFTH CENTURY

capitals inscribed on the base of the Trajan column at Rome are as legible to our eyes as though carved but yesterday instead of over 1800 years ago. [On page 8 is shown the inscription on the Arch of Titus, erected at Rome in the first century, set in Forum capitals, a type-face based on the ancient lapidary characters. Each of the full page plates shows a large letter from the Trajan column.]

Between the square capital adapted for stone-cut inscriptions and the current cursive hand, is another form adapted from the square capital for easier execution with the pen, and nearly contemporary with the rustic capitals. It is known as the 'uncial.'

This form was of fewer lines and more rounded than the rustic, which the copyists found somewhat difficult of easy execution, although even the rustic style of letter was composed of fewer strokes than the square

capital. The uncial is important to us principally because it helps to explain a later form widely different from the original square capital. Uncials made their appearance in Italy about the second century A. D., but came

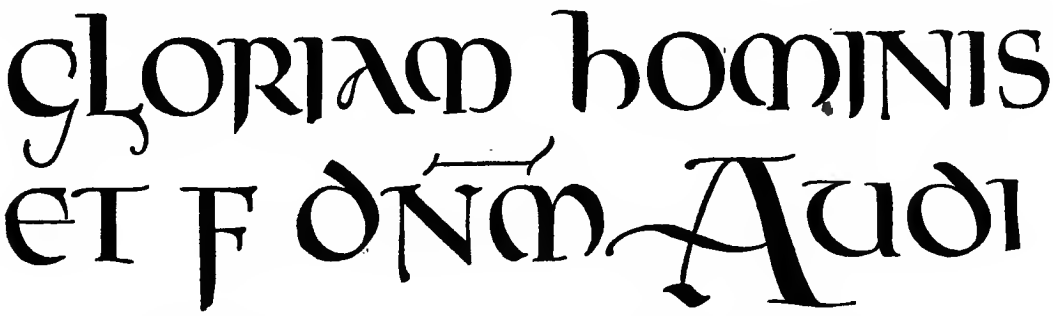


FIG. 7 ROMAN UNCIALS OF THE SEVENTH CENTURY, WITH RUSTIC INITIAL. FROM SPECULUM OF ST. AUGUSTINE

into general use in the fourth. They were based mainly on the square capitals, were very simple in form, and indicate clearly the firm use of a soft reed or quill pen.

Uncials are typically pen-drawn capitals and differ from capitals only in the letters A, D, E, G, H, M, T, Q and V. None have been found more than five-eighths of an inch in height, although the name is derived from *uncia*, an inch. Paleographers call them 'majuscules,' that is, large letters.

The nature of the uncial form does not permit it to be made very small, or rather, perhaps, if made small it ceases to be an uncial; in the oldest books many were so large that comparatively few could find place even on a large page. This waste of space and the increasing difficulty in procuring parchment compelled a reduction in size of characters used.

The illustration shows some Roman uncials of the seventh century; note the letters A, D, E, H and M, which differ most from the original models. Compare also with the rustic capitals of the fifth century.

When bookmaking became more general and the need grew for a greater number of books, the scribes found it necessary to increase their product. Neither the uncial previously in use nor the cursive script enabled them to meet the conditions. The uncial writing, beautiful as it was, was too slow,* and the cursive too ordinary for good book work; therefore a

*Sometimes indicated by the appearance of impatience at ends of lines, where the scribe allowed his writing to take on a more cursive character.

compromise hand developed which was more readily written than the capital book hand and more legible than the ordinary business hand. This new hand was written in small characters which came to be called 'minuscules.' When completely developed it superseded all other writing for

FIG. 8 ROMAN SEMI-UNCIALS

books, except for Bible manuscripts or lives of the Saints, which were still issued in the older uncial character. At first little distinction was made between the minuscule forms and the capitals from which they developed,

FIG. 9 IRISH SEMI-UNCIALS

but by writing capitals more rapidly certain modifications took place, finally evolving an entirely new character, which reached its relative perfection in the tenth and eleventh centuries, then degenerated with use as do

FIG. 10. ENGLISH SEMI-UNCIALS

all scripts. Fig. 8 shows an enlargement of some of the Roman semi-uncials, of historical interest rather than of any artistic value.

Cursive or running characters gave rise to a variety of hand-writings, of which the Irish 'semi-uncial' is the most important. No Irish hand is known on which it could have been formed, yet in the sixth century Ireland was the chief school of western calligraphy, and in the seventh, the Irish writing had attained an excellence since unrivalled. It is said that Ireland borrowed the forms for her hand-writing from the manuscripts

which the Roman missionaries brought to them in the fifth century. These manuscripts were usually in a half-uncial character,—that is, a mixture of uncials and minuscules or smaller letters.

The illustration [fig. 9] shows typical letters of the Irish half-uncial writing and is from the book of Kells, a volume written about the end of the seventh century, decorated with wonderful initials.

With the revival of learning which took place in the eighth century, the Emperor Charlemagne compelled the employing of skilled writers,*

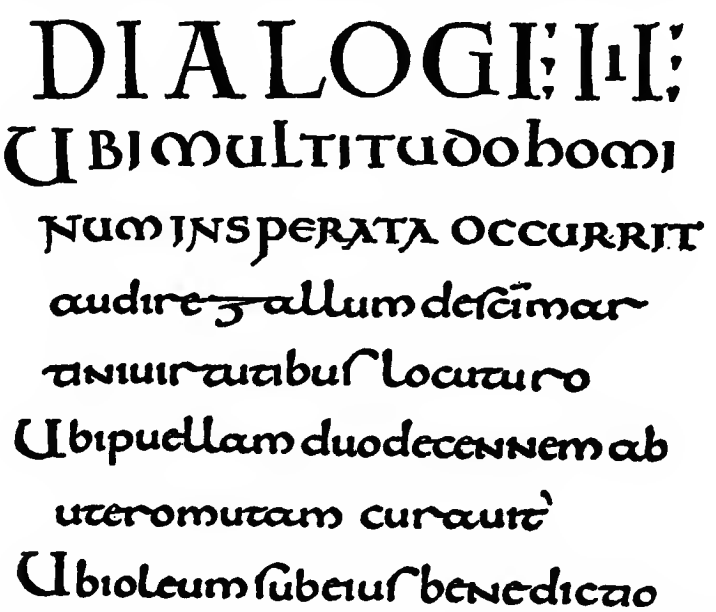


FIG. 11 FROM A CAROLINE MS. [TOURS, NINTH CENTURY,] SHOWING SQUARE CAPITALS, UNCIALS AND MINUSCULES

who reintroduced the smaller Roman character, the use of which had declined with the decadence of the Roman Empire. From their writing was derived the so-called Caroline minuscule, which was specially developed at the famous school at Tours founded by the Englishman Alcuin, the learned friend of Charlemagne. Alcuin, trained in the schools of North-

*Charlemagne ordered that "every abbot, bishop and count should keep in permanent employment a qualified copyist who must write correctly, using Roman letters only, & that every monastic institution should maintain a room known as a *scriptorium*." Alcuin entreated the monks to zealousness in their work. He said: "It is a most meritorious work, more beneficial to the health than working in the fields, which profits only a man's body, whilst the labor of the copyist profits his soul."

umbria, was for some time Abbot of the Convent of St. Martin at Tours, and under his guidance the school became celebrated for the excellence of its calligraphy. He took for his models the best features of the classical hands of the sixth century, added suggestions of contemporary French and Italian lettering, and produced a half-uncial and minuscule of great beauty, more legible than any earlier script.

From the eighth to the thirteenth century, the Caroline hand gradually developed in different directions and its influence spread throughout Europe—in fact throughout the civilized world. Developed in different parts

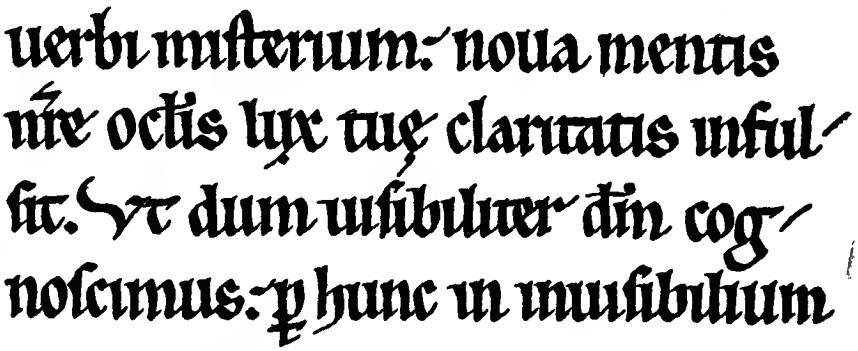


FIG. 12 ENGLISH WRITING OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY

of the Empire, it acquired varying national characteristics, with a general tendency to a loss of breadth and a substitution of a regular angularity in the curves, due possibly to the imitations of the coarse characters of monkish manuscripts. At the end of the twelfth century, when a period of decadence set in, a class of letters was produced to which the name 'Gothic' has been given. Curves almost entirely gave way to straight lines, at first of scarcely varying thickness, but gradually emphasizing the thickness of the perpendicular strokes, while evolving a fine or thin line for the sloping ones. By the end of the thirteenth century, new forms and essential changes in alphabets had arisen out of the changing Caroline minusculè, brought about by the greater facility acquired by continuous practice.

The letter we call 'lower-case' was the final step in evolution from the Caroline hand, but it did not reach the definite and fixed form familiar to our eyes until after the invention of printing.* Lower-case forms were rare

*It is an interesting fact, the first Roman lower-case types have not been surpassed, probably because type designers continue to copy copies of copies *ad infinitum* [*ad nauseam.*]

in the fourth century, more common in the eighth and quite universal in the tenth.

Let us go over the foregoing and set down more concretely the development of the Roman alphabet, including mention in proper sequence of the National hands, the Gothic letter and first types, which will be treated more fully hereafter.

FIRST: CAPITALS

LAPIDARY LETTERS

a The Roman capital as cut in stone, of which the inscription on the base of the Trajan column is the finest example. Note that a characteristic of this alphabet consists in the varying widths of the letters, of which some are square & some round—the square having the horizontal lines at right angles to the vertical strokes. [See large plates]

MANUSCRIPT FORMS

b Square Roman capitals, which, carefully written, became the formal literary hand, and were used until about the end of the fifth century for important books. The external angles invariably are right angles, and the curves regular and symmetrical. [fig 5]

c Rustic capitals, a variety of square capitals used in manuscripts of the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries, less formal than the carefully drawn Roman letter on which they are based. They were used for years as ornamental letters for titles, etc., after they had gone out of ordinary use. [fig. 6] Rustic capitals written between the year 31 B. C. and A. D. 79 are known, but no examples have survived to fill the gap between the first and fourth centuries.

d Roman uncials or true pen forms, more quickly written than the square capital on which they are based, and clearer than the rustic form, characterized by simple round shapes natural to pen handling. [fig. 7] Perfected in the fourth century.

SECOND: CURSIVE

MANUSCRIPT FORMS

a Roman half-uncials, which were mixed uncial and cursive forms adopted by scribes for quick and easy writing and which mark the change from capitals to small letters. [fig. 8]

b Irish half-uncials based on the Roman forms. [fig. 9]

c English half-uncials modelled on the Irish, later developing into a pointed writing, the result of slanting the pen. [fig. 10]

MANUSCRIPT FORMS

d The Caroline minuscule, a revival of the round, open earlier Roman forms, [fig. 11] which under Alcuin took on a simple & graceful form that gradually excluded all other hands. In the eleventh century it assumed a more finished form and continued to improve until in the twelfth century its beauty was unsurpassed. In England the writing of this century is particularly fine.

THIRD: THE NATIONAL HANDS

MANUSCRIPT FORMS

1 Lombardic or national hand of Italy, founded on the old cursive.
2 Visigothic, or national hand of Spain.
3 Merovingian, or national hand of France.
4 Celtic, or national hand of Ireland, based on Roman semi-uncials.

FOURTH: THE SO-CALLED GOTHIC

MANUSCRIPT FORMS

A written form evolved from the national hands, but which became a distinct style in the twelfth century. It is not properly 'Gothic,' as it was not derived from the Goths, but was in fact the bad writing of monkish scribes, who endeavored to conceal their lack of skill and errors in form by a sort of ornamentation.

FIFTH: PRINTING

TYPES

a The Gothic black-letter of Gutenberg and the early printers.
b The transitional form used by Sweynheim and Pannartz, the German printers at Subiaco [near Rome].
c The well-nigh perfect Roman form developed by Nicolas Jenson, the Frenchman who printed at Venice.
d The Aldine or Italic, by Aldus Manutius, the great Italian printer at Venice. It was at first called 'Venetian' in Italy, and 'cursiv' in Germany and Holland, where it was copied almost at once; in France it was called 'italic,' the name by which it is still known to French and English readers. All of these type-forms are dealt with fully in another chapter.

FIG. 13 GOTHIC TYPES OF EHRHARD RATDOLT [ENLARGED]

Chapter III. *The National Hands*

WITH the decline of the Roman Empire, the writings of other nations rose in importance and we see a variety of characters which the evolution of national hands brought about. The text hands in use in western Europe up to the age of Charlemagne may be classified into four

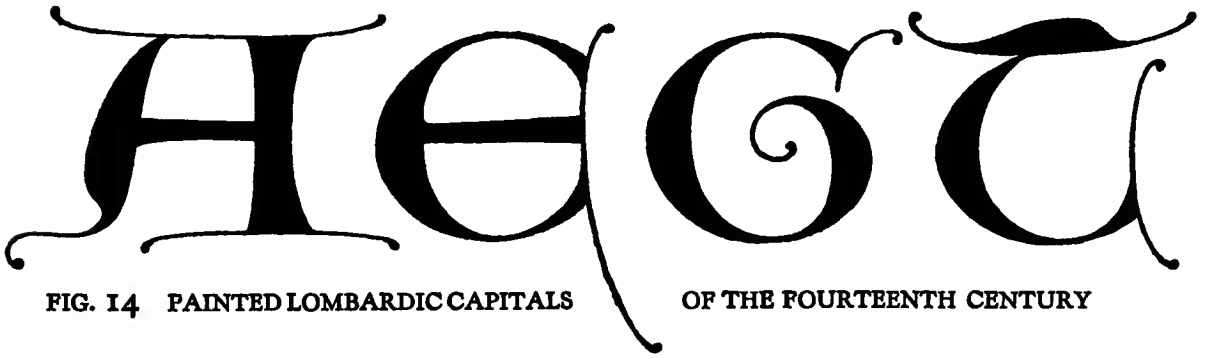


FIG. 14 PAINTED LOMBARDIC CAPITALS OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

kinds,—each developing its own form, but later all merging gradually into one, that we now call 'Gothic.'

First, Lombardic, or the national hand of Italy, which was a development of the uncial and was first used in northern Italy. The Lombardic character is a most useful and interesting form and presents less of the fixed quality of the Roman. There are many and wide variations of it as developed by the scribes in different countries. It was the favorite form selected for initials and versals in manuscripts, which were usually painted in, in colors and gold, the solidity of the body-strokes making it especially adaptable for this purpose. At its best this Lombardic letter preserves much of the feeling of the uncials of the sixth and seventh centuries.

Lombardic capitals do not combine well in words or sentences, although frequently so used.* Occasionally, where the decorative quality sought is of more importance than easy legibility, they offer an opportunity for richness difficult to attain with other forms. If drawn carefully and well

*If the craftsman will study carefully the various forms of the same letter, and then try to reproduce the spirit of them in one of his own, he is more likely to produce capitals that will combine well, than if he simply copies existing forms.

spaced, there is no reason why they should not be used, except for the reader's lack of familiarity with them. For ecclesiastical work they are particularly suitable. While the Lombardic capital is capable of really beautiful treatment, care must be exercised in the selection of models, as the majority of examples show a debased type. After the fourteenth century they were often vulgarized and over ornamented, losing their typical forms and showing a tendency to confusion and illegibility. Those shown in fig. 14 are not too ornate. The existing type-forms of the Lombardic character mostly lose all the freedom of the hand drawn letter and seldom grace the page where used. In the tenth and eleventh centuries this form of letter attained its greatest beauty.

FIG. 15 LOMBARDIC WRITING OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

FIG. 16 LOMBARDIC CAPITALS. THIRTEENTH CENT.

Visigothic, or the national hand of Spain, is similar to the Lombardic and became an established text in the eighth century, persisting until the twelfth. It was at first extremely crude and illegible, later becoming fine and handsome. A characteristic of the text was a tendency to extreme elongation of the limbs of the letters.

Merovingian, the national hand of France, was made up largely of loops and angles in a cramped irregular way. Its derivation is the same as that of the Visigothic, and though the writing of the seventh century is practically illegible, that of the eighth is read almost easily. One characteristic of the hand, as in the Visigothic, was the elongation of the up and down strokes, occurring even in the case of the capitals. This hand and the preceding one present little of value in the way of pattern for the student craftsman.

Celtic, the national hand of Ireland, was founded on the semi-uncial Roman and developed from manuscripts taken into Ireland by missionaries. It is bold, clear, and frequently of great beauty, lending itself to some of the most wonderful achievements of penmanship in the history of calligraphy; but it does not present much material for the present-day artist in his everyday work, although of intense interest to the student.

FIG. 17 SPANISH CAPITALS. ETHICS OF ARISTOTLE WRITTEN ABOUT 1458

Chapter IV. *The Development of Gothic*

THE four varieties of writings which finally merged into the one we now call 'Gothic,' are variations upon the Roman capital. The Gothic form is characteristic. By the thirteenth century it had become a distinct style and within the next hundred years had reached its highest perfection, although some individual scribes clung tenaciously to the older forms, which were round and free and more easy to write. The later, more regular and straight-backed letter was revived by the early printer after it had gone out of fashion for a time, as he found it more easy to imitate in type.* It was the use of the reed pen by the mediaeval scribe in writing the Roman letter that gave it its Gothic character. The quill pen which the Italians employed, held the ink better and was more pliant than the reed, making the minuscule letter rounder and with greater variety in the thick and thin strokes; it came into general use with the use of paper which replaced vellum.

This leads to the statement that the character of all lettering is directly due to the tool employed. The stylus merely scratched the surface of the clay or wax, and gave us the cuneiform character; the chisel gave us the clear-cut classic inscriptions in stone; the reed pen, blunt strokes with thick ink on papyrus; the quill, the round full-bodied form.

In the stone-cut capital, the cutter felt the need of a neat square cut to end the stem of his letter. To define the free end, a sharp cut was made

*Not the form of the letter itself, but as written, the letters ran together and interlocked in a way too difficult to accomplish with separate type bodies, except by the use of a great many 'tied' characters, [two or more letters on one type-body].

[24] *across* it with the chisel, and as the chisel was usually wider than the thin line, this cut extended beyond it on each side. Probably for the sake of uniformity corresponding extensions were added to the thick strokes, and what was at first merely an attempt on the part of the craftsman toward neat workmanship later became an essential part of the letter itself. These endings are called 'serifs' or 'cornua.' With the pen the serif definitely finished the free endings and added to the squareness and finish of the letter, but as the fluid ink was inclined to drag and bracket at the junction of the stem on the side toward the direction of the stroke, the scribe deliberately added to the opposite side to make both uniform in shape. Serifs preserve and accentuate the regularity of the line of lettering.

With the pen the pressure is not naturally in the middle of the stroke, but at one end. In forming the letter O, instead of the symmetrical Roman form, the Gothic O is the more natural one. It was easy to cut the Roman form in stone and preserve symmetry. Gothic letters are essentially written forms made with one stroke of the slanted pen, and while the Caroline letters written in the same way kept an open round appearance, in the Gothic, for the sake of greater economy of space, the curves were reduced to straight lines [at first of scarcely varying thickness] making the

gothic minuscule

FIG. 18 MEDIAEVAL GOTHIC MINUSCULES

letters narrower, more angular and stiffer, until the written page was made up of rows of perpendicular thick strokes, connected at the top and bottom by oblique hair lines. Gothic capitals, however, tend to roundness, and in a way are incongruous; but they do break the monotony of an exceptionally rigid form of minuscule, perhaps happily, although they seldom seem to belong to them. The glory of the Roman alphabet lies in its capitals, while that of the Gothic letter lies in its lower-case. This is but natural, since the Roman alphabet originally was an alphabet of capitals only. In Italy alone the earlier roundness was preserved, and while of course affected later by the Gothic tendency, the letters never entirely acquired

the extreme angularity of northern European writings. The fifteenth century formal writing of the Italians became the foundation of the Roman types which now supersede all other forms for printing books.

Figs. 19 & 20 show six variations of the Gothic 'A' drawn by craftsmen of different nationalities at different periods: No. 1 by Albert Durer, early sixteenth century, No. 2 from the tomb of Richard II about

[No. 1] [No. 2] [No. 3]

FIG. 19 VARIATIONS OF GOTHIC CAPITAL 'A'

[No. 4] [No. 5] [No. 6]

FIG. 20 VARIATIONS OF GOTHIC CAPITAL 'A'

1400, No. 3 from an Italian ms. of the sixteenth century, No. 4 from an alphabet by the well-known Gothic architect, Bertram G. Goodhue, 1901, No. 5 from an English Chancery ms. of the fifteenth century, and No. 6 is a seventeenth century Flemish Gothic type form.

Late Gothic is narrow and condensed in the extreme, the letters have angular and acute corners, and the ascenders and descenders are shortened with marked loss of legibility. [See fig. 18] When a form was evolved in which the amount of black over-balanced the white, it was called 'black-letter.' As in all pen-drawn forms, the broad lines are the down right-sloped strokes; but as the intrinsic value of Gothic lies in its freedom, no absolute rule for the form can be laid down. Gothic quality applies rather to the spirit than to exact form, as every individual letter may have several quasi-authoritative shapes, each accepted, if preserving an intelligent conception of the spirit of freedom, which is the essential of Gothic lettering.

The large word 'Alphabet' on the title page, drawn by the writer, is based on the Gothic lettering shown in the large plates and illustrates the slight changes necessary to give an entirely fresh aspect to traditional forms. The lower-case letters are variations of the Italian round-hand.

Chapter V. *The Beginnings of Types*

TYPES constitute the simple and inevitable corollary of the written books that preceded them. Written forms of letters were shaped for easy reading, the scribes simplifying and dropping everything difficult for the pen to shape easily. Types based on those forms were simplified still more because of technical and mechanical limitations, but not at the expense of beauty, as printing came at a time when the illuminated manuscript had reached its greatest period of perfection, and fifteen centuries of artistic traditions furnished beautiful models for the printers' use.

