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The Foundations of Western Civilization

Course Guidebook

Professor Thomas F. X. Noble
University of Notre Dame



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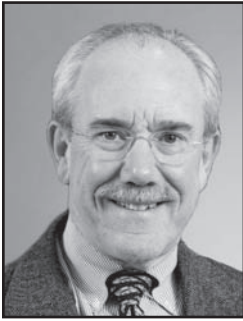
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Professor Noble's research interests are concentrated in the late antique and early medieval periods (A.D. 300–1000). He has worked on religious history, the history of Rome and the papacy, and the age of Charlemagne. His first book, *The Republic of St. Peter* (1984; Italian translation, 1997) explored the origins of papal temporal rule. He has edited two volumes, one a collection of essays on early medieval culture and the other a collection of saints' lives. He is now completing a study of controversies over religious art between 300 and 900. He has also published more than 30 articles and book chapters and around 150 book reviews. In 2002, Houghton-Mifflin published the third edition of his co-authored *Western Civilization: The Continuing Experiment*.

Professor Noble has taught courses in Western civilization for more than 25 years, along with surveys of medieval Europe and church history. He has taught advanced courses in late antiquity and Carolingian history. His

Ph.D. students now teach at colleges and universities across the country. In 1999, Professor Noble was presented with the Alumni Distinguished Professor award at the University of Virginia, that institution's highest award for teaching excellence, and a Harrison award for outstanding undergraduate advising. ■

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The Foundations of Western Civilization

Scope:

In this course of 48 lectures, we will explore the essential contours of the human experience in what has come to be called “Western civilization,” from its humble beginnings in the ancient Near East to the dawn of the modern world; we will range from about 3000 B.C. to A.D. 1600. We will begin by asking just what “Western civilization” actually is, or what it has been thought to be. Throughout the course, we will pause to reflect on where Western civilization finds its primary locus at any given moment. That is, we’ll begin in the ancient Near East and move to Greece, then to Rome; we will explore the shape and impact of large ancient empires, including the Persian, Alexander the Great’s, and Rome’s. When we take our leave of Rome, we’ll move to Western Europe. We’ll watch Europe gradually expand physically and culturally. Finally, we’ll see the globalizations of Western civilization with the Portuguese and Spanish voyages of exploration and discovery.

But Western civilization is much more than human and political geography. We will explore the myriad forms of political and institutional structures by means of which Western peoples have organized themselves and their societies. These include monarchies of several distinct types, as well as participatory republics. Looking at institutions will draw us to inquire about the Western tradition of political discourse. Who should participate in any given society? Why? How have societies resolved the tension between individual self-interest and the common good?

Western civilization has always accorded a prominent place to religion and, by extension, to religious institutions and leaders. We will ask why this should be the case. Although we will pay some attention to the ancient religions of the Mediterranean world, we’ll focus throughout on the three dominant monotheistic traditions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Each of these religious traditions produced sacred books and vast commentaries on those books. Christianity also produced art, architecture, and music that have become living parts of the Western tradition.

If Western culture was at its source primarily religious, it was never exclusively so. This insight will invite us to probe the philosophical tradition of the West as it has asked how people should live, how they should conduct themselves, what they should regard as beautiful, and where they should find their pleasure. We will notice that the West has provided many answers to these fundamental questions. What has been common are the rational tools of debate used to seek answers and the ferocious critical tools elaborated to cross-examine every answer that has been offered.

Western civilization, finally, has bequeathed to us a library-full of literary monuments. We will discuss these from the standpoints of their technical artistry, their esthetic adornment, their political and social messages, their real and imagined audiences, and their long-term impact. We'll ask why we continue to read some works and forget others. With literature, indeed, as with other objects of our investigations, we'll continually ask what *is* more than what *was*; we will seek to understand why some things remain living elements of a civilization. ■

“Western,” “Civilization,” and “Foundations”

Lecture 1

The West has simultaneously had freedom and slavery. Does the West stand for freedom or oppression? Or, does the West stand for liberation from oppression?

For Sherlock Holmes, the first principle of detection was to begin with the obvious. Let’s turn the old sleuth on his head and begin with what is not so obvious. What do we mean when we speak of “the West”? We can define this term culturally: free and participatory political institutions, capitalist economies, religious toleration, rational inquiry, an innovative spirit, and so on. We can define the term geographically: a cultural tradition that began around the Mediterranean Sea, spent centuries as a European preserve, then migrated to all the earth.