Printing began as an aid to the art of the scribes, not as an independent art, and at first was used mainly, if not entirely, to supplement their work. In this connection 'printing' does not here mean pages of text printed from *movable* types, but the use of engraved blocks, many bearing engraved legends, which were printed *before* the descriptive text was *written* in. Copies of such manuscript books with printed illustrations are to be found in the British Museum and European libraries. The illustrations were printed because of the deficient skill of the copyists, and while it was expedient to engrave the pictures, it was yet inexpedient to engrave the whole text. This was at the beginning of the fifteenth century. With the invention of movable types the situation took on a new aspect and the work of the copyist fell into disuse, while that of the illuminator or decorator of books correspondingly rose; but the invention of printing was the death blow to the beautiful book letters of the scribes.

At the time of the invention of printing from movable types, two styles of writing were in general use, so naturally there came about two styles of type-faces, Roman and black-letter. For nearly a century after the invention, black-letter was the preferred form, not only in Germany but in Holland, England, France and Spain, although as early as 1464 Roman type letters of a crude form appeared in Germany, nearly as early as at Rome. Why the hostility to the simpler Roman forms was so widespread we cannot understand, for the Roman alphabet certainly needed no defense after

over fourteen centuries of use in the preservation of literature. One reason for the general use of black-letter was that its heavy face and lack of fine lines made it easier to cast and in printing it would not show signs of wear as readily as the Roman form. The greater *compactness* and boldness of the black text to which the ordinary book buyer had been familiar all his life, is probably what impelled Nicolas Jenson, the designer of the most

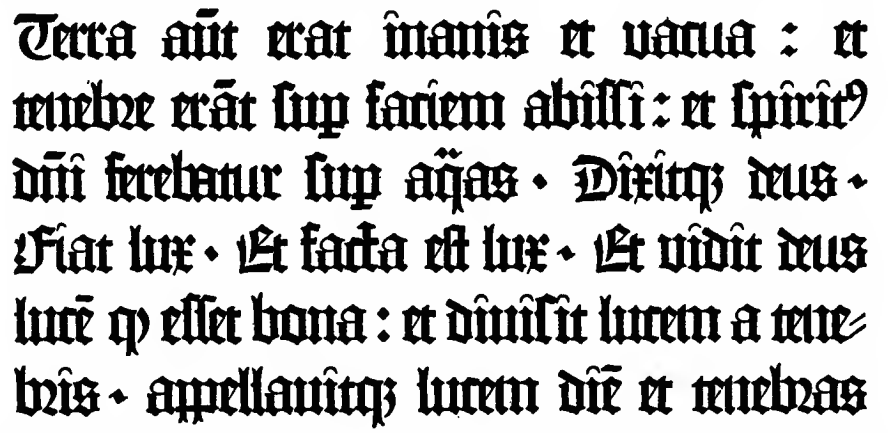


FIG. 21 TYPES CUT FOR NATIONAL PRINTING OFFICE AT PARIS FROM THE TYPES OF THE BAMBERG BIBLE OF 36 LINES

nearly perfect letter, to print in Gothic text in order to make his books salable in northern Europe; just as Ulrich Gering in Paris was obliged to discontinue printing in Roman letter and revert to black. In order not to prove huddled and ineffective, light face Roman types were of large size, open and round of form, with abundant white space within each letter as well as between lines. Large types meant large books and additional cost in the making.

The first attempt at economy in production was the reducing of white space between lines and words, and the neglect to paragraph; next, the reduction in sizes of types. Jenson, Ratdolt and Renner had put black-letter on small bodies, but there had been no attempt to crowd the round-faced Roman into smaller space. Aldus found that his beautiful books in large types and broad margins were unsalable. To get buyers he must make smaller and cheaper books and make smaller types for them.

Type shaped itself, we may say, accidentally. First it was based closely on manuscript forms, probably with the intention to deceive readers into

 the idea that the printed books were manuscript, but whether with that intention or not, it was the only way to make books readable to eyes accustomed only to manuscript pages. But in a short time it became apparent that the considerations which controlled the scribe no longer concerned the printer. He discovered that one shape was as easy to print as another, and this discovery brought about an attempt at a revision of the alphabet in the direction of greater legibility. At first, thought was given to beauty of form as well, but later attempts to bring letters into a given space by compression or reduction did not necessarily satisfy the true ends of art.

The styles of the early types were not invented by the punch cutter; usually he was directed by the printer to imitate the letters of some preferred manuscript as closely as he could.

We of to-day have been reared on print, with all its mechanical smoothness and precision. We have little, if any, ideal of lettering, and little feeling for the charm of character and individuality that only hand work gives. No one can look at an early printed book without feeling the beauty of the type page, for the old printers' types were inspired by the letters of the hand-written books, and with these for models they played endless variations on the alphabet, while our present types in the main are absolutely monotonous, with no artistic flavor or thoughtfulness.

The first types were Gothic and the earliest specimen of printing to bear an authentic date is the Letter of Indulgence issued by Pope Nicholas V to the King of Cyprus in his war with the Turks. It consisted of a single sheet of vellum 11 x 7 inches, printed, on one side only, at Mainz in 1454, and it is now preserved at The Hague. Some of it is printed in the same type as that used in the Mazarin Bible, and as it is issued from the press at Mainz, it is reasonable to imagine it was printed by Gutenberg. The first book to bear a printed date is the Schoeffer Codex of 1457.

I am assuming that Johann Gutenberg of Strassburg was the inventor of movable types, and that John Fust, a goldsmith and rich burgher of Mainz, assisted him with money, the two jointly printing the Mazarin Bible. It is conjectured that the metal types used by the early printers were cut by goldsmiths, and it is therefore easy to conclude that Fust's skill as well as his money contributed to Gutenberg's service. Their type was based on

the familiar manuscript hand of the time. The Bible bears no date, but in the copy preserved in Paris, the rubricator's inscription shows that it was finished before August 15th, 1456. The type is *known* to have been in existence in 1454, and it is not likely that it was cut before 1450, the date Gutenberg entered into partnership with Fust.

Printing did not spread rapidly for many years after its birth. In 1462 there was one shop at Mainz under Fust and Schoeffer, possibly Gutenberg was still working there, too; Pfister was at Bamberg, Mentelin and Eggestein were at Strassburg; these four were all. After the sack of Mainz, Ulrich Zel established a press at Cologne, and gradually printing spread throughout Europe.

We come now to the first radical improvement in the art—the beginning of the Roman type character, which took place in 1465. Then it was that Sweynheim and Pannartz began printing in the monastery of Subiaco near Rome. Theirs was the first press established in Italy, and the first book printed in that country was Cicero's 'De Oratore' in 1465. The type used was neither black-letter nor Roman, but a type that was black-letter in color but nearly Roman in form.

Their type shows plainly an unconscious leaning of its designer toward the mannerisms of the Gothic black-letter—the only form of letter used until these printers established their press. This transitional type, then,

Here ends The Treatyse of Fysshynge wyth
an Angle, set in type by St John Hornby and
Meysey Turton & printed by the first-named
at the Ashendene Press, Shelley House, Chel-
sea in the year 1903 after the text of the Boke
of St Albans 'enprynted at Westmestre by
Wynkyn the Worde the yere of thyncarnacion

FIG. 22 ASHENDENE PRESS TYPE, BASED ON FIRST TYPE OF SWEYNHEIM & PANNARTZ

marks the beginning of the Roman type-form; it is the prototype from which all other Roman types are descended, and for that reason it is extremely interesting, and also, it presents a valuable pattern for radical departure. Exactly as the designer of this type used the Gothic letter with

 which he was familiar and created a new form, so should we make use of the letters of the great periods as a source of inspiration.

In the same year, 1465, that Sweynheim and Pannartz were printing in their transitional type at Rome, another printer at Strassburg was using a distinctly Roman letter, as was Gunther Zeiner at Augsburg in the following year; while in 1470 at Paris, Ulrich Gering and his associates printed from the first Roman types in France. The types of these early printers, while unlike those of Sweynheim and Pannartz, were all simple and legible, and not without beauty; but the real development of the Roman letter had its beginnings in Venice. John of Spires and his brother, followed by Nicolas Jenson, began printing there in 1469. "Jenson," William Morris said, "carried the Roman type as far as it can go." This type, which has been the inspiration for all fine Roman types since 1470, is the first Roman type-form of distinction; round and bold, it has great beauty, and the individual forms are in perfect symmetry and accord in combination. [A lower-case letter is shown on each of the full-page plates]. Jenson had an instinctive sense of that exact harmony in types, and he was so intent on legibility that he disregarded conformity to any standard—an innovation that modern designers might well consider. Jenson's original inspiration was, no doubt, some fine manuscript book; but realizing the essential difference between the written character, where every repetition of a letter took naturally some subtle quality of difference and variety, and print, where every repeated letter was in exact facsimile, he conceived his types as forms cut in metal and considered his model forms only as suggestions. He brought to this work his experience as Master of one of the French mints, where he engraved coins. It is said that in 1458, at which time rumors of the new art of printing had reached France, Charles VII sent him to Mainz to learn the secret and bring it back to France. He did return to France in 1461, but meeting with a cool reception from the son of Charles, who had not the interest of his father in such matters, he did not long remain there and turned to Italy, where the printing tide flowed. Here his activity was great and the fame of his work spread beyond Venice, so that Pope Sixtus IV called him to Rome and conferred on him the title of Count Palatine. Even during his lifetime his types were acclaimed

as the true Venetian characters, as "sublime reproductions of letters." [31]

It would seem that the wonderful type of Jenson, the designs of Ratdolt and the excellent work of contemporary printers should be sufficient glory for one city, but the fame of Venetian typography is further enriched by the great Aldus Manutius, first for his celebrated editions of the Greek classics and later for that slanting character which he called 'chancery,' but which was named 'Aldine' by the Italians in honor of the maker. In France, where this new form was counterfeited, it was called 'italic,' the name by which it is still known to French and English readers, while in Germany and Holland, where it was almost immediately copied, it is called 'cursiv'. In a decree dated November 14th, 1502, the Senate of Venice gave Aldus the exclusive right to his character; but although his patent was renewed by Pope Alexander in 1513, he had no real protection, as the man who cut his type for him from the hand-writing of Petrarch made duplicate punches for a rival printer, who reprinted Aldus' edition of Virgil, not only stealing the new form of letter, but his editorial work as well. Other printers made imitations, and one at Lyons known as 'the Honest Man Bartholomew Trot' reproduced the Virgil and other Aldine classics in close imitation, even bearing the trade mark of Aldus, and sold them as productions of Aldus' press.

From this time on printing sank lower and lower—French or Low Country printing remaining neat but without distinction. But the worst of all was the English, and it was not until about 1724, when William Caslon cut the fine fount of type now known as 'Caslon old face,' that any revival of early excellence was realized. Before Caslon's type was cut it is said there was more Dutch type in use in England than there was English, and his letter is probably based on an Elzevir model. His type is clear and neat, well designed, and as *originally cut*, full of variety and life; but as recut [and it has been imitated by all the type foundries] it has lost everything of feeling and vitality, retaining the form only. As Caslon cut each character painstakingly on the end of a steel punch, with few instruments of precision, judging form and proportion solely by eye, his type shows considerable variation in the forms and proportions of the same letters in different type sizes, and exhibits plainly those natural irregularities and

 deficiencies in execution that are always the indication of a mind intent on design and personal expression.

Caslon's business advanced rapidly; he met obstacles, of course, but for fourteen years he worked with so much industry and excellence that he was without a rival at the head of the profession of letter-founders.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century Giambattista Bodoni, an Italian printing at Parma, exercised a tremendous influence on the types of his contemporaries. While his types are absolutely devoid of any artistic quality, being so regular and precise in line that a monotonous effect is produced, Bodoni and his school furnished the models for type-founders until 1844, when the Chiswick Press of London revived Caslon's famous founts. The new vogue of Caslon's 'old face' influenced other founders to cut new 'old style' letters. Bodoni's type displayed in a marked manner an attenuation of the thin lines, with a reduction of the graduated portion of the curves to a minimum. The letters are thereby weakened in construction and turn a page into a maze of heavy lines fretted here and there with greyness, so that the eye is constantly readjusting its focus. Morris says of it that it is the most illegible type ever cut, with its preposterous thicks and thins; he even speaks of "the sweltering hideousness of the Bodoni letter." Newdigate, the English writer, says the ugly modern face which we owe to Bodoni is still used almost exclusively for certain classes of work. Most of the text pages of our magazines and newspapers are set in a modern face. The type shown in fig. 23 is the result of an attempt to produce a type face which will redeem "the ugly modern face we owe to Bodoni" from the charge of illegibility it now rests under.

COMPARATIVELY FEW PEOPLE CARE
anything about Art, and when they do it is
because they mistake it for something else.

FIG. 23 18 POINT 'GOUDY MODERN'

Chapter VI. *The Qualities of Lettering*

IN preparing this manual the author has endeavored, as far as possible, to present the subject in the order that appeared to him most helpful to the student of lettering, and it may seem to some that he has given undue space to the 'Beginnings of types' and printing. His reason is that as practically all of the drawn lettering employed to-day is to be printed as type or in combination with types, and as the lettering should be in exact harmony with those types, no better models for drawn letters can be found than fine types based on the letters of the hand-written books.

Before the year 1500, letters were chiefly *pen-forms* and pen produced, and while indeed they did influence the shape of the forms we now use, it is no longer necessary, except in the case of the occasional formal written book, to carry the qualities inherent in pen-forms into letters produced by other methods and for other purposes.

It is to be understood in all that follows regarding lettering, that formal writing is not meant, but instead, lettering intended for book-covers, title-pages, advertisements, types, etc., and such lettering is properly 'drawn,' not 'written.' One writer has gone so far as to maintain that drawn letters are *wrong* and written ones only are *right*. He does admit that the Roman capitals of the Trajan inscription are not entirely *pen-forms*; if there is one exception, why not others? There is no doubt that the capitals of the Trajan column were first *painted* in before cutting, but that is hardly writing. In formal writing, where the actual work of the artist is seen and read, neither reproduced nor duplicated by mechanical process, the lines should be formed without sketching, retouching or correcting. Each letter should be simple [having no unnecessary parts], distinctive and legible, and should show, too, the obvious use of the pen. But if the work is to be reproduced by mechanical process in which any corrections or retouchings will not be discoverable, there can be no good reason for omitting or neglecting such corrections if greater clearness or better appearance is gained.

The author does not feel that formal writing should be reproduced by

process at all; it is the form in which the personality of the craftsman is strongly expressed, a quality that is practically lost when duplicated by process, which takes no account of the varying degrees of color, etc., and the reproduction presents only a flat and lifeless copy. In this handbook formal writing* is only touched upon as a matter of historical interest.

Letters are not to be measured nor is there any canon of proportion to set up. Broadly speaking, they must be either Italian [Roman] or Gothic. It does not matter whether they are based on the circle or on the square, whether 'old style' or 'modern,' the essentials are the same; the chief difference lies in the matter of proportion. One word, however, as to the use of Gothic, to-day little used as a text letter; for lines where the decorative quality is of greater importance than easy legibility, this style presents an opportunity for compactness and color impossible in the Roman forms.

Pleasing legibility is the primary consideration. One point to avoid is extreme attenuation of any lines, as this involves constant alteration of the focus of the eyes, which though slight in reading a few words or a line, is extremely wearing in the aggregate. Ruskin struck the right note when he advised the craftsman not to make lettering illegible whose only merit is in its sense, by attempting beauty at the expense of use. He says "write the commandments on the church wall where they can be plainly seen, but do not put a dash and tail to every letter." Where the eye can rest is the place for decoration. The idea that a page is made beautiful only at the expense of legibility is a vagary of artists lacking a knowledge of the art with which they meddle.

In the first place, simplicity of form is necessary; this requires a study of the essential root forms, which are practically those of the lapidary capitals of two thousand years ago. Each of those characters had an individuality. By emphasizing this characteristic quality in such a way that nothing in it inclines us to confound any letter with its neighbor, we may get a new expression or quality of personality, which is as far as we may go, since those forms are now fixed. One possessing individuality will express himself in his work and endow it with character, with that *personal singu-*

*Formal writing is adequately dealt with in the volume "Writing, Illumination and Lettering," by Edward Johnston. Macmillan & Co., New York.

larity which is the quality that gives distinction to any work. There should be no attempt to make designs of individual letters, since design implies invention, and what already exists cannot be invented.

Some alphabets are in themselves in the highest degree so decorative that there is danger in using them except for a word or two, as the repetition of the elements contributing to their decorative quality is bound to be irritating. In the manuscript page every repetition of a character took

J. VASQUES, FIRST TO PRINT IN THE CITY OF TOLEDO, MCCCCLXXXVI

FIG. 24 HADRIANO TYPE, BASED ON STONE-CUT LETTERS OF FIRST CENTURY

on a subtle quality of difference; in print every repeated letter is in facsimile. The artist should then study his model until he has grasped the spirit of it, selecting characteristic forms and simplifying them for his use, to avoid any element of restlessness.

In the construction of a letter the artist must decide first what is its intrinsic shape—that is, in what degree are the lines, curves and angles, or the directions the lines take, that compose it, fixed. His next thought should be for form, and on his decision here will largely rest the measure of his ability. If the form is fundamentally wrong, no added ornament by way of disguise will rectify it. Its character must be organic, and more often than not a form developed simply without conscious effort toward beauty but with due recognition of its essential quality, will result in real beauty.

The ancient craftsmen who cut the old inscriptions in stone were more concerned for a consistency in the proportion of their letters than with mere details of execution; their work was not a matter of conscious or elaborate design. Apart from the proportion of the forms, the character of the stone-cut letter is that given by the tool used in its making, but the form itself is that produced by brush or pen. This is natural, since the letters were probably painted in before cutting.

Hadriano type, shown in fig. 24, was designed by the author, who reversed the process, and from a rubbing of a few letters from an inscription

 of the first or second century, produced a type conceived in the same spirit as the original cutting, a design unique in the annals of type founding.

Study the accepted model until the *essential* form can be reproduced without conscious effort; but do not forget that a letter or style good in one material and suited to a definite purpose cannot always be adapted [even by brute force] to another material, place or purpose, although the

FIG. 25 SIX VARIATIONS OF LOMBARDIC 'A'

underlying principle of its structure may be used as a basis for a new rendering. Many letter-forms are indeed interchangeable; but if it is desired to adapt lettering of one class to the purposes of another, certain differences of treatment are inevitable to make them suitable to the medium employed. Thought based on knowledge, good taste developed by analysis of beautiful forms, and modesty, will go far toward attaining style.

Fig. 25 presents six drawings of the Lombardic capital A, freely rendered from a sixteenth century service book, to illustrate a point the author desires to impress on the beginner,—that he is free, if it seems advisable, to copy exactly any letter shown herein; but copying is not the best way to develop individuality. Rather let him get at the underlying form and cautiously work out his own variations. These six drawings show the slight changes necessary to give each letter a different aspect without destroying its harmonious quality or losing the generic likeness. [See also the 'A' in the word 'Alphabet' on the title-page.]

The main reason for the use of drawn lettering is that it is more easily addressed to the artistic sense than the use of set and fixed type-forms and

becomes itself the decoration of the page. Beautiful letters, as such, are out of place for the text of books, where easy reading is the chief desideratum and where symmetry is of less importance. But for the decoration of the page, the type ready to one's hand as a rule does not serve. Qualities of greater account than mere mechanical precision or regularity are needed, making the drawn character necessary; but no license is thereby permitted to the artist to take undue liberties with the proportions of letters. True, the cross-bar of an A or an H may be shifted up or down [within limits] etc., but that is not what is meant. It is one thing to disregard tradition, but quite another to go beyond the bounds of moderation. In lettering itself there is not much scope for originality, but there are so many varieties of letters from which to choose that the artist may devote all his arts of design to their arrangement and expression without finding it necessary to invent mock forms.

UNCIAL 7TH CENT. | ENGLISH 8TH CENT. | CAROLINE 9TH CENT. | ENGLISH 10TH CENT. | ENGLISH 11TH CENT. | ITALIAN 12TH CENT. | ITALIAN 16TH CENT. | F. W. G. 20TH CENT.

FIG. 26 DEVELOPMENT OF LOWER-CASE 'g' FROM ROMAN UNCIAL

Chapter VII. *Notes on the Plates*

EACH plate shows fifteen forms of one letter of the alphabet, each corresponding form occupying a similar location on every plate, so that a note regarding a form of letter shown in fig. 27 on this page will refer to any letter shown in the same position on each of the large plates. Each plate includes a brief historical note of the letter shown which the craftsman may find of interest, even if of no great aid in making variations from the forms given.

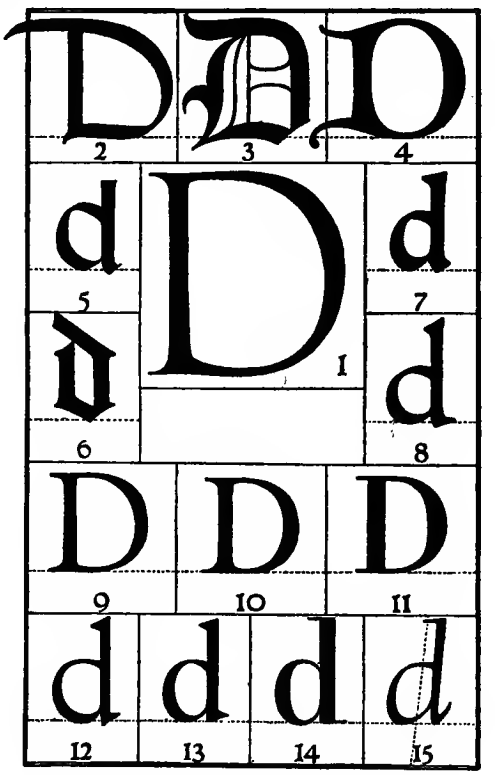


FIG. 27 KEY TO LARGE PLATES

No. 1 A letter from the inscription on the base of the Trajan column at Rome, cut A. D. 114. The stone on which the inscription appears is three feet nine inches high by nine feet three-fourths of an inch long, within the moulding, with lettering in six lines, practically filling the free space. The letters in the two upper lines are each about four and one-half inches high, in the next two lines

four and three-eighths inches, in the fifth line four and one-eighth inches and in the last line three and seven-eighths inches. The serifs are small and carefully formed, the thin or hair lines about half the thickness of the thick stems. The curves of B, P, and R, should be noted. The characters H, J, K, U, W, Y, Z are not present, but forms such as *might* have been cut are shown in their appropriate places. These capitals have been very carefully drawn by the writer from a photograph of the inscription purchased by him at the British Museum, and with the utmost care to retain all the subtleties of form and proportion. No finer capitals on which to base new expressions are to be had, and they may be accepted as the root forms of western European lettering.

The Forum capitals shown in the title page and on page 8, were designed by the author in an attempt to render the spirit of the classic lapidary inscriptions. They are the *first types* ever cast "distinguished by their successful rendering of classic feeling . . . The capitals known as Forum are the most beautiful and have been widely used and imitated." [BRUCE ROGERS] Forum capitals retain the spirit of the ancient lapidary letter, although comparison with those of the Trajan inscription will show differences in the forms of individual letters.

No. 2 Slanted pen capital, originally produced by reed or broad quill pen, later developing into the straight pen uncial of the seventh and eighth centuries. The letters shown are not copied from nor founded upon any particular manuscript, but illustrate the form naturally produced by the scribe using a broad pen with the square capital as a model.

No. 3 Gothic or black-letter capital, the gradual outgrowth of the round Roman uncial shown in fig. 7. This form, which has persisted and is still in use as an ornamental letter, is descended from the fifteenth century writing of northern Europe. It is one of the most picturesque forms, and very ornamental, although individual letters may seem illegible. The letter shown is a free rendition of a type-form from the Caslon Foundry in London, called 'Caslon's Old Black.'

No. 4 Lombardic Gothic versal. Manuscript versal forms [so called because used to denote the beginnings of verses, paragraphs, etc.] were *built up* Roman letters which in the tenth and twelfth centuries departed from the more severe

Roman form by the addition of ornamental features, or by curving and fattening the strokes, developing or degenerating into the Lombardic, not that it was invented by the Lombards, or even confined to northern Italy, but because it was first developed there. These capitals are used mainly as initials and in many cases are not written but painted in, which accounts somewhat for the fatter strokes. Note and compare figs. 14 and 16.

No. 5 Italian round-hand minuscule, from the writing book by Vespasiano, 1556, and which varies but little from the manuscript hands of the fourteenth century. It is based on the old Roman uncial, [see fig. 7] and retains some of its peculiarities, preserving its roundness. This letter-form never acquired the extreme angularity of the Gothic, and became the foundation of our Roman small letters or 'lower-case' forms which have superseded all others. With this letter, Gothic capitals, either black-letter or Lombardic, are used. Note the word 'Alphabet' of the title-page to this volume, also fig. 13, showing type of Ratdolt, both variations of the Italian round-hand.

No. 6 Gothic or black-letter minuscule, the type-form used for first printing by Gutenberg and Fust. Taken from a facsimile of the types of the Bible of 36 lines. [fig. 21] The mediaeval minuscule of Germany stands apart and never attained the beauty of either the north or south hands; nevertheless it furnished the model for the first types. In Italy a more refined taste went back to an earlier time in search of a more beautiful standard of writing, which was brought to perfection soon after the middle of the fifteenth century, just at the right moment to be adopted by the early Italian printers.

No. 7 The second type of Sweynheym and Pannartz, in which the compression, blackness and modified angularity are a little less pronounced than in their first type [shown fairly reproduced in fig. 22] which showed marked leaning toward Gothic mannerisms. Theirs was the first attempt to cut the Roman form of letter in type and marks the transition from Gothic to Roman, although it is neither Gothic nor entirely Roman, but Gothic in color and nearly Roman in form. It is the prototype of our Roman lower-case letters and therefore of great interest, and a form on which the designer might well exercise his

artistic attempts at letter design. These letters have been drawn freely from facsimile reproductions with intent only to preserve the general effect, the *actual* details of serifs, etc., being lost in bad presswork and inadequate reproductions.

No. 8 Type of Nicolas Jenson, the first pure Roman type-face, and of great distinction and beauty, not so much in the design of the individual characters, which are round and bold, as in the perfect harmony and symmetry of the letters combined in a page. No one character dominates, each takes its proper place; the letters hang together and show at a glance the great difference between the round open Roman form and the somber angular black-letter. It was on this form that William Morris based his Golden type. The craftsman can find no better Roman letter on which to form a style. These drawings are from photographic enlargements of the types of Jenson's Eusebius.

In the type shown in fig. 28, the writer believes that he has *rediscovered* the principle of spacing individual types in use by Jenson and his contemporaries, but not since—a principle to which the harmonious quality of a page of Jenson is largely due. Every letter stands on solid serifs of unusual shape, so planned

QUOD NICOLAUM IPSUM EX
urbe roma istuc salvum adventasse
scribis gratulor, et eo magis quod et com-

FIG. 28 'GOUDY ANTIQUE,' ILLUSTRATING JENSON'S PRINCIPLE OF LETTER SPACING

as to make each letter-form conterminous with its type-body, while maintaining sufficient white space to set each letter off from its neighbor and preserve to the greatest degree the unity of the word formed by the separate characters. This permits close spacing of words and avoids loose composition. A type page full of white gaps is not clearly framed by its margins, nor is it in pleàsing harmony with them.

Nos. 9 & 12 Kennerley type, designed by the author, and the type in which the text of this volume is printed. So named because first used in a volume published by MITCHELL KENNERLEY [the publisher of 'The Alphabet']. Of the Kennerley an English writer says: "This type is not in any sense a copy of early letter—it is original; but Mr. Goudy has studied type design to such good pur-

pose that he has been able to restore to the Roman alphabet much of that lost humanistic character which the first Italian printers inherited from their predecessors, the scribes of the early Renaissance. Besides being beautiful in detail, his type is beautiful in the mass. . . . Since Caslon first began casting type in 1724, no such excellent letter has been put within reach of English printers."

Nos. 10 & 13 Caslon old-face, designed and cut by William Caslon in 1724, and the *first* type of any distinction to be used in England. This letter presents the perfection of unassuming craftsmanship, but lacks any artistic pretensions; it is straightforward, legible, with a quality of quaintness and even beauty that secures for it general favor. It is perhaps better known by name to all who use types than any other face; but few realize that the face to-day bearing the name differs greatly from the original cutting by Caslon. Comparison of the same letters in different sizes of Caslon's types shows considerable variation. The writer has used what he considers typical forms, regardless of the different type sizes from which they were taken.

Nos. 11 & 14 Types of Bodoni, the Italian printer, cut about 1771. He made his hair lines thinner and the stems thicker than any previous cutting of Roman types, and cut his letters with a sharpness and regularity never before equalled. He considered his designs as having been executed with a broad pen, but with

LIFE WITHOUT INDUSTRY IS GUILT,
life without Art is brutality.

FIG. 29 24 POINT 'GOUDY PEN,' MODERN TYPE FACE

a broader pen than anyone else had ever attempted to use. The copperplate quality of his types gave his print a sharpness and brilliancy that is somewhat dazzling. [Not clearly indicated here owing to the large size of the letter.]

The type shown in fig. 29 is the result of an essay by the author to design a modern face letter with a quality of interest and legibility not present in the types of Bodoni and his school.

No. 15 Kennerley italic, designed by the author to accompany the Roman face shown in Nos. 9 & 12. It is the face used in the Introduction to this volume.

The inclined dotted line shows the slight degree of slope, probably as little inclination as that of any italic known, the italic quality of the forms not making greater inclination necessary. The capitals are shown below. [fig. 30]

In 1497 Aldus described his printing in his new italic letter [said to be copied from the handwriting of Petrarch] as "like writing by hand, but with a hand of metal." Kennerley italic is used for the chapter titles in this book.

ACTA PAGANA RESURGUNT

FIG. 30 24 POINT 'KENNERLEY' ITALIC CAPITALS.

The last plate shows four renderings of the ampersand or short 'and,' a character which is practically a monogram of the letters E and T, or the Latin 'et,' i.e. 'and.' The notes preceding regarding Nos. 2, 3 and 8 apply to these. No. 1 is the Caslon italic form. The figures given directly under and on each side of '&' are from an old brass [A. D. 1520], and the lower set is a free rendering of Caslon's old style figures. Arabic figures were introduced into Spain A. D. 950, into France in 991, and into England in 1253.

As a matter of graphic convenience the letters 'v' and 'u' began to vary, until in the tenth century the v form was by preference used as the initial and u as the medial letter. Similarly, in the fifteenth century, 'I' was lengthened and turned to the left at the beginning of words as a sort of ornamental initial, and as the consonantal sound usually occurred at the beginning and the vocalic in the middle of words, the two initial forms of V and J became specialized to denote consonants, and the medial forms u and i to represent the vowels. The form 'U' is of recent introduction as the early printers used a 'U' with two thick vertical strokes to which our lower-case form is similar.

The dot over the i was introduced in the fifth or sixth century A. D., although at first it was merely an accent to indicate 'double i,' the single i being written without any accent.

The preceding chapters present no royal road to lettering. The student must do his own work, draw his own conclusions, and re-discover for himself the fundamentals the writer has attempted to outline. When the craftsman has *mastered* the essentials, he may then devote all his efforts to new departures.

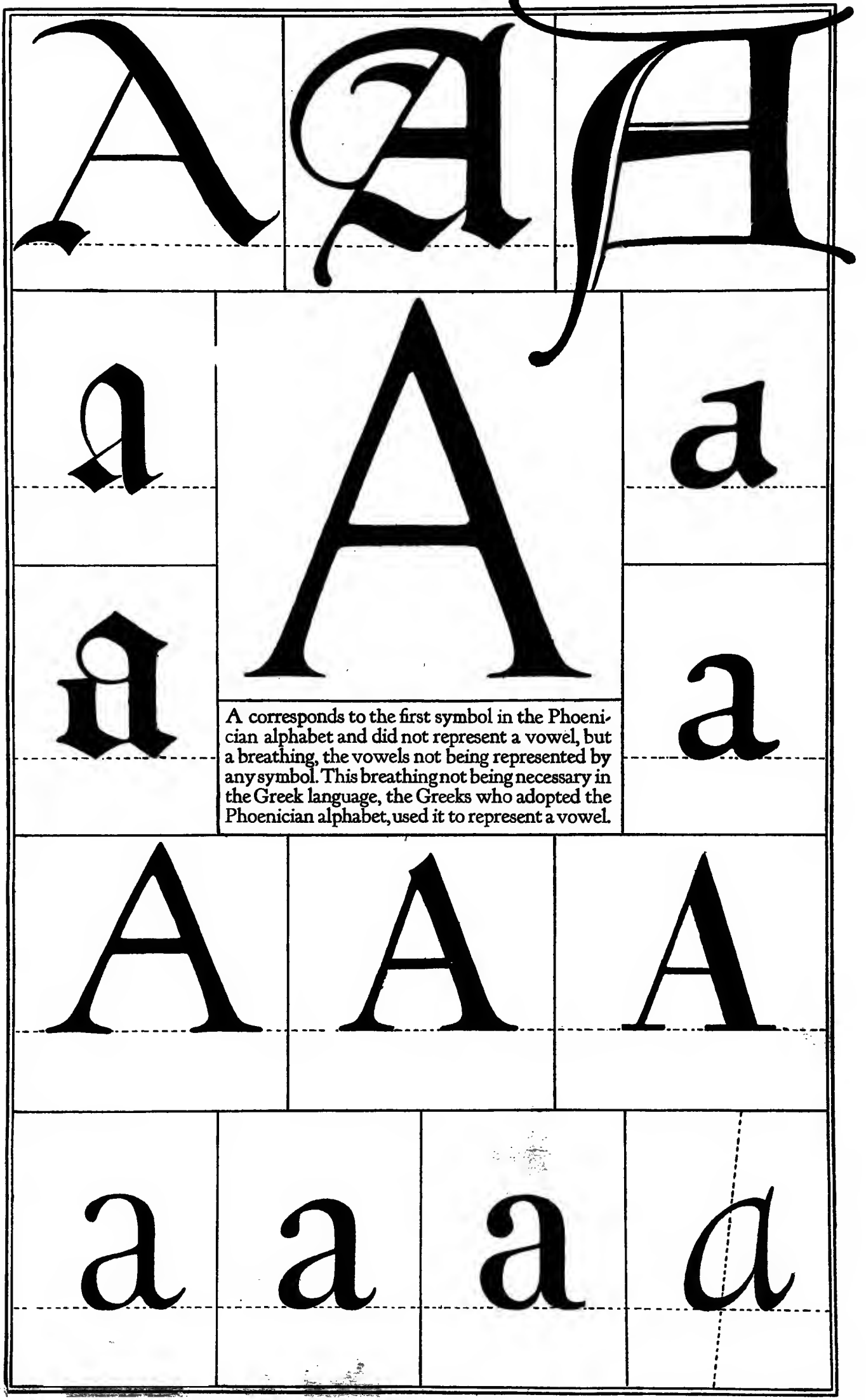
Mechanical affectation of finish will not in any degree take the place of real knowledge of forms; imitations of early craftsmen's work will not necessarily produce results fit to present needs. Study shows that their productions were strictly within the bounds of severe conventions, influenced by the environments and conditions under which they worked.

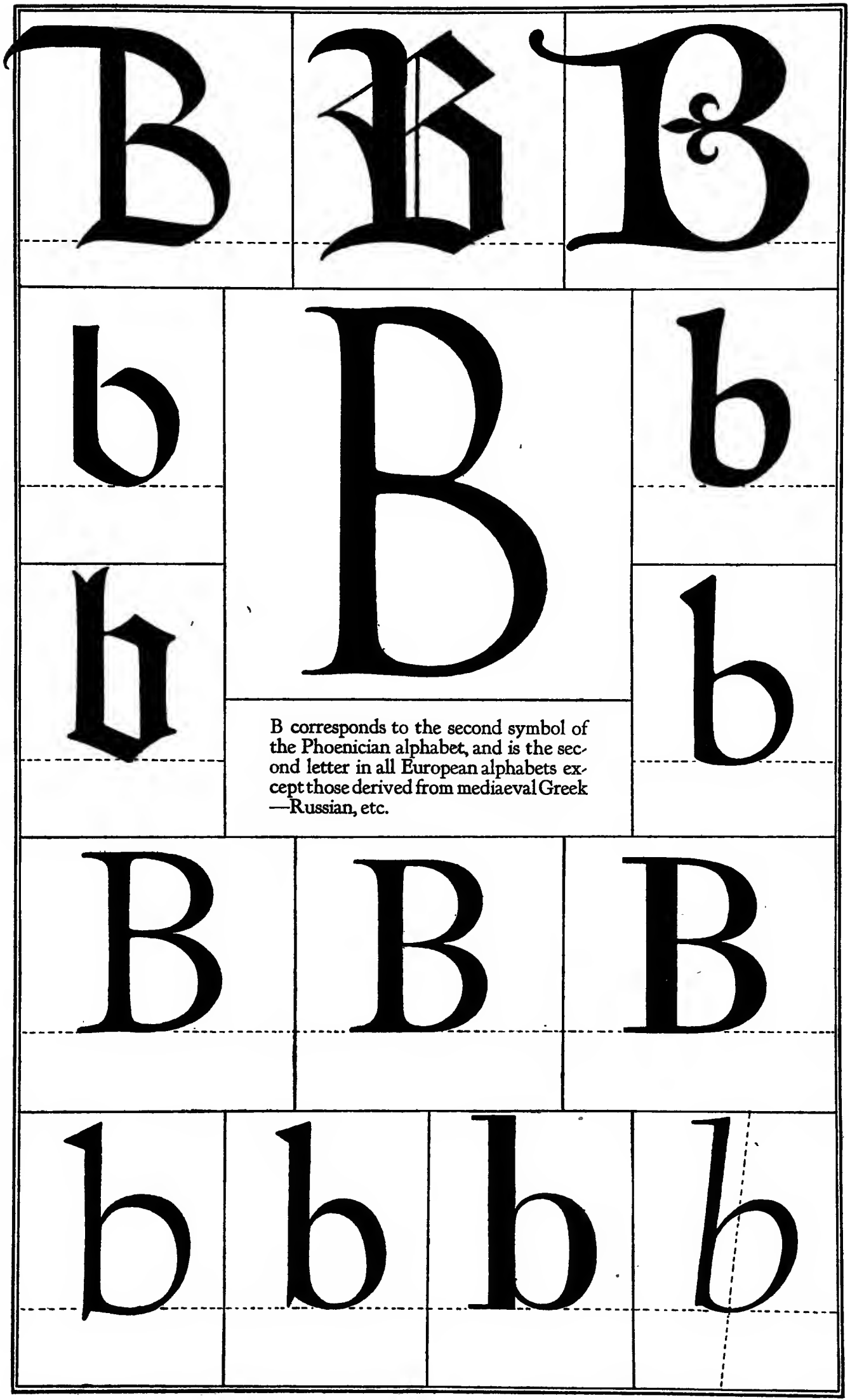
To make our work meet present requirements and satisfy human needs, the craftsman must now, as then, enter sympathetically into the details and incidents of the lives of the users of his work, and recognize fully their necessities and obvious habits; therefore work produced under other and different conditions will seldom present more than a basis for new expressions.

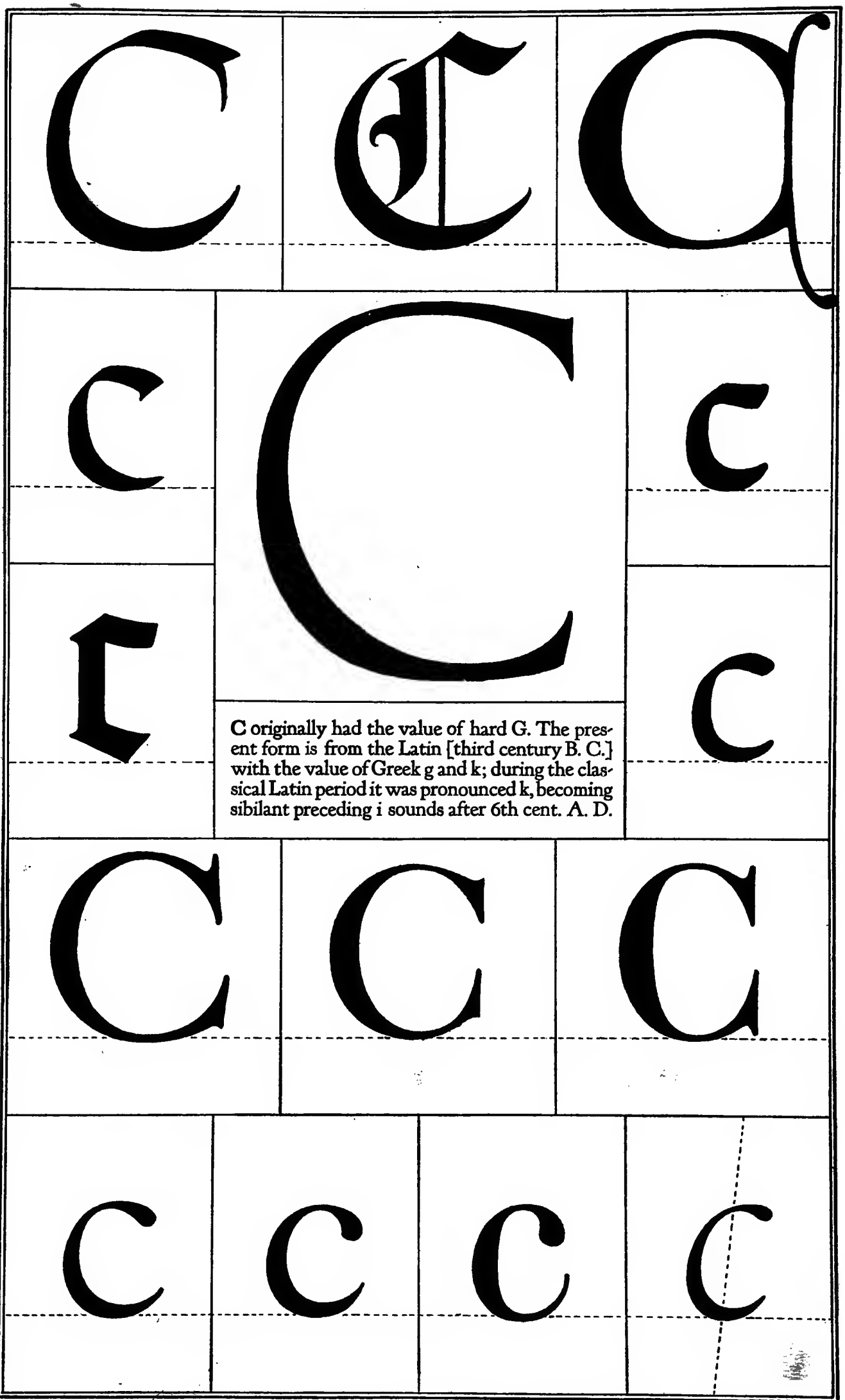
In using the older patterns we may depart radically from the suggested forms, or even engraft upon them a character derived from other sources or styles, if always we can persuade them into something fit, harmonious, consistent and satisfactory. Nor should we forget that the best work includes a degree of beauty aside from its strict utilitarian purpose, as beauty in any useful thing supplies a very real demand of the mind and eye.

To present properly and fully a history of the development of each of the Roman forms we use would require many more words than the limited space under the Trajan capitals on the plates following, will permit. The meagre notes given are mere outlines and intended only to present those facts that can be given in a few words, and should be read in connection with each other and not independently, as the evolution of many letter-forms is dependent upon that of others.