Any definition brings controversy: The West has had freedom and slavery; women have historically enjoyed fewer rights and opportunities than men; some have enjoyed vast wealth while others endured deep poverty. Definitions also bring paradox: Western civilization began in what is now Iraq, but it would be hard to make a case now for Iraq as Western. Today, Japan, in the “Far East,” seems “Western”; in the Cold War years, Turkey was Western while Libya, far to the west of Turkey, was Eastern.

“Civilization” is no easier to define. The word itself is built from a Latin root *civ-*. We see this in such Latin words as *civis* (citizen), *civitas* (city), *civilis* (civil, polite, citizen-like). Thus, cities appear crucial to our sense of what civilization is. The Greek vocabulary is similarly revealing. *Polis* (city) gives us our words for politics and political. Cities emerged as a result of what is called the Neolithic Revolution, which occurred about 9,000 to 10,000 years ago in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Essentially, this process involved the rise of agriculture and the domestication of animals. The process was *revolutionary*, but it took a long time to produce cities and, then, civilization.

Extracting food from arid regions surrounding great rivers demanded social cohesion and cooperation. Irrigation was a key motor process. Concentrated

populations grew as more people could be fed more predictably. This led to the specialization of labor, which in turn, resulted in social and political differentiation. Gradually, arts and crafts emerged and, finally, writing. With writing, we cross into the historical period.

These key elements seem to mark all civilizations, but one may also speak of Western civilization or African civilization, or somewhat more narrowly, of Maya or Aztec civilization. The West is unique, but it is not uniquely civilized. Civilization arose about 5,000 years ago. That is a long time. But the earth is about 4 billion years old. People like us—*homo sapiens sapiens*—have been around for some 40,000 years and their ancestors, for about 100,000 years. Human ancestors go back to Africa a million or so years ago. These time spans are humbling!

Finally, then, what do we mean by “foundations”? We mean origins, of course, but not just origins because all things grow and change. Durability is important but paradoxical: The oldest institution in the world today is the papacy, but Catholics are just under 20 percent of the world’s population. The Athenian polis lasted in its highest manifestation less than a century, but its ideals have fired imaginations for 2,500 years. Few places today live by Roman law, yet Rome’s law was the most influential ever conceived.

Foundations seem somehow related to revivals: Think of Greek or classical revival architecture. Think of one of the West’s great movements: the Renaissance (allegedly a revival of classical antiquity). The Protestant Reformers thought they were reviving primitive Christianity, not creating something new. Foundations seem to be related to traditions, but these can be both invented and discarded. Those famous and “ancient” Scottish tartans were mostly invented in the 18th century; I passed a restaurant the other day with a sign that read, “A Tradition Since 1979.”

In the following 47 lectures, we’ll proceed through some 4,500 years. We’ll begin in the ancient Near East and end with a Western European world beginning to globalize. What themes will we follow? Without being clumsy determinists, we’ll talk of ecology, geography, and climate. Both the visible structures and invisible ideologies supporting them will draw continuous and comparative attention.

Although pagan religious beliefs and practices will engage us from time to time, we shall concentrate on the three “Abrahamic” faiths: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. We’ll ask how people lived, how they earned their livings, what their manners and customs were like, how their families were organized, and how they spent whatever leisure time they had. We will explore key philosophical ideas, always with a view to understanding them in specific historical contexts: Why did those people think those things in those times?

We will discuss great works of literature, the ideas they expressed, and the forms in which they were presented. We’ll look into their backgrounds, their intended audiences, and their actual audiences right down to today. And we’ll talk about art and architecture as the most public and visible manifestations of the Western tradition. But alongside these concrete issues, we’ll repeatedly tease out perspectives on celebrity versus distinction; values versus virtues; changing understandings of the “good, the true, and the beautiful”; the respective roles of faith and reason; the competing claims of the individual and the community.

We will end around A.D. 1600, when many of the major features of modernity have come into view and the essential traditions of Western civilization have attained maturity. Two great backward-looking movements—the Renaissance and the Reformation—anchored tradition firmly into the Western worldview. “Christendom” was durably divided into Catholic and Protestant communities and cultures. Interlocking relationships of great-power diplomacy foreshadowed the modern state system. The Scientific Revolution altered the old balance of “science” and “wisdom.” ■

So “West” is a little messy. It’s not absolutely easy to define; it’s not so self-evident—“obvious,” as [Sherlock] Holmes would’ve said—what the West is.

Suggested Reading

Braudel, *History of Civilizations*.

Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*.

Fagan, *Journey from Eden*.

Mellaart, *Neolithic of the Near East*.

Questions to Consider

1. If we were playing a free-association game, what would come most readily to your mind when you heard the words “Western” and “civilization”? (Keep this in mind. I will repeat the question at the end of the course!)
2. How do you think about such large-scale notions as change, continuity, revolution, evolution, and tradition?