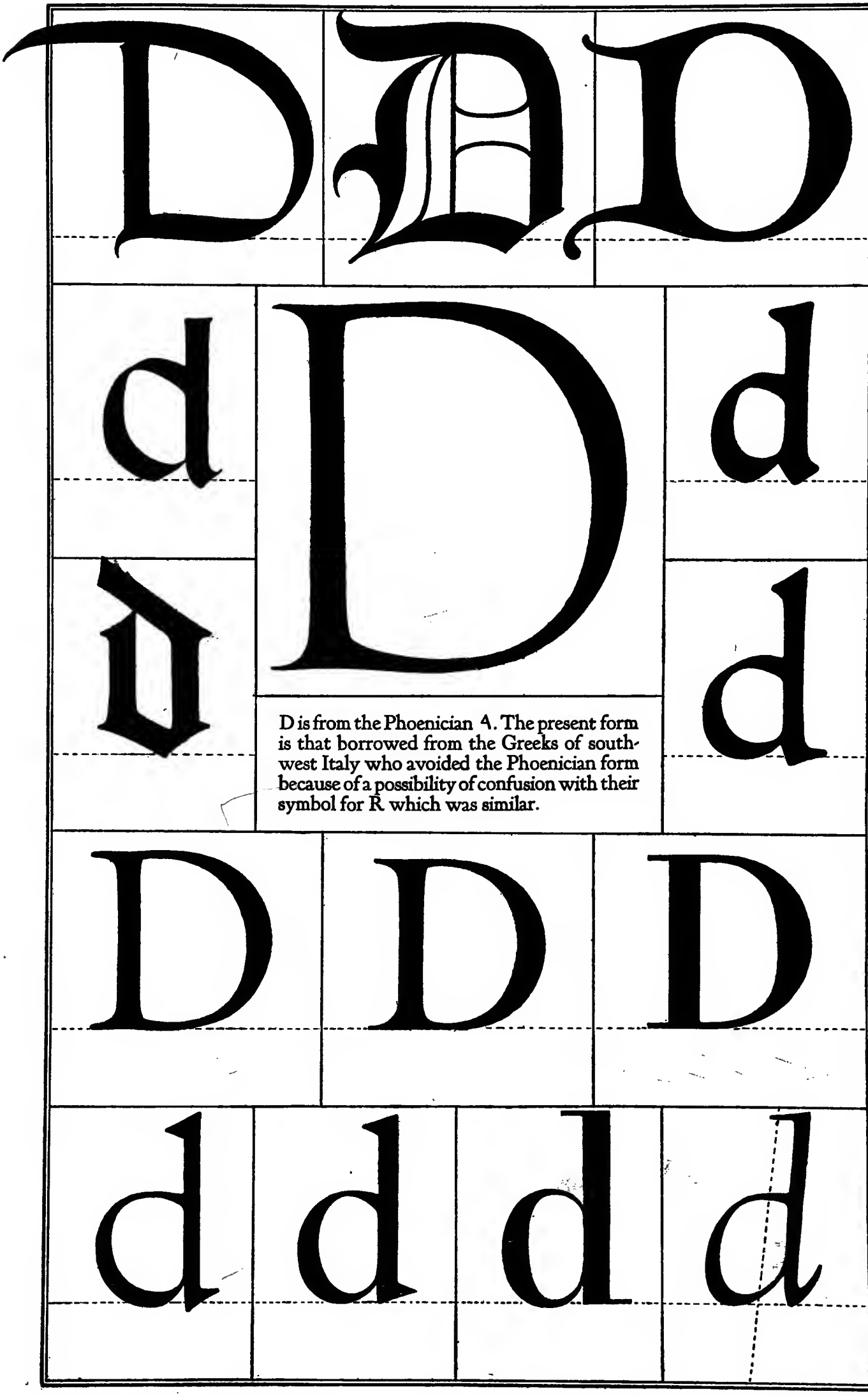
THE PLATES

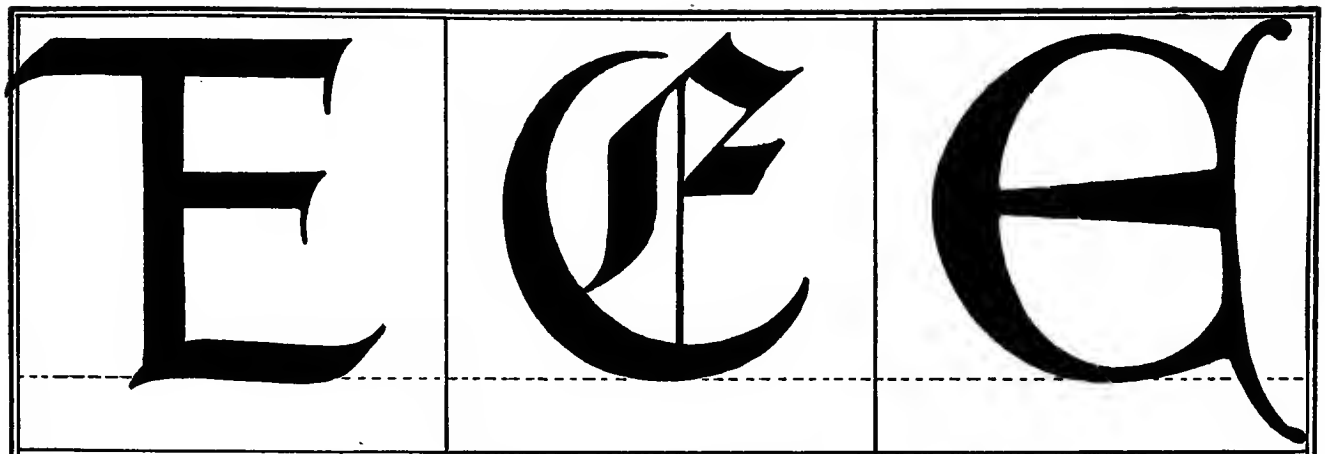

A corresponds to the first symbol in the Phoenician alphabet and did not represent a vowel, but a breathing, the vowels not being represented by any symbol. This breathing not being necessary in the Greek language, the Greeks who adopted the Phoenician alphabet, used it to represent a vowel.

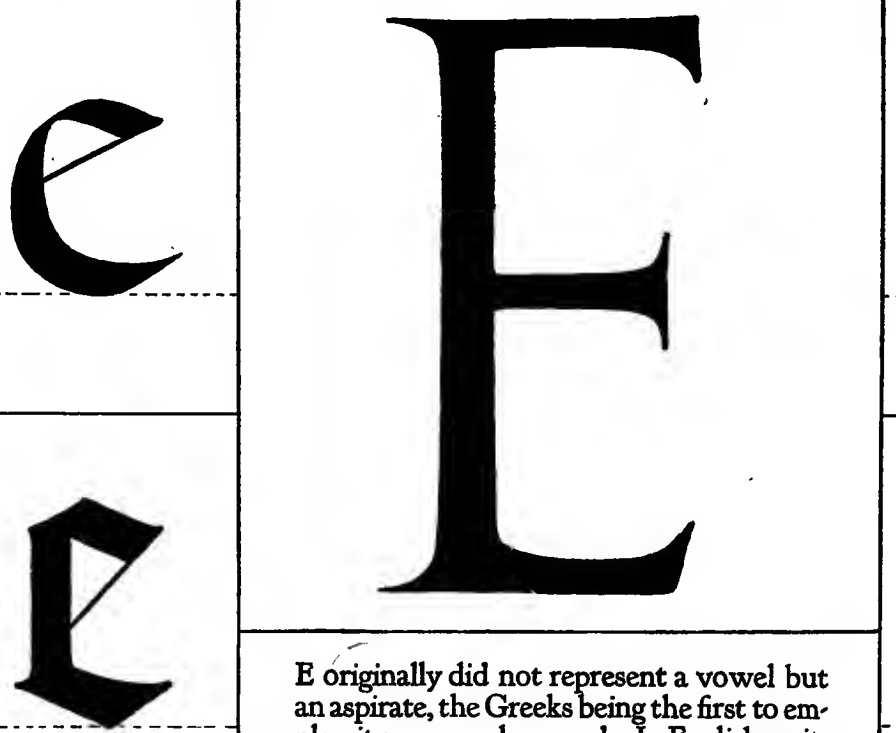

B corresponds to the second symbol of the Phoenician alphabet, and is the second letter in all European alphabets except those derived from mediaeval Greek —Russian, etc.



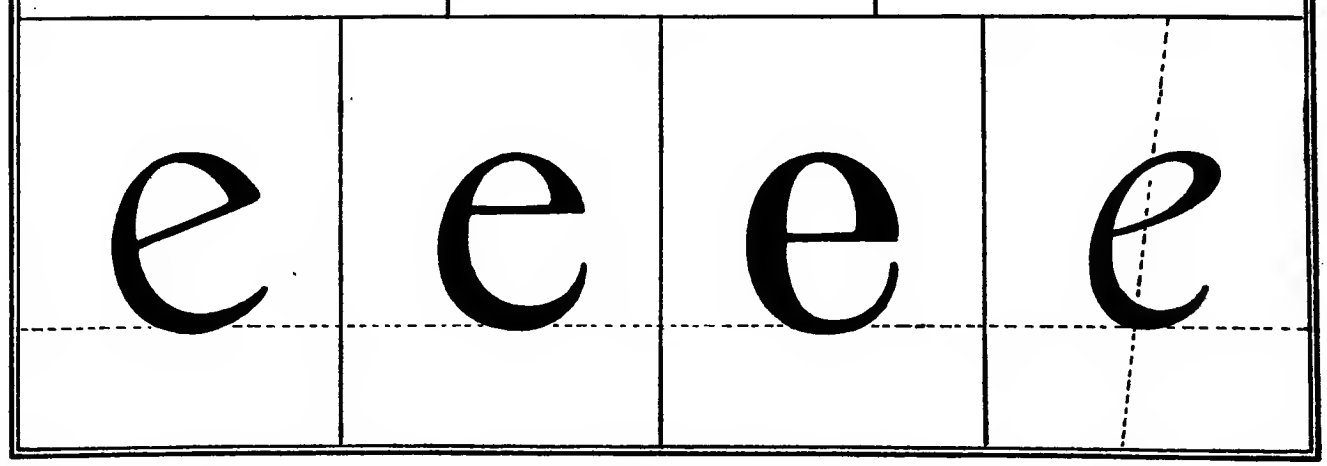
C originally had the value of hard G. The present form is from the Latin [third century B. C.] with the value of Greek g and k; during the classical Latin period it was pronounced k, becoming sibilant preceding i sounds after 6th cent. A. D.

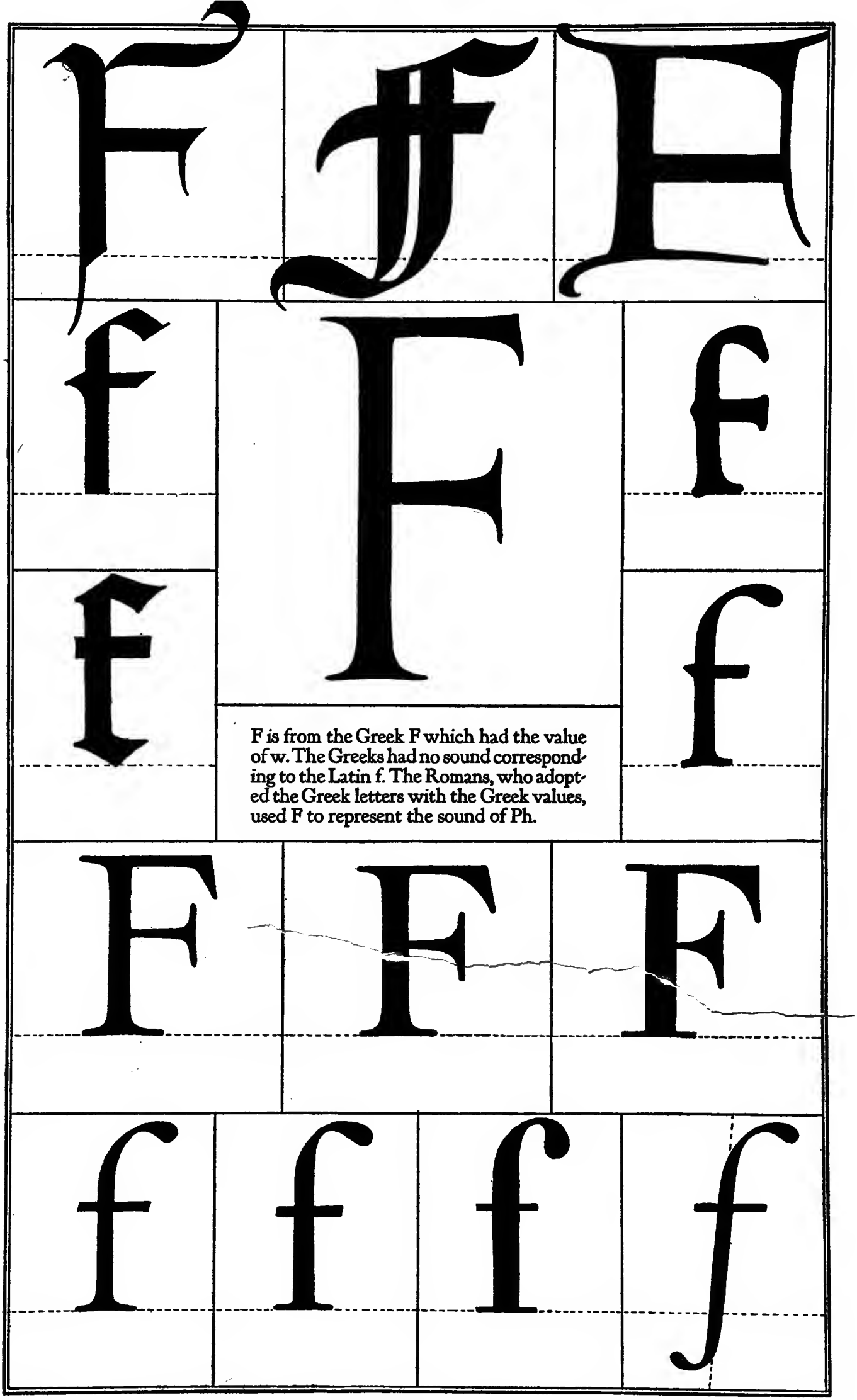

D is from the Phoenician 4. The present form is that borrowed from the Greeks of south-west Italy who avoided the Phoenician form because of a possibility of confusion with their symbol for R which was similar.



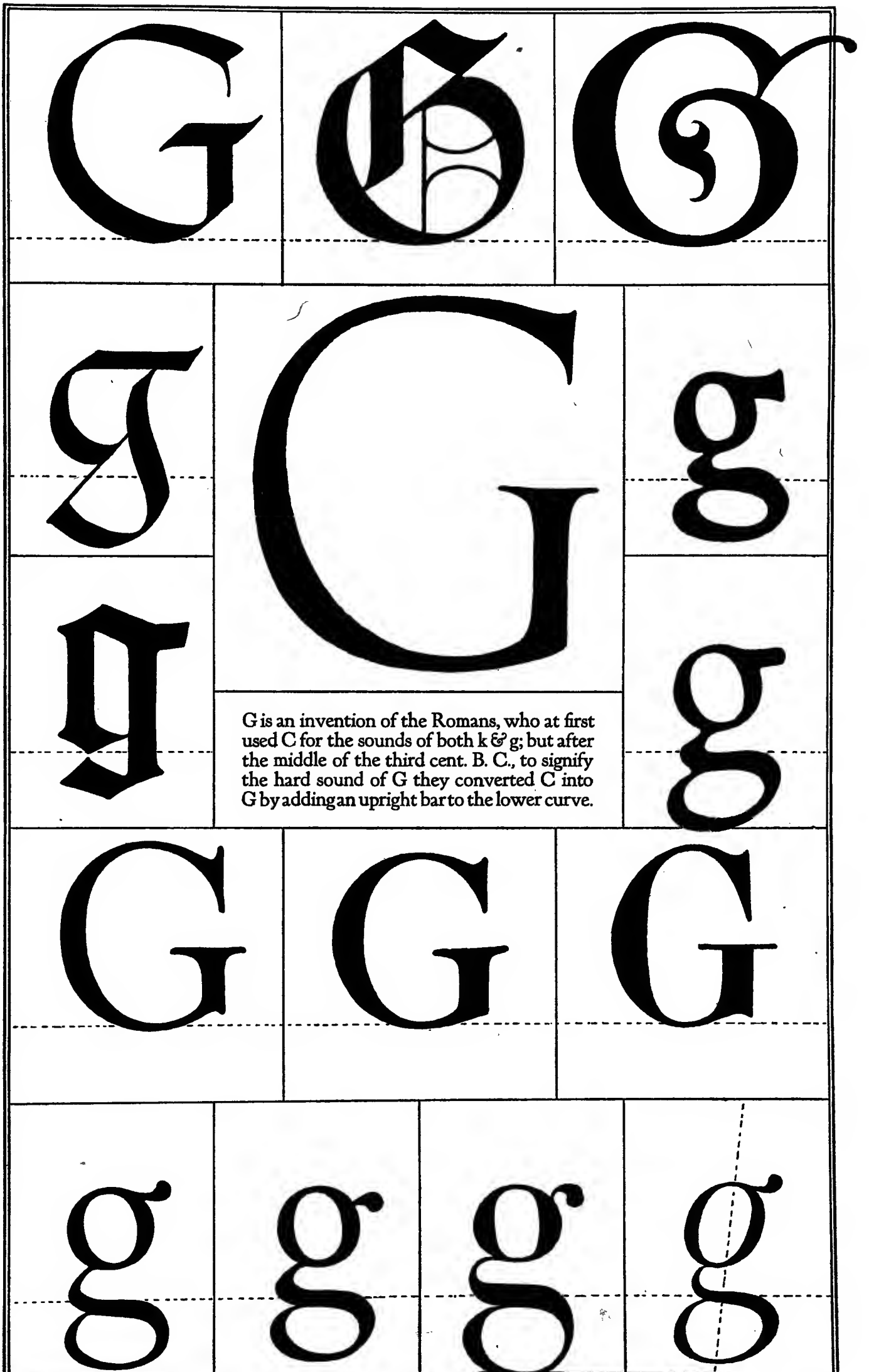


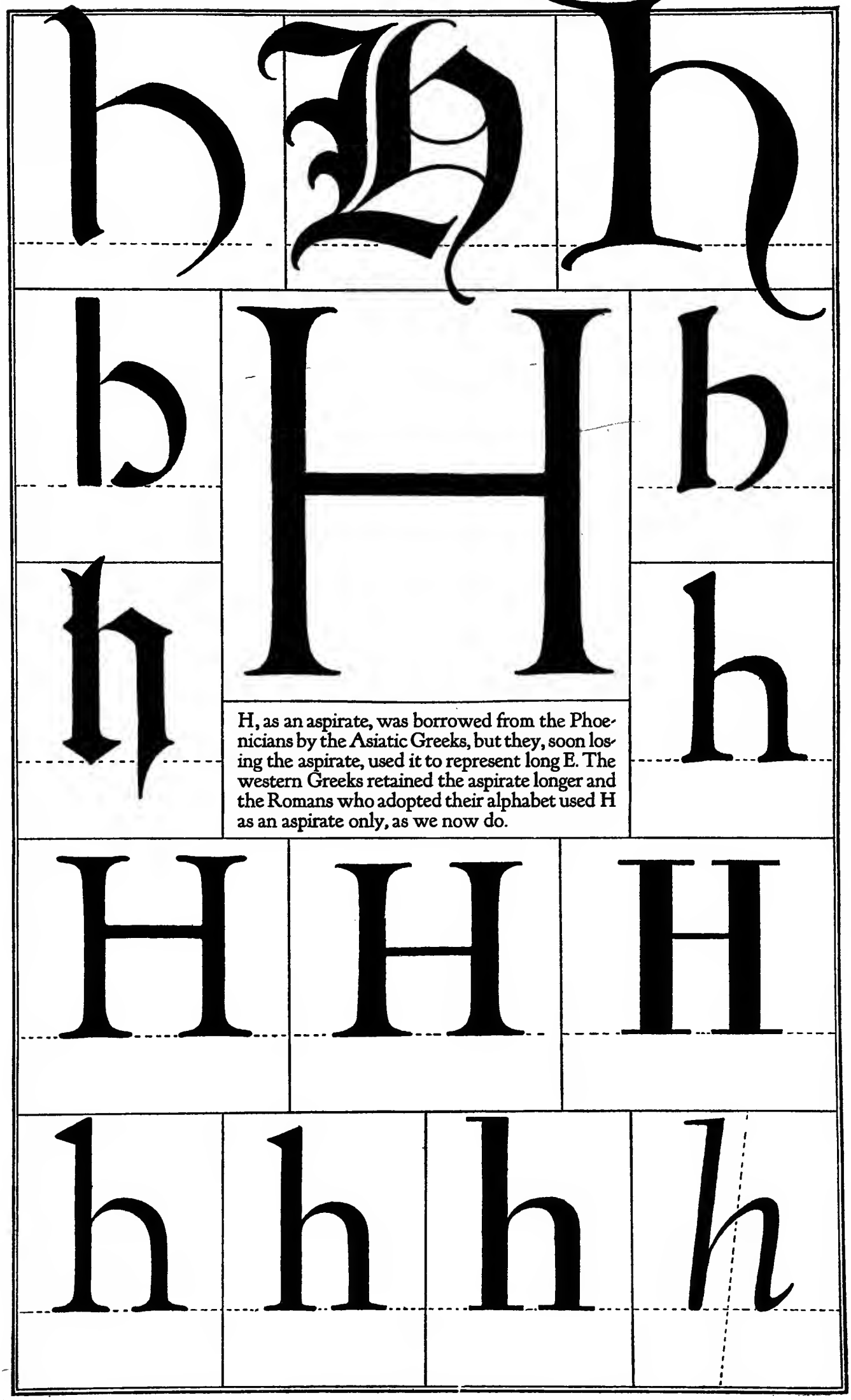
E originally did not represent a vowel but an aspirate, the Greeks being the first to employ it as a vowel, as we do. In English writing it is the most frequently used letter in the alphabet.



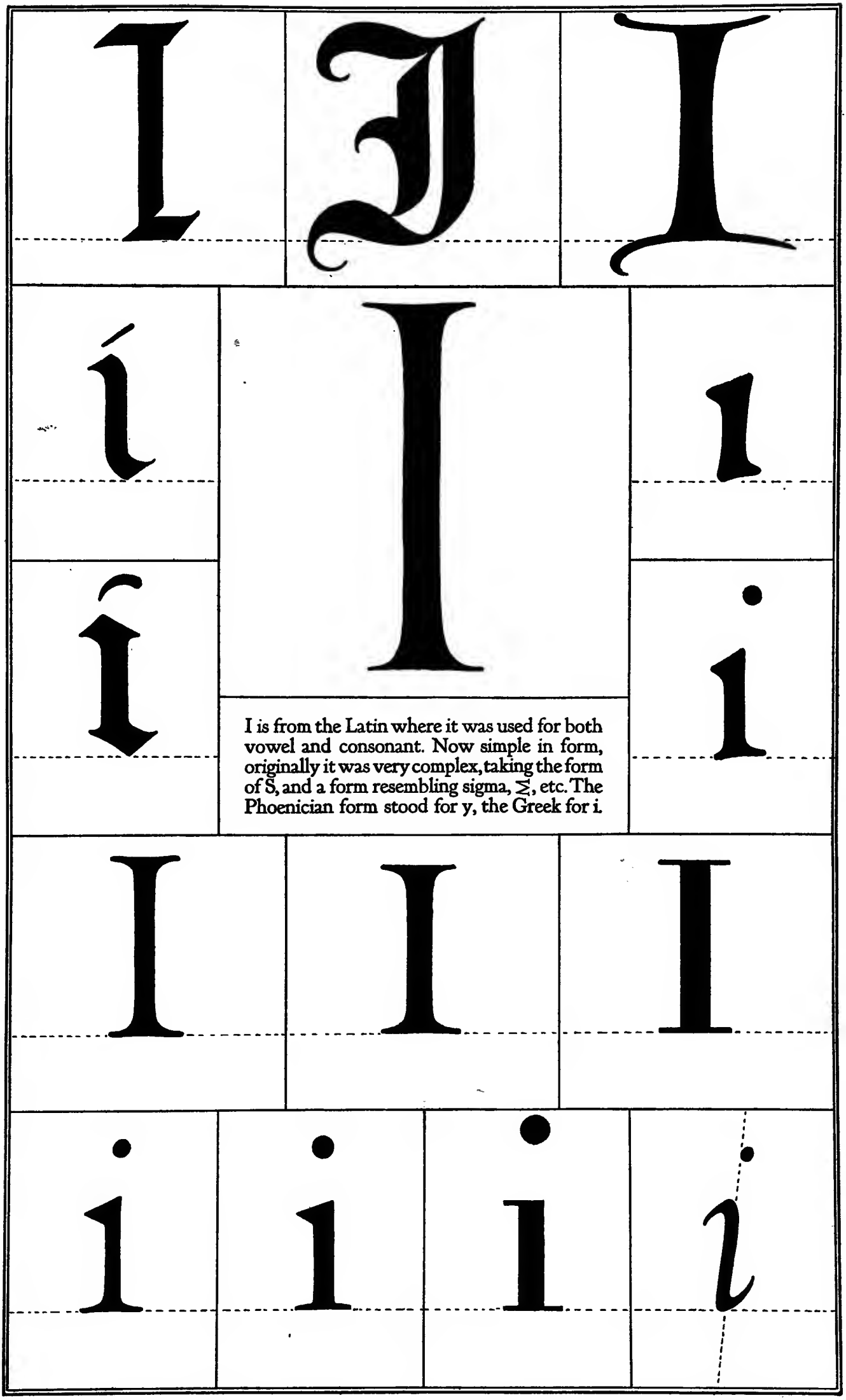


F is from the Greek F which had the value of w. The Greeks had no sound corresponding to the Latin f. The Romans, who adopted the Greek letters with the Greek values, used F to represent the sound of Ph.

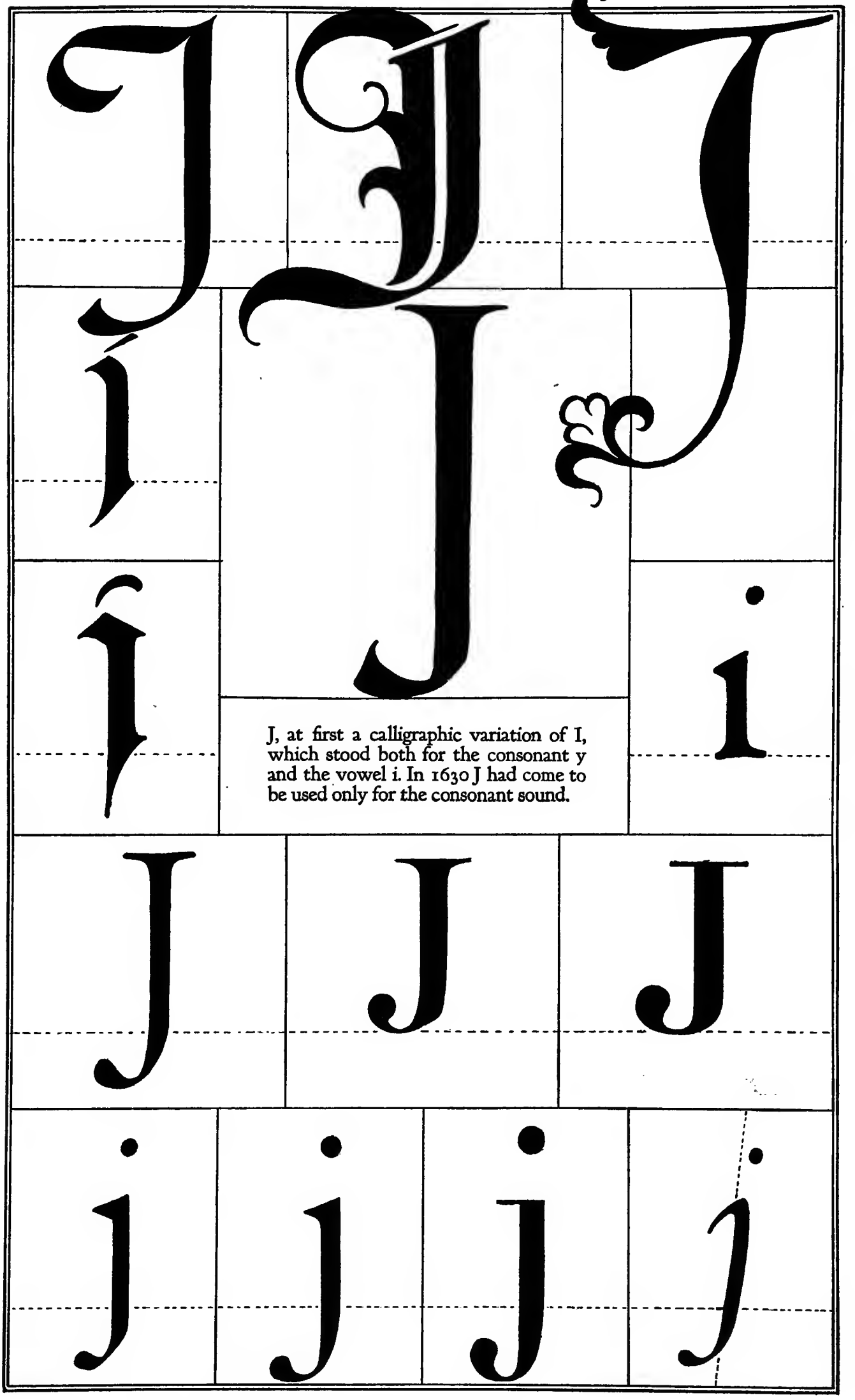

G is an invention of the Romans, who at first used C for the sounds of both k & g; but after the middle of the third cent. B. C., to signify the hard sound of G they converted C into G by adding an upright bar to the lower curve.



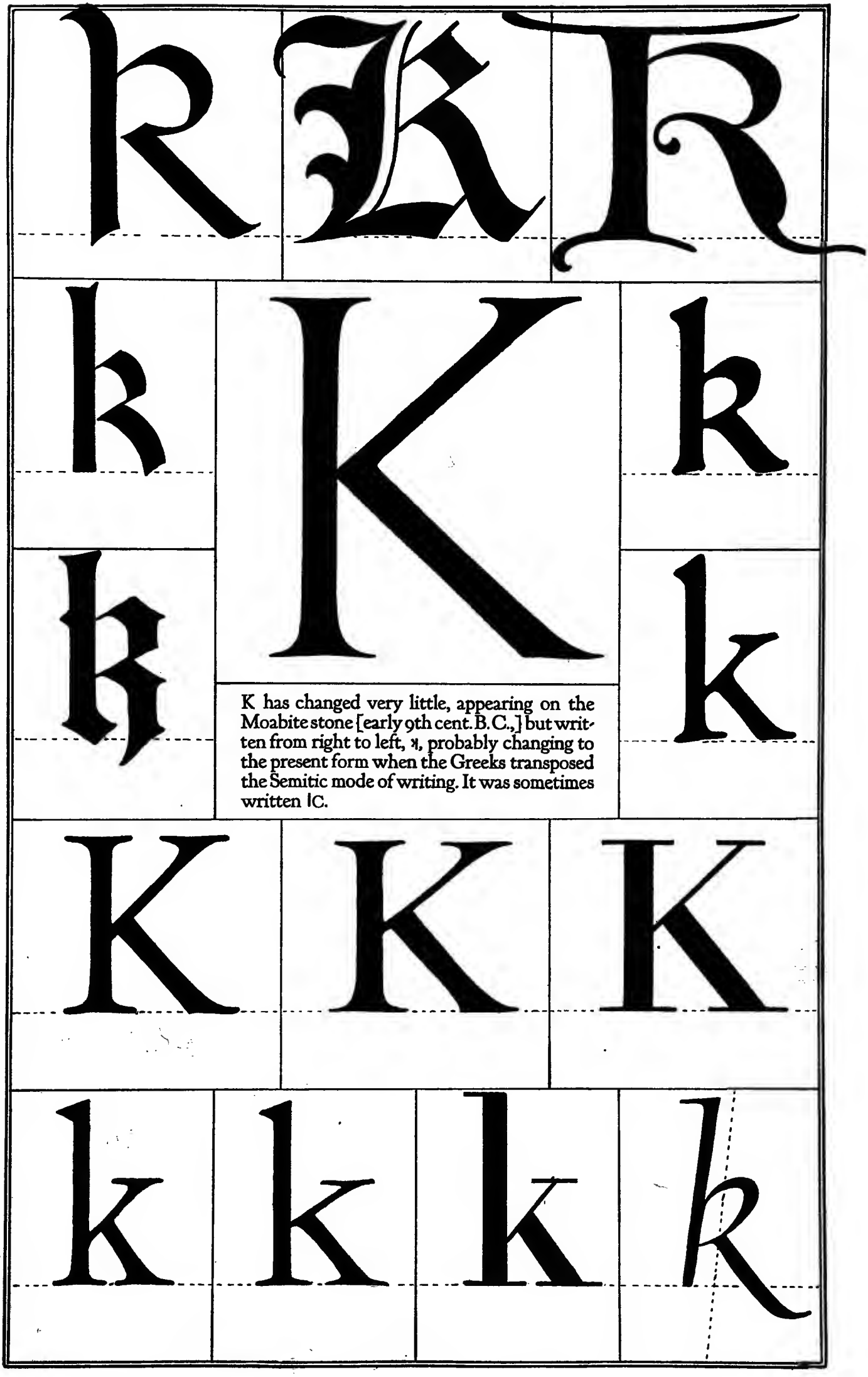
H, as an aspirate, was borrowed from the Phoenicians by the Asiatic Greeks, but they, soon losing the aspirate, used it to represent long E. The western Greeks retained the aspirate longer and the Romans who adopted their alphabet used H as an aspirate only, as we now do.



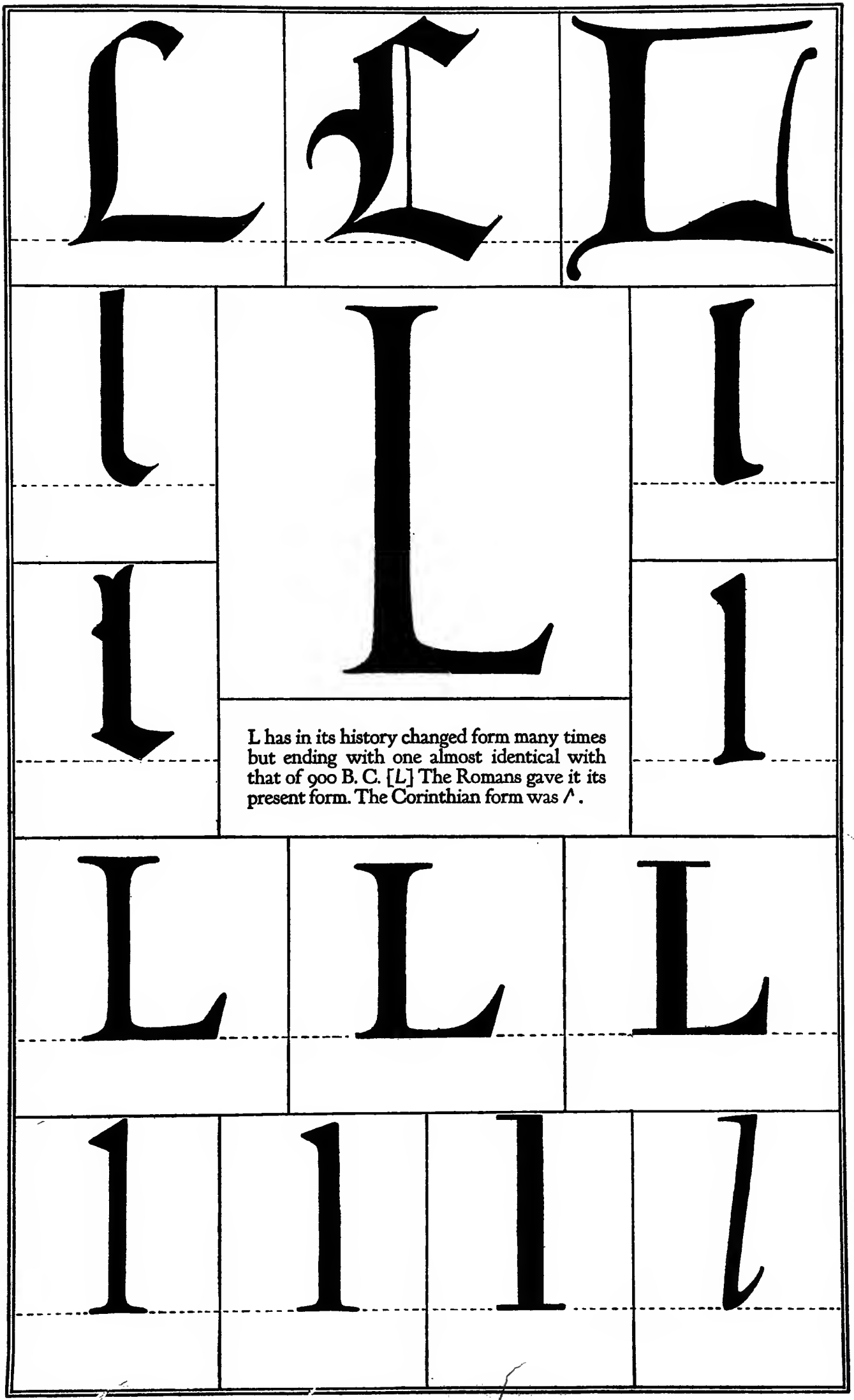
I is from the Latin where it was used for both vowel and consonant. Now simple in form, originally it was very complex, taking the form of S, and a form resembling sigma, Σ, etc. The Phoenician form stood for y, the Greek for i.



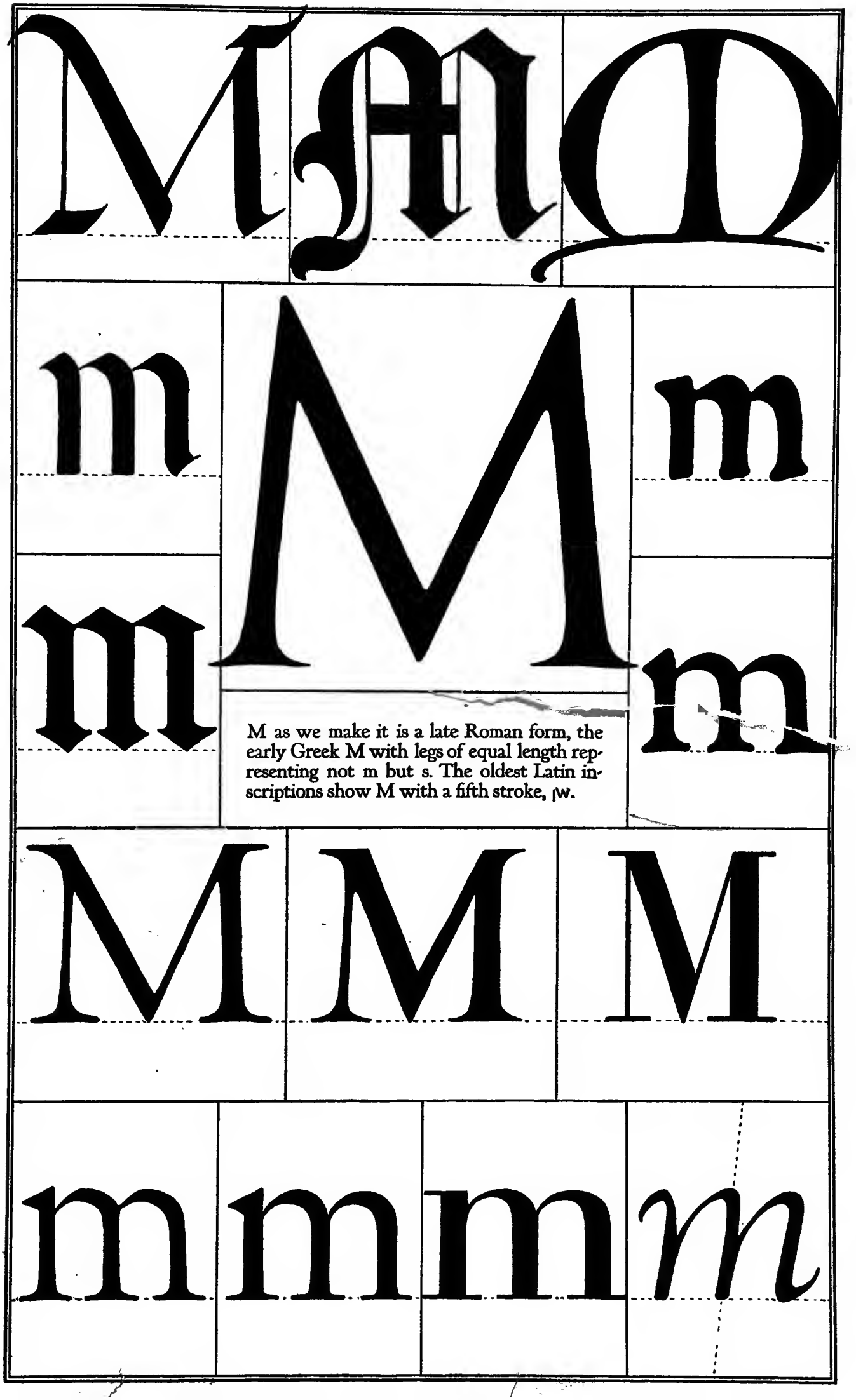
J, at first a calligraphic variation of I, which stood both for the consonant y and the vowel i. In 1630 J had come to be used only for the consonant sound.

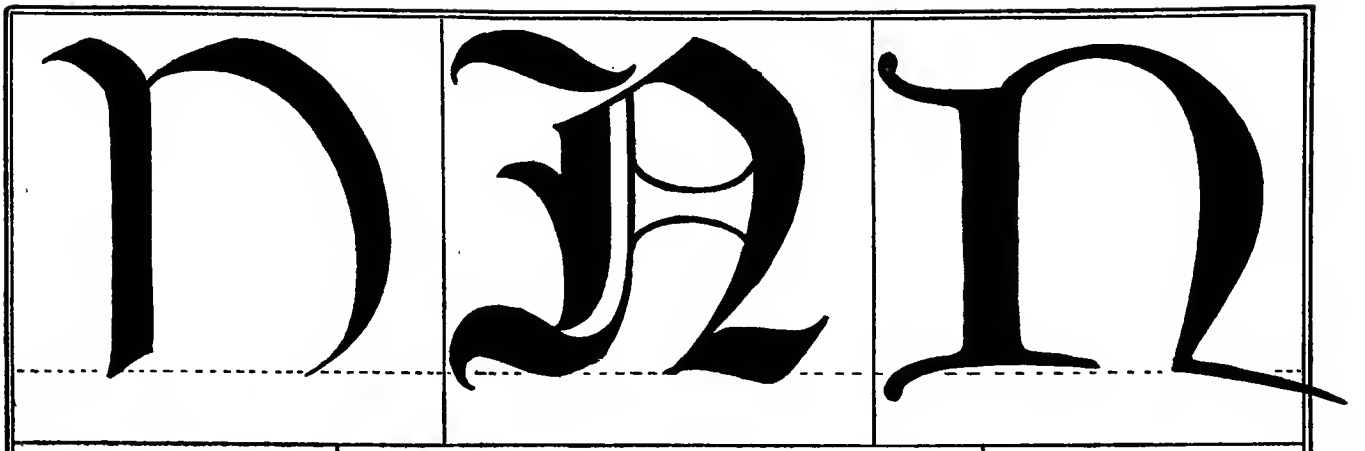


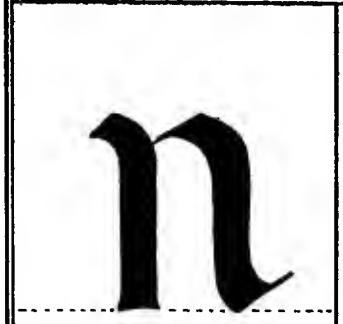
K has changed very little, appearing on the Moabite stone [early 9th cent. B.C.,] but written from right to left, 𐤊, probably changing to the present form when the Greeks transposed the Semitic mode of writing. It was sometimes written IC.