History Begins at Sumer

Lecture 2

These kings were thought to have been put in place by the gods to rule with the special favor of the gods, to be accorded victory (for example, in battle) by the gods, to be accorded prosperity by the gods.

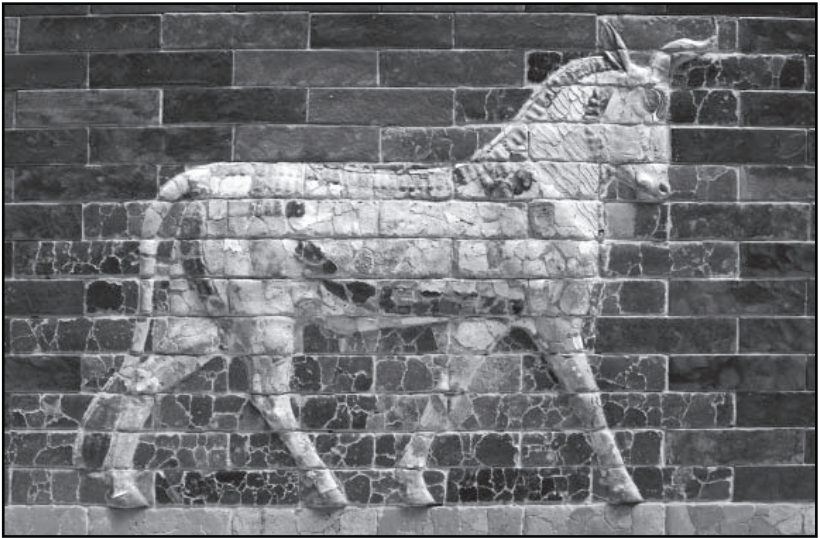
Although Mesopotamia is all the land between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, the earliest traces of civilization appeared in Sumer, in what is now southern Iraq, and possibly, at Tell Hamoukar, in what is now northeastern Syria.

The Uruk period (3800–3200 B.C.) was tremendously creative, with the invention of the wheel and plow; the planting of the first orchards (of dates, figs, and olives); and the development of metal casting. Perhaps most significant was writing: cuneiform.

People built cities with walls—circuits up to five miles—and buildings of mud brick. The most impressive early buildings were temples: *ziggurats*. Temple priesthoods dominated society.

In the “Dynastic period” (2800–2350 B.C.), fierce competition between cities, and perhaps inside them, too, led to the emergence of local strongmen—*lugals*—who evolved into kings. Kings claimed to be the representatives of the gods and to rule by the favor of the gods. This process introduced *theocratic kingship*. As warfare became more important, large landowners formed a military aristocracy.

Mesopotamia is a broad, open plain surrounded by deserts and, beyond the deserts, by mountains. The region has no natural frontiers to ward off migrants or conquerors. Areas beyond Mesopotamia were inhabited by people of lower cultural development who coveted the comparative riches and security of Mesopotamia. After about 2350 B.C., Sumer was several times overrun by outsiders.



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Babylonian bull relief sculpture from the Ishtar Gate.

Sargon (2371–2316) conquered Sumer from Akkad to the north, then expanded his holdings, as did his son after him, to the east and west. This first imperial state demanded little of its subjects and, ironically, was itself conquered by Sumerian culture. After Akkadian rule eventually weakened, there was a period of relative independence for Sumerian cities, followed by Babylonian conquest. Hammurabi (1792—1750) was the most famous and powerful of the Babylonians (or Amorites). His law code was influential for centuries. Like the Akkadians before them, the Babylonians adopted and spread Sumerian culture.

In religion, people were *polytheists* and *syncretistic*. Sky gods were generally thought of as male and related to power; earth gods were thought of as female and related to fertility. Individual forces of nature were also invested with divine power: *Animism* is a habit of mind that sees nothing as wholly lifeless. Gods and goddesses differed from humans in supernatural powers and immortality. They were capricious. Religion sought to propitiate them. Religion was pessimistic and fatalistic; it had no ethical dimension at all. This outlook was perhaps related to the geography and politics of the region.

Religion served as an impressive attempt to begin to systematize knowledge about the natural world.

Law was issued by councils of notables in conjunction with priests and kings. Law was not abstract and philosophical. Publishing laws in public places established the important principles that all are subject to the law; that the law belongs to all; that law rules, not men.

Religion was important and the priestly class was very important.

That seems pretty clear. But there are those walls.