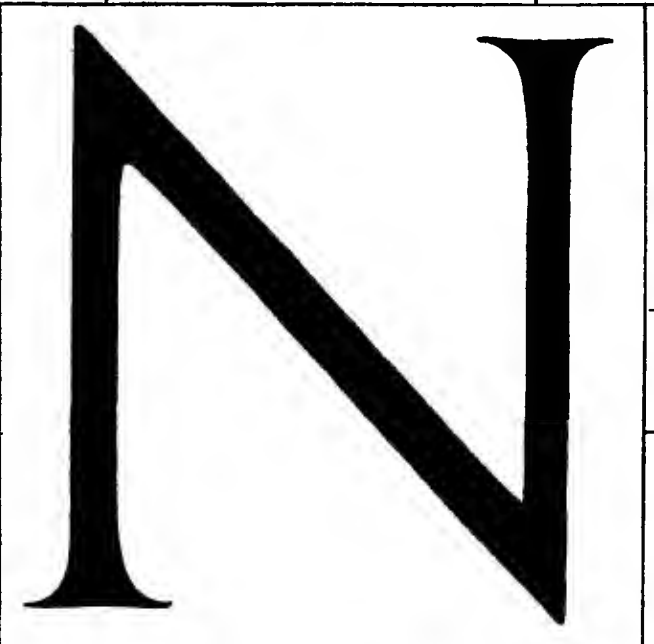


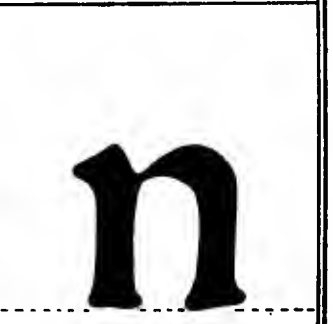
L has in its history changed form many times but ending with one almost identical with that of 900 B. C. [*L*] The Romans gave it its present form. The Corinthian form was ∧.

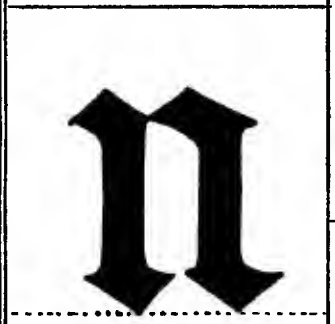

MMD
m M m
m m
M as we make it is a late Roman form, the early Greek M with legs of equal length representing not m but s. The oldest Latin inscriptions show M with a fifth stroke, ↀ.
M M M
m m m m

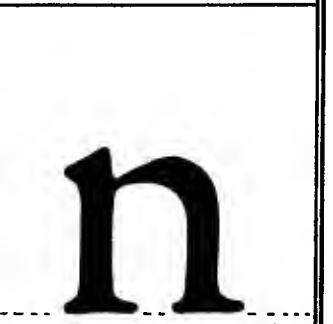




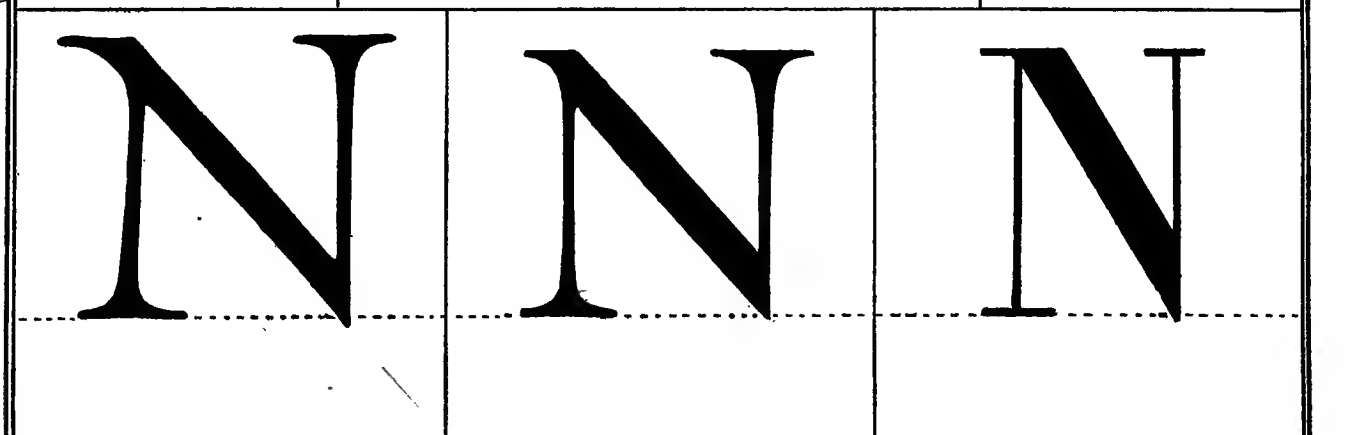


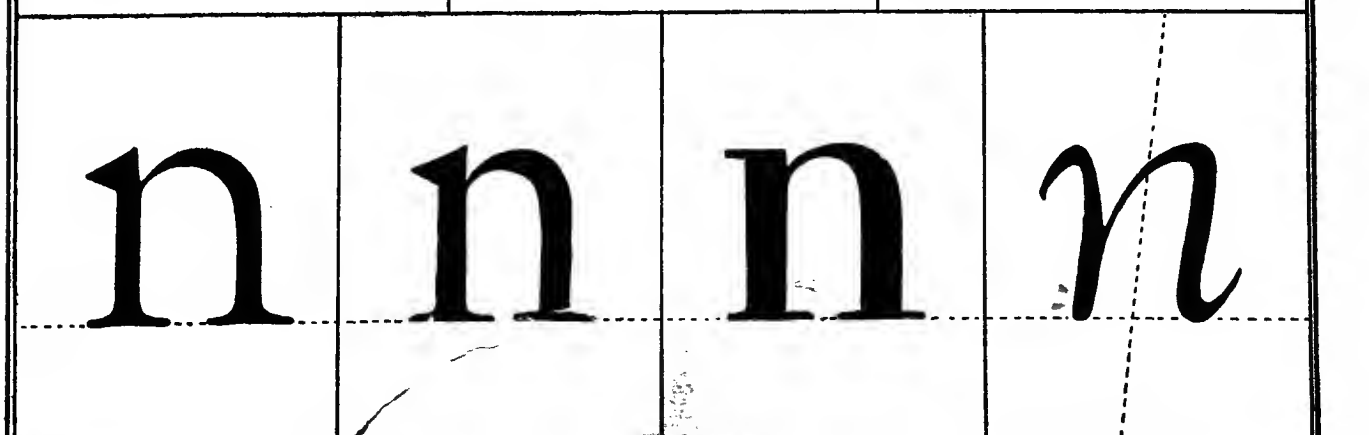


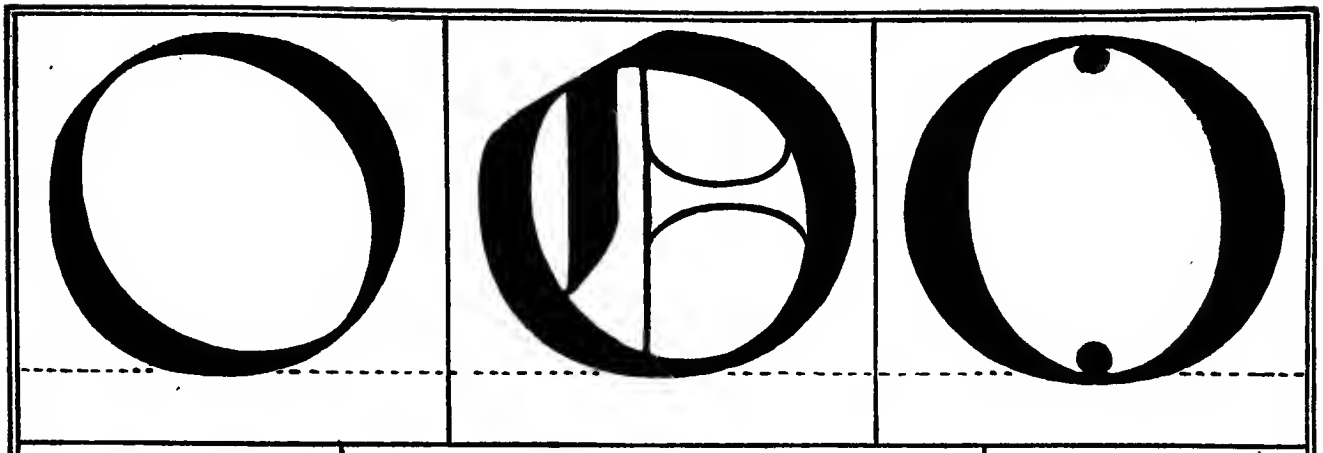


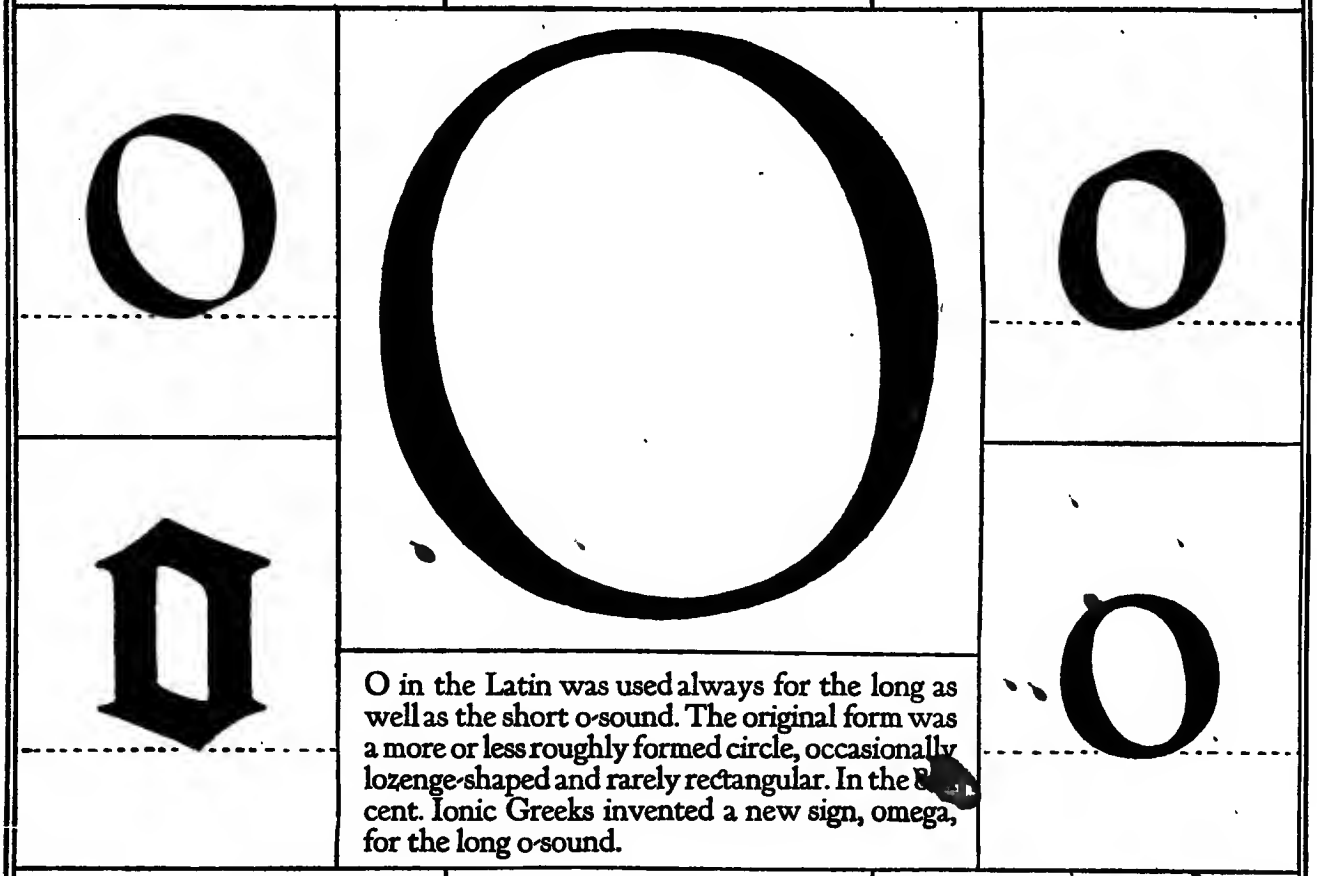


N in its earliest form had its first limb longer than the others, the Greek and Latin tending to make all of equal length. The Trajan inscription shows no serif at joining of first and diagonal strokes.

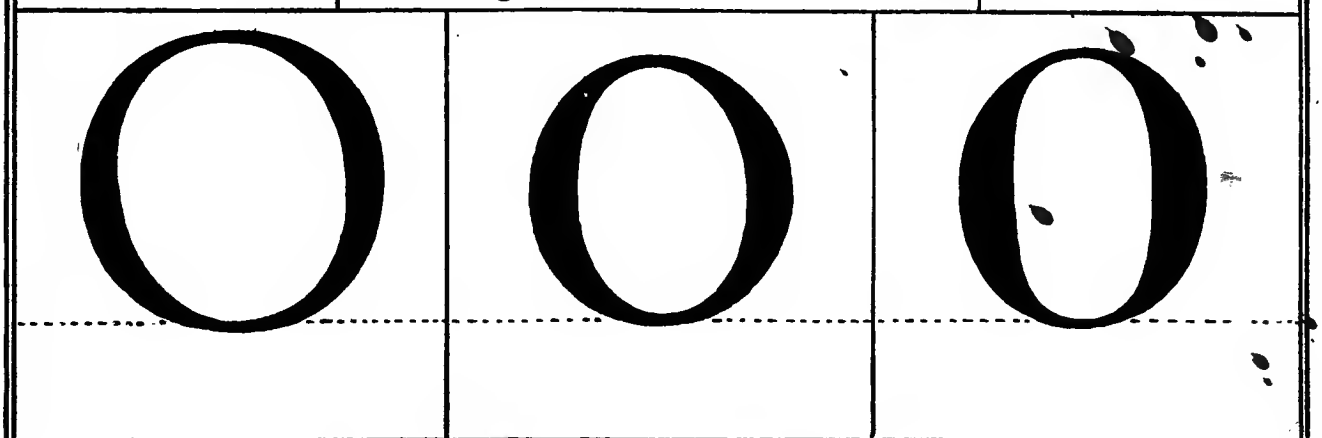


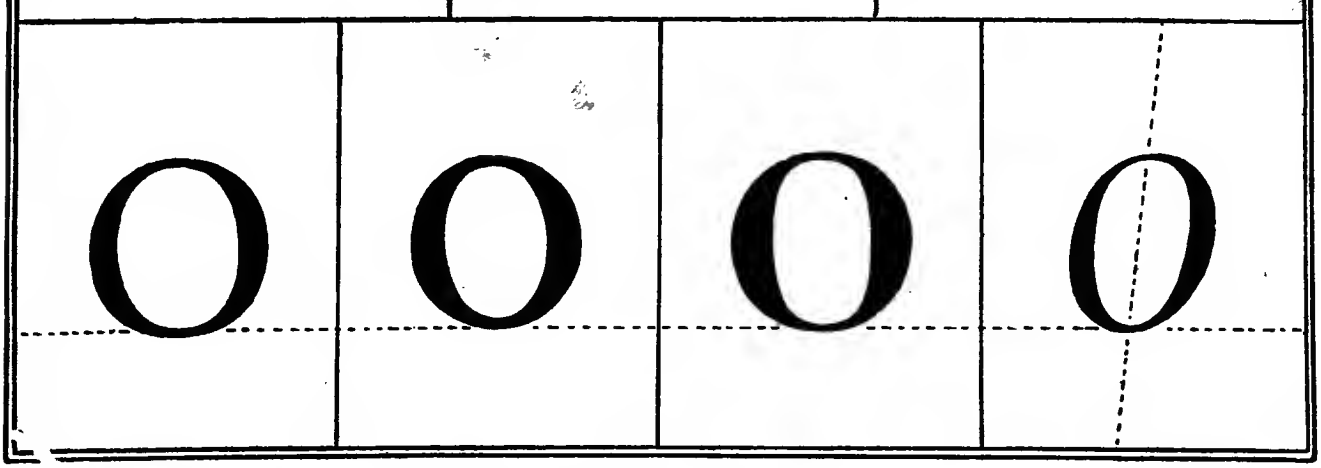


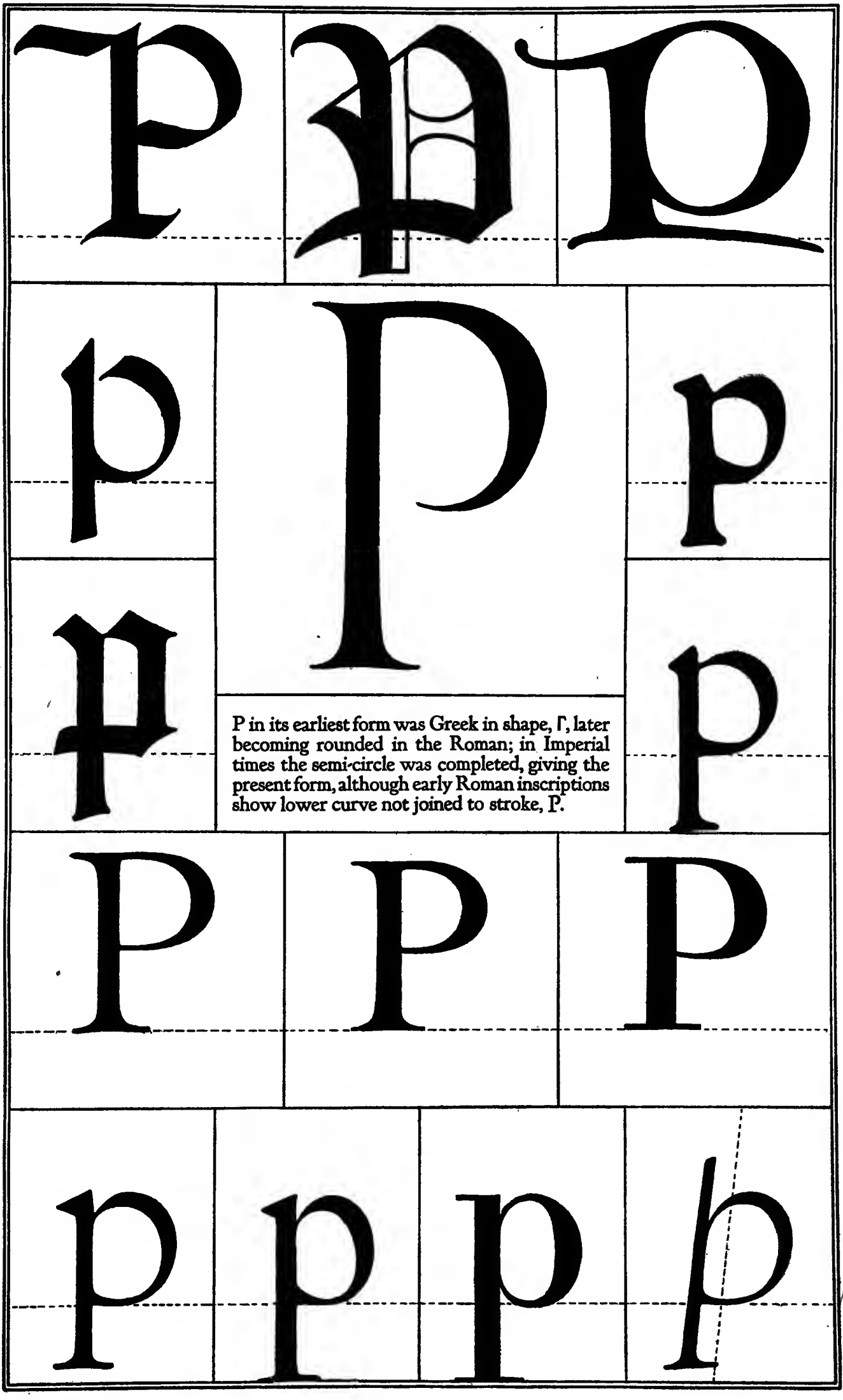




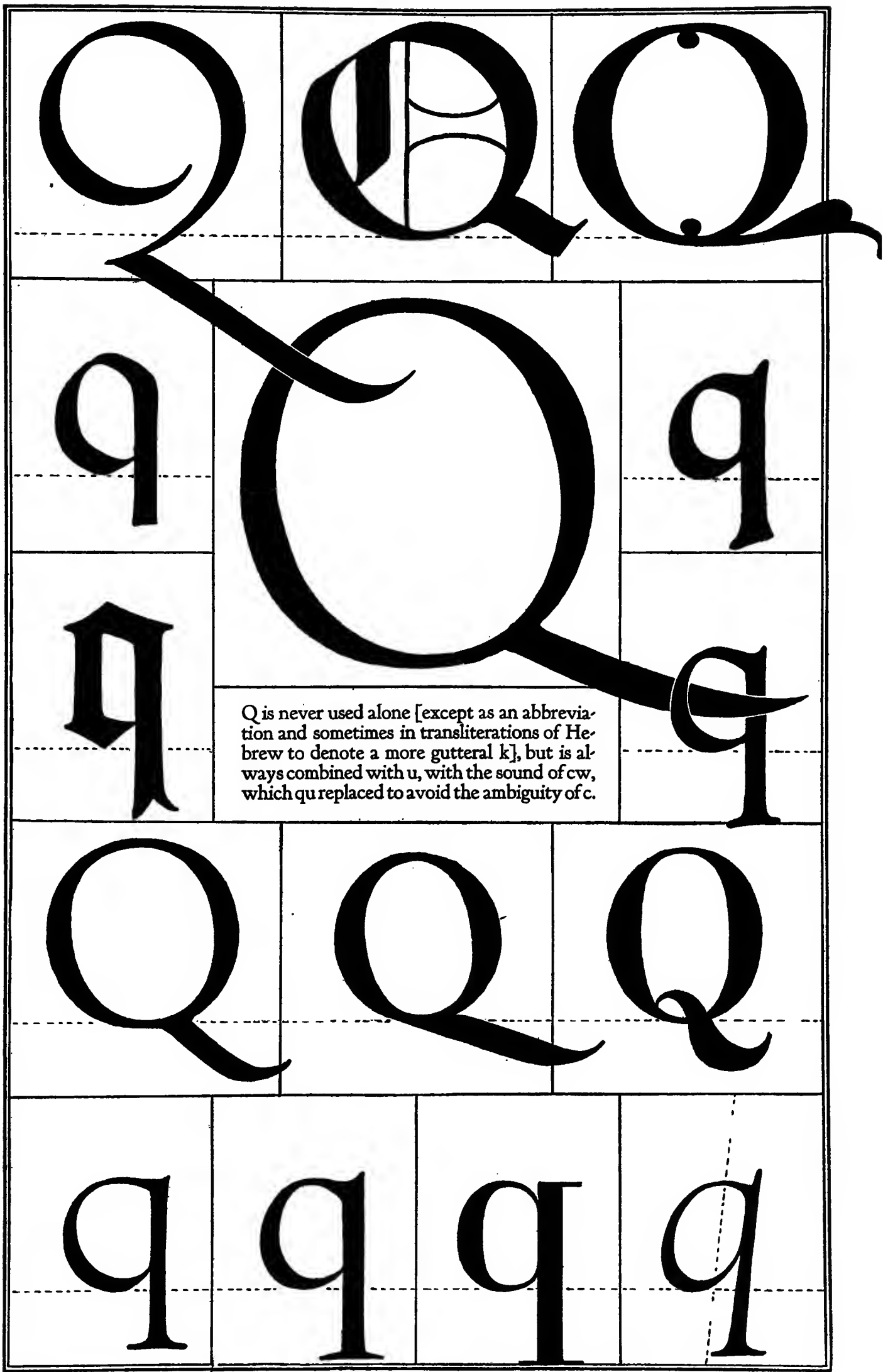
O in the Latin was used always for the long as well as the short o-sound. The original form was a more or less roughly formed circle, occasionally lozenge-shaped and rarely rectangular. In the 8th cent. Ionic Greeks invented a new sign, omega, for the long o-sound.



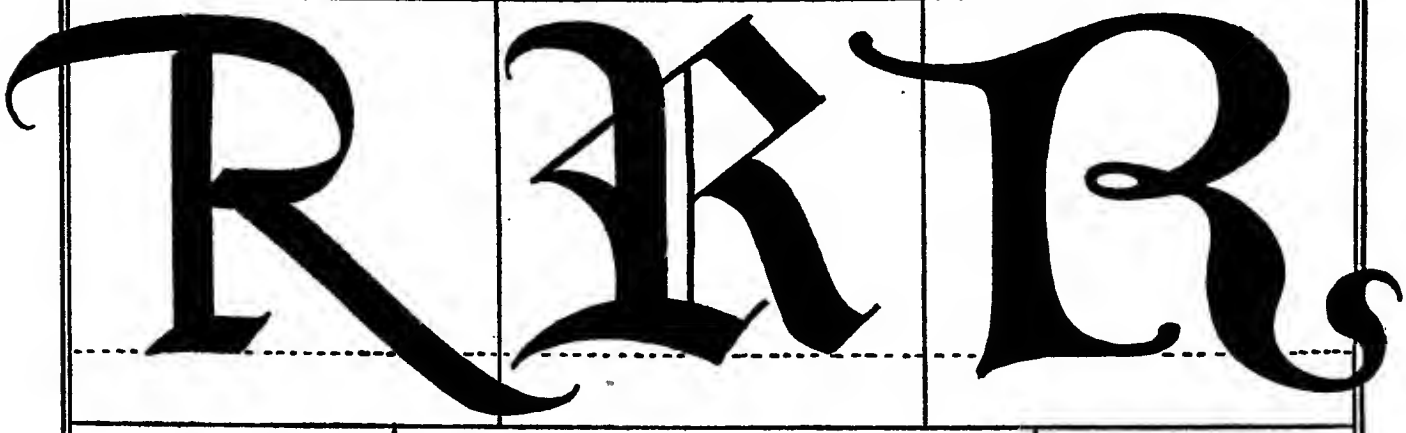


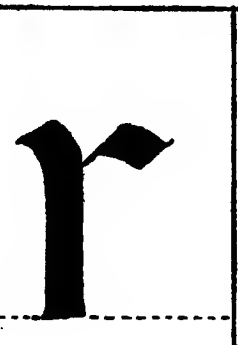


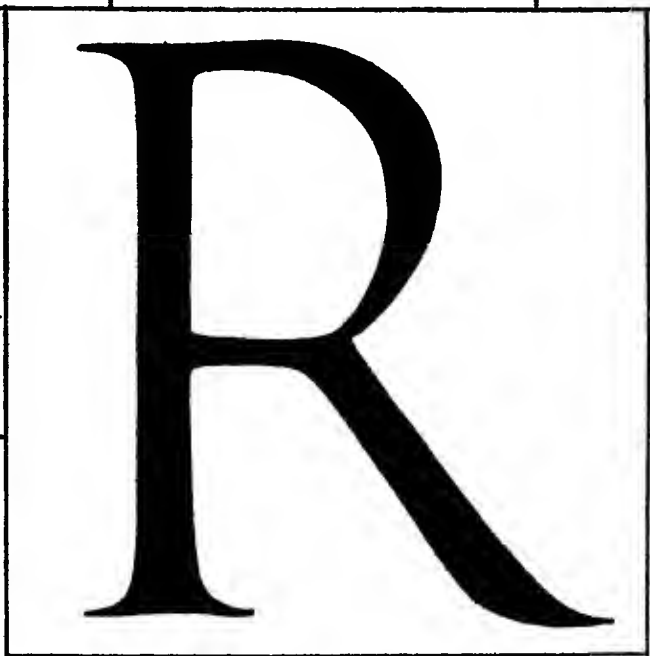
P in its earliest form was Greek in shape, Γ, later becoming rounded in the Roman; in Imperial times the semi-circle was completed, giving the present form, although early Roman inscriptions show lower curve not joined to stroke, P.

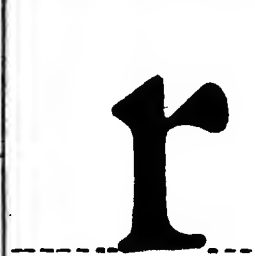


Q is never used alone [except as an abbreviation and sometimes in transliterations of Hebrew to denote a more gutteral k], but is always combined with u, with the sound of cw, which qu replaced to avoid the ambiguity of c.

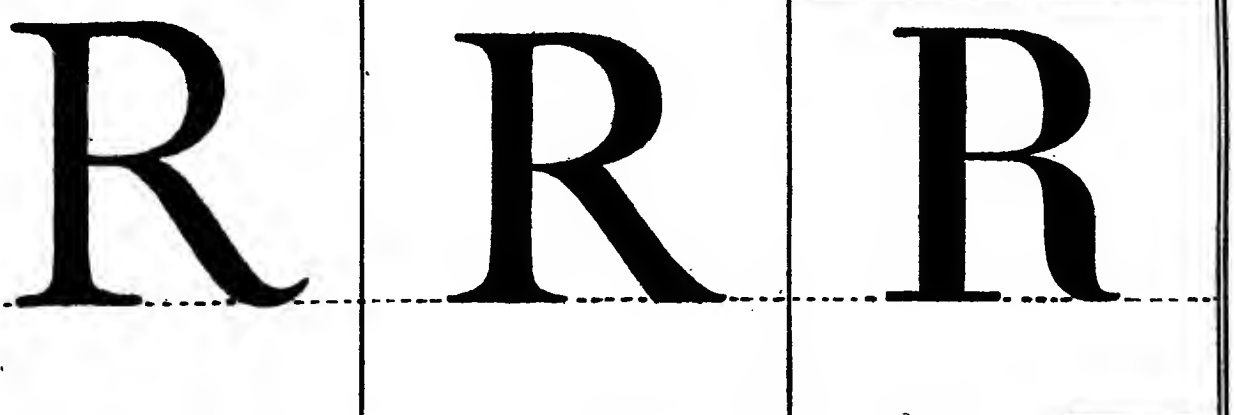


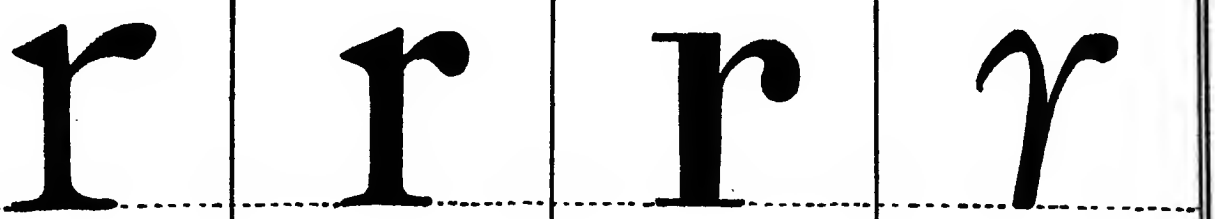


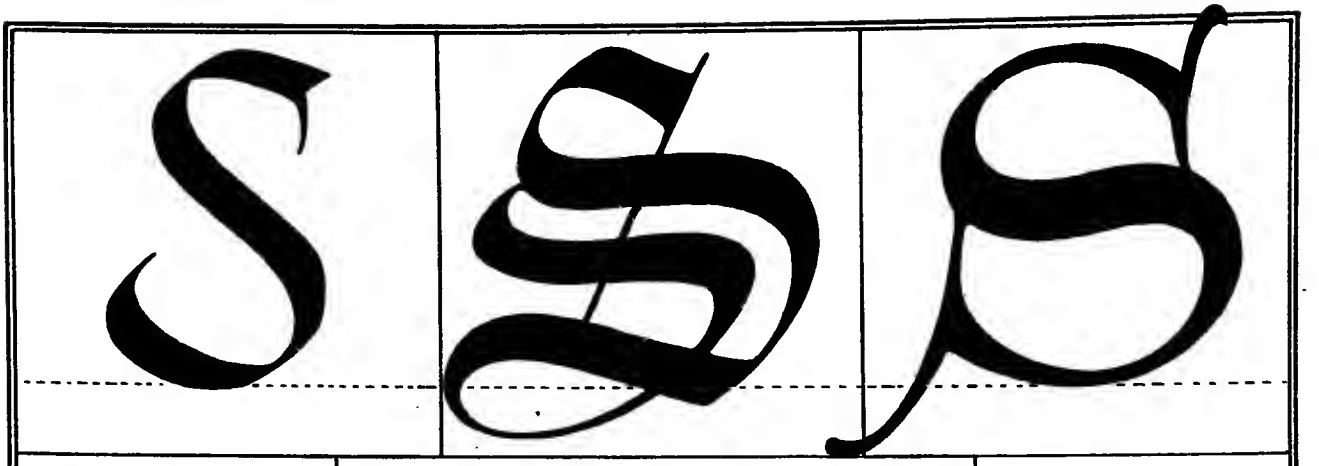


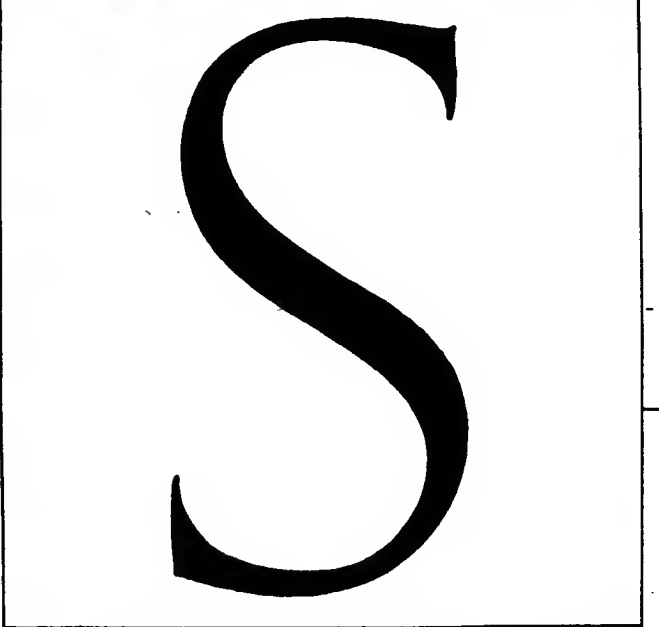


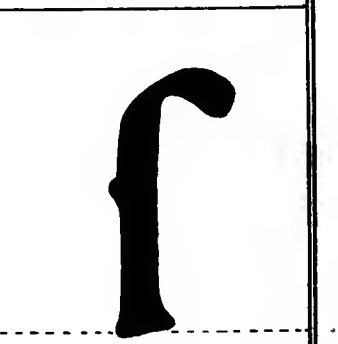
R in the Phoenician was written like the symbol for d [ᴬ], the tail being introduced later, [although not a universal practice,] to avoid confusion with D.



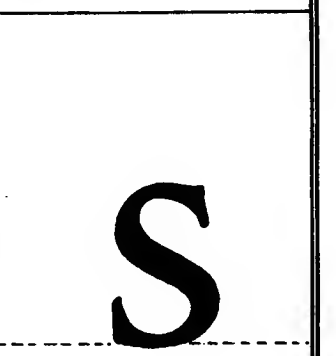


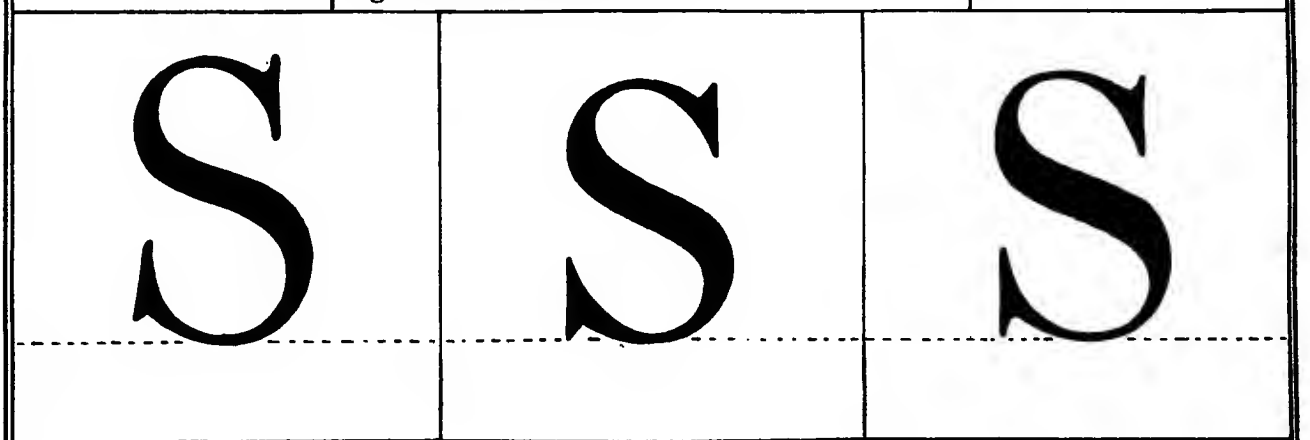


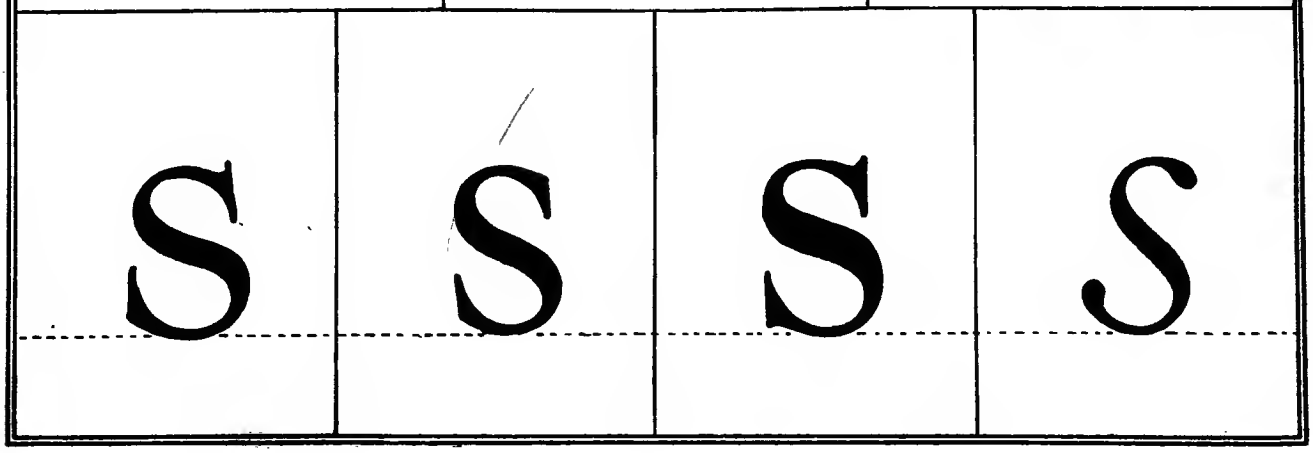


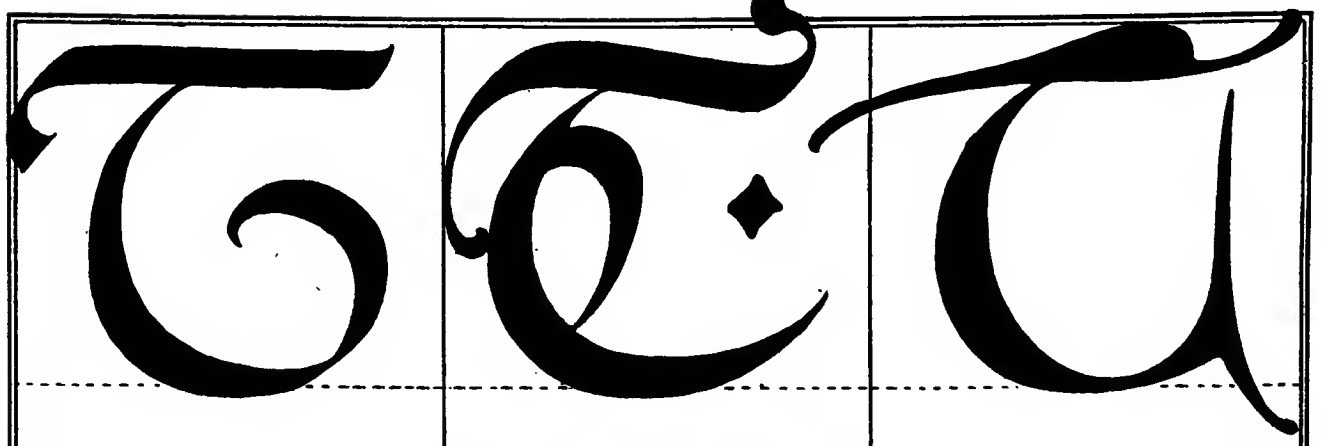


S, one of the four Phoenician sibilants, took a form similar to our W, which when turned at an angle of 90 degrees, became the Greek sigma. The early Greek form was angular, [≤] which later becoming rounded, is the origin of the Roman form.









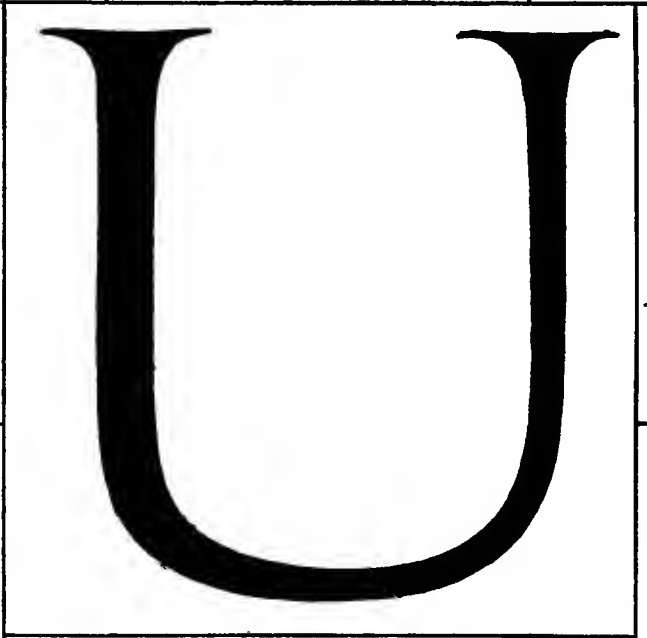
t T t

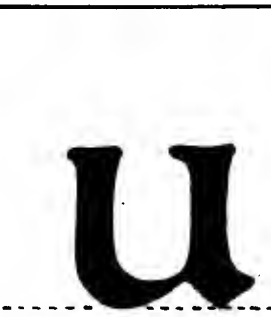
t t

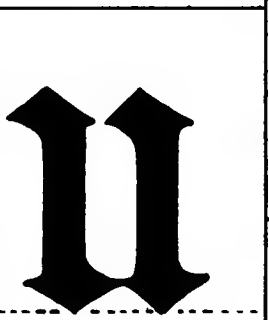
T in its Phoenician form was that of a St. Andrews cross, X, which is the form shown on the Moabite stone. The Greek and Latin forms were practically those of the T we use.

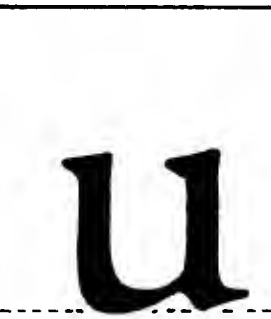
T T T

t t t t

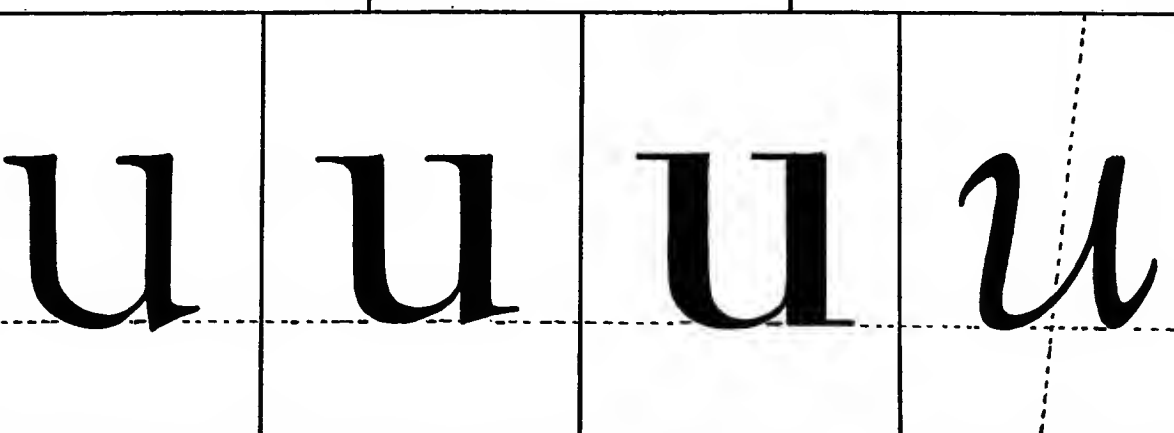


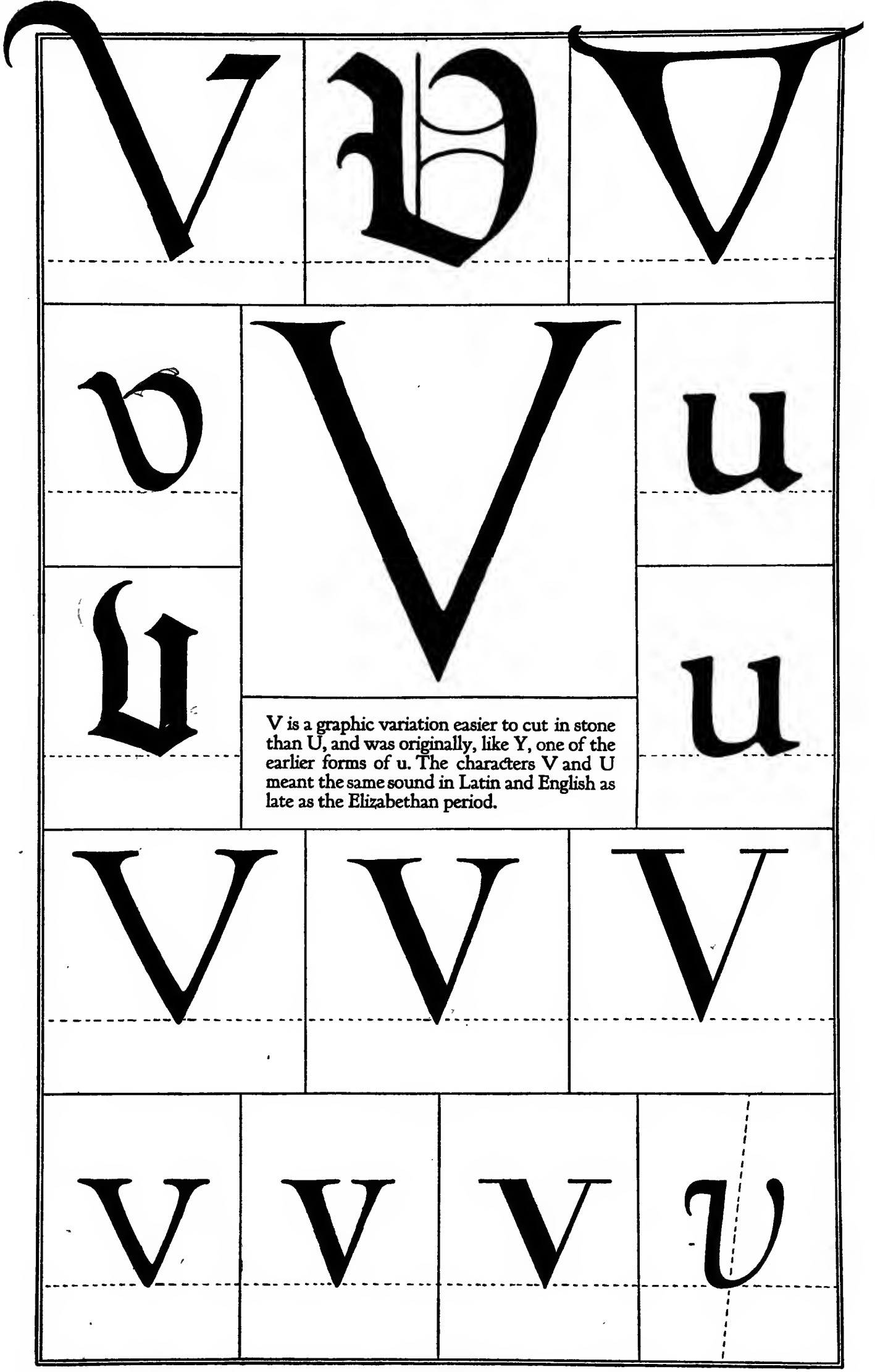




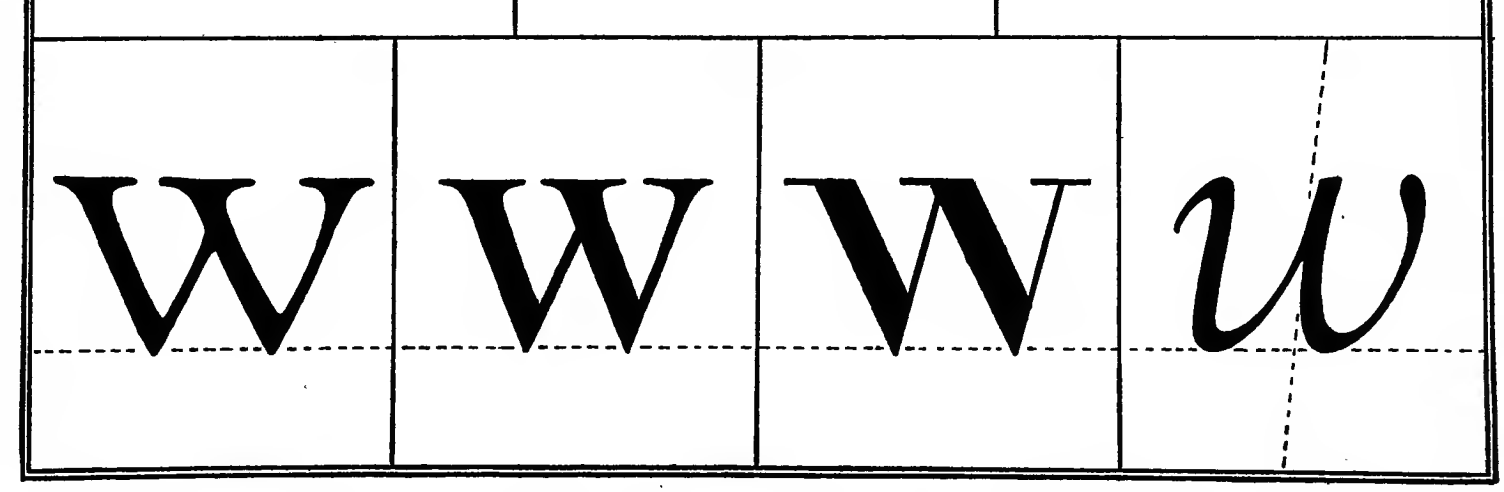


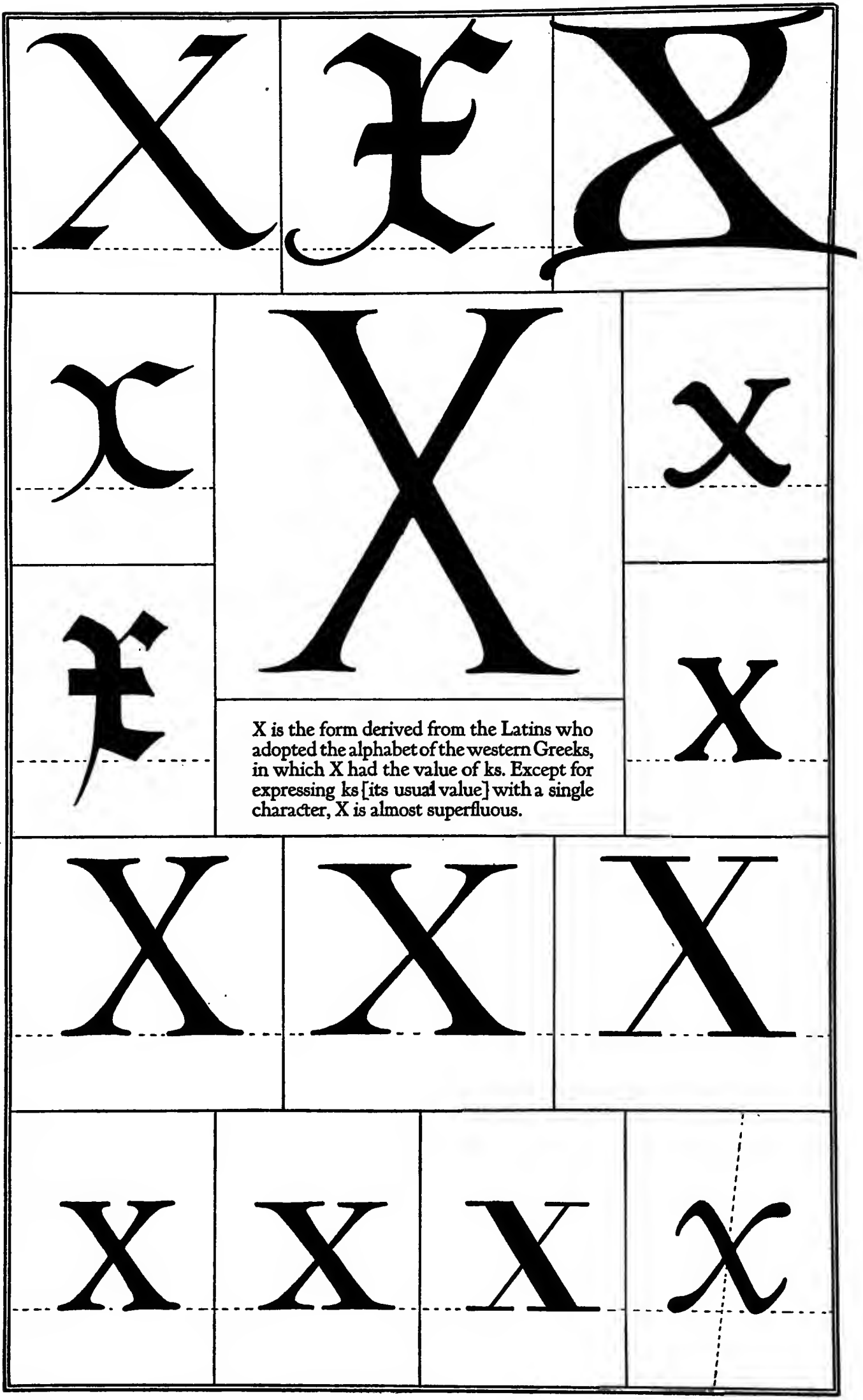
U is a manuscript modification of the Latin inscriptional V. The Greeks introduced symbols for vowels, not then indicated by separate characters, taking the Phoenician F which had the value of W, represented by v, and used it for the vowel U.



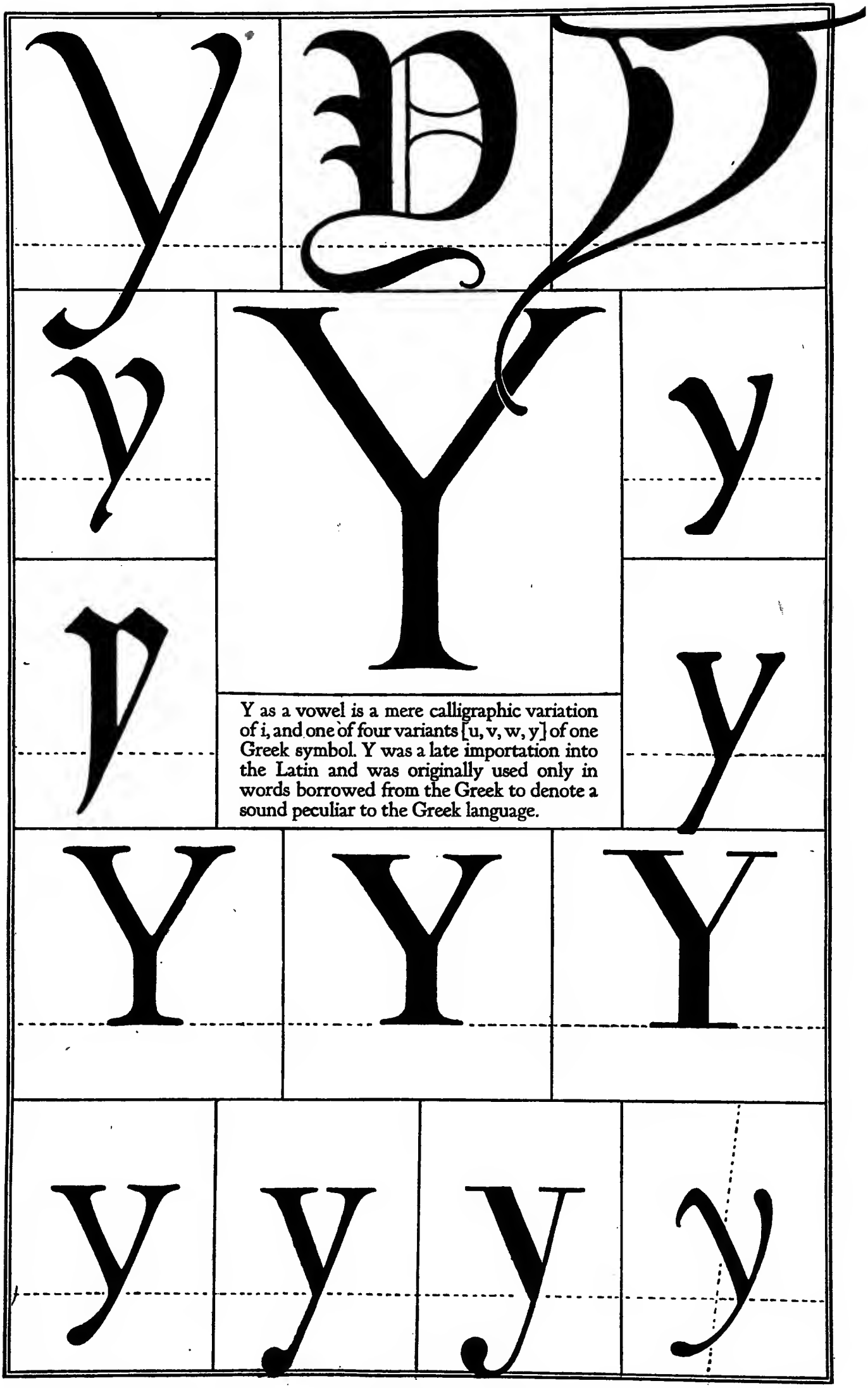

V is a graphic variation easier to cut in stone than U, and was originally, like Y, one of the earlier forms of u. The characters V and U meant the same sound in Latin and English as late as the Elizabethan period.

W is a ligature of VV. In Latin V always had the vowel value of u, and double u [vv] was employed to represent the consonant value. In the 9th century in England, a special Anglo-Saxon character [*p*] was adopted to represent the sound of w, which in 1280 was in turn replaced by w.

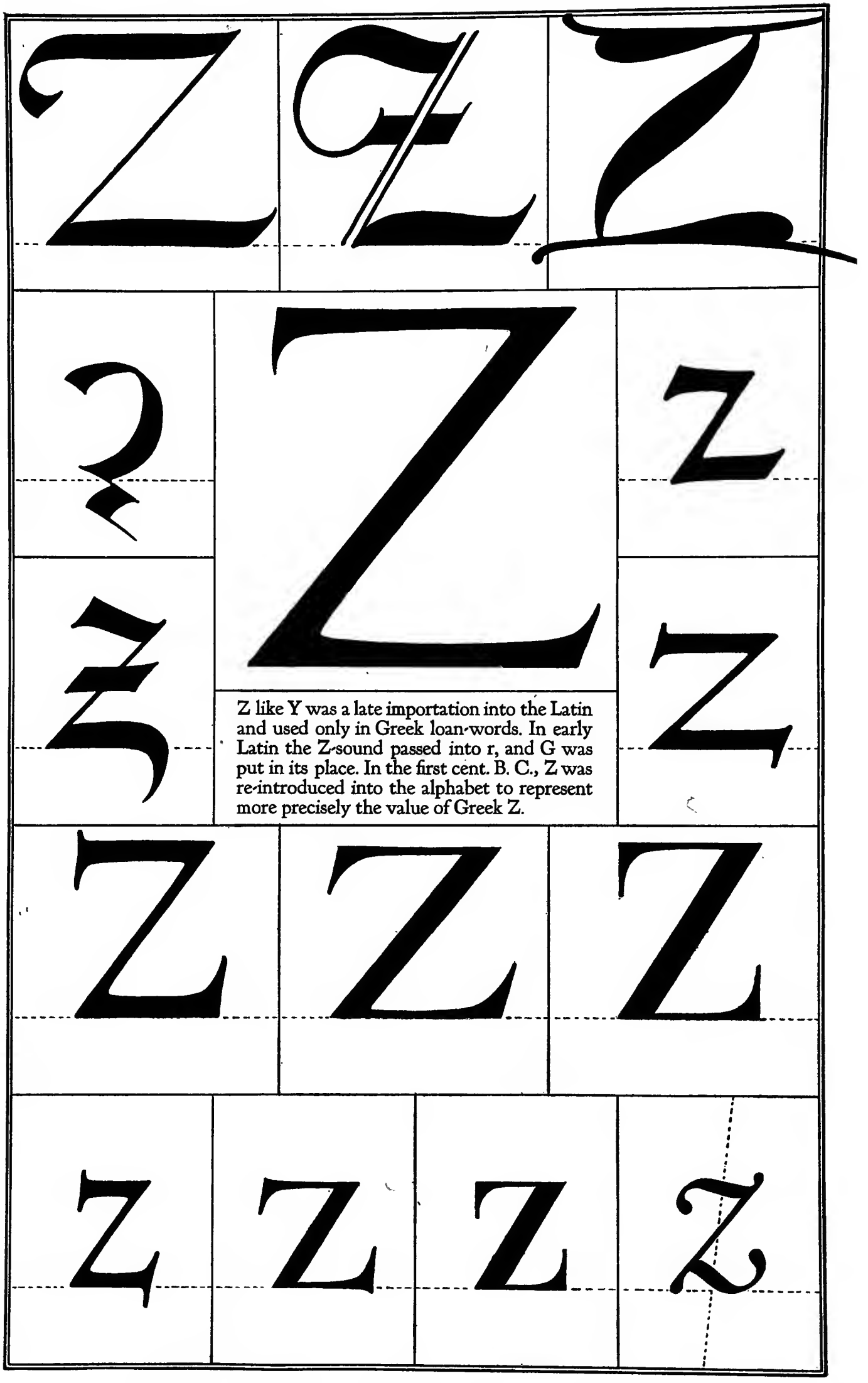




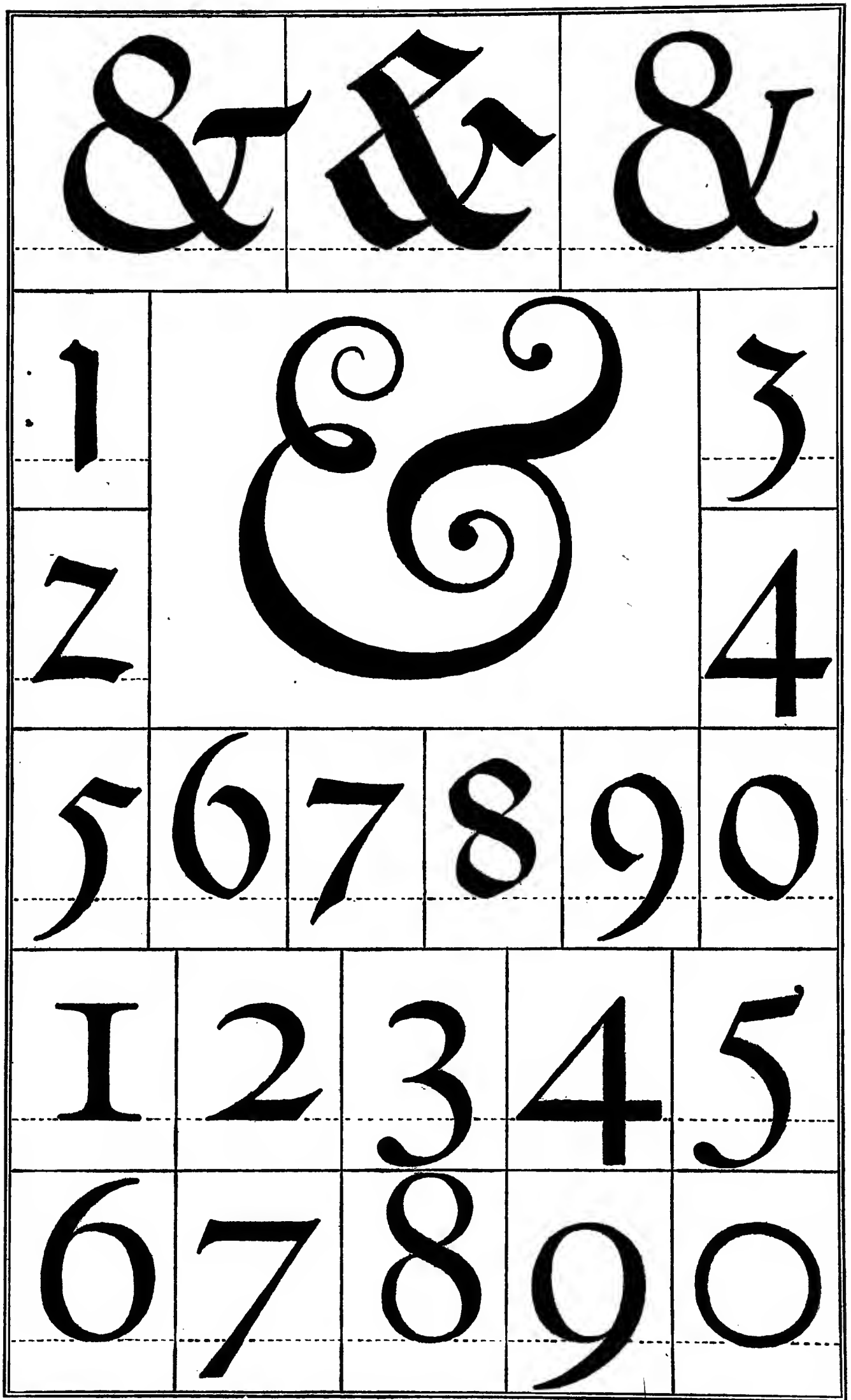
X is the form derived from the Latins who adopted the alphabet of the western Greeks, in which X had the value of ks. Except for expressing ks [its usual value] with a single character, X is almost superfluous.



Y as a vowel is a mere calligraphic variation of i, and one of four variants [u, v, w, y] of one Greek symbol. Y was a late importation into the Latin and was originally used only in words borrowed from the Greek to denote a sound peculiar to the Greek language.



Z like Y was a late importation into the Latin and used only in Greek loan-words. In early Latin the Z-sound passed into r, and G was put in its place. In the first cent. B. C., Z was re-introduced into the alphabet to represent more precisely the value of Greek Z.



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