In literature, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* was a remarkable achievement. The *Epic* is a Sumerian work dating to around 2500 B.C. that survives in later versions dating to around 800 B.C. (A tribute to its dissemination!) An “epic” is a work on a grand scale dealing with gods and heroes; it is serious in tone, elevated in language, and universalizing in outlook. *Gilgamesh* is a tale of

the adventures and friendship of King Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu. It contains a mythical account of the civilizing process and a poignant reflection on mortality as the irreducible element in the human condition. There were other works, too, for example, short poems by Enkheduana, Sargon’s daughter and the world’s first known woman writer.

Sciences probably derived from watching the heavens, measuring fields, and regulating irrigation hydraulics. Sumerians developed the decimal and sexadecimal systems (hence, we still have 60 seconds in a minute, 60 minutes in an hour, and so on). Sumerians understood place value in numbers, that is, the difference between 35 and 53. They anticipated Greek developments in mathematics.

Sumerian culture gradually spread over much of western Asia and directly or indirectly influenced all the peoples who emerged within or who conquered those lands, including the later empire-building Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, and Turks. Specific Sumerian practices and beliefs were adopted and adapted for millennia. ■

Suggested Reading

Bottéro, *Ancestor of the West*.

Crawford, *The Sumerians*.

The Epic of Gilgamesh.

Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*.

Lerner, *Creation of Patriarchy*.

Snell, *Life in the Ancient Near East*.

Questions to Consider

1. What specific examples of the civilizing process that we learned about in the first lecture have we encountered in this one?
2. What are some of the ways in which Mesopotamia's geography influenced the historical development of the region?

Egypt—The Gift of the Nile

Lecture 3

Quite simply, the first thing you need to know about Egypt: no Nile, no Egypt. The Nile is a very long, very powerful, very important river.

The Greek writer Herodotus called Egypt “the Gift of the Nile,” and so it was. The Nile is a long, powerful river running in a northerly direction some 750 miles from the last cataract to the Mediterranean. It floods—annually and predictably—an area five to 15 miles wide. About five percent of Egypt is habitable. Without the Nile, there would be only barren desert. From as early as 5000 B.C., small communities along the Nile began to drain marshes, irrigate, and plant regular crops (mainly cereal grains).

Slowly, these communities coalesced into *nomes* (the word is Greek; we do not know what word the Egyptians used) under *nomarchs*. Then the *nomes* of the south—“Upper Egypt” because it is nearer the source of the Nile—and the north—“Lower Egypt,” nearer the mouth of the Nile—formed as larger entities. It seems that a need to control irrigation led to political organization on a larger scale. Much about this period is shrouded in legend, but about 3100 B.C., Menes united Upper and Lower Egypt. This unification ushered in the historical period.

Historians divide Egypt’s historical period into 30-some dynasties, or families, of rulers. The dynasties are grouped into the Old, Middle,



The Nile River valley as seen from space.

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and New Kingdoms, with intermediate periods in between. The Old Kingdom (2695–2160 B.C.) was an era of great vitality, security, and prosperity. Egypt was isolated and untroubled by invaders.

A distinctive Egyptian kingship evolved. The word *pharaoh* comes from *per aa*, meaning the “Great House.” Pharaoh was one of the gods and guaranteed Egypt’s prosperity and security. In turn, Egypt’s prosperity and security legitimized the pharaoh. The Great Pyramids at Gizeh symbolize the Old Kingdom.



King Akhenaten of the 18th dynasty of ancient Egypt.

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The Middle Kingdom (2025–1786 B.C.) was a period of more widely dispersed rule. Pharaohs shared power with local notables. This period was important in the elaboration of Egyptian religion because the emphasis moved beyond the royal dynasty to nobles and even ordinary people.

Around 1700 B.C., the Hyksos, Semitic-speaking peoples from Palestine, conquered Egypt. Hatred for foreign rule eventually led a dynasty from Upper Egypt to drive out the Hyksos and inaugurate the New Kingdom (1550–1075 B.C.). Fired by ambition and a desire to ward off future conquest, the Egyptians now built an empire that extended into Mesopotamia and along the shore of the eastern Mediterranean. This was a brilliant and cosmopolitan period.

After about 1400 B.C., the Egyptians confronted the Hittites, a powerful and expanding people from Anatolia and the first Indo-European speakers

in recorded history. In 1274, at Qadesh in northern Syria, the Egyptians and Hittites fought a battle that left them both crippled and declining.

Everything starts with the pharaoh in a two-class society (the pharaoh and everybody else). Egypt first displayed an abstract sense of rule—the separation of ruler and office and the complete removal of the ruler from the ordinary realm of humans.

Religion grew more complicated over time. The peace and prosperity of the Old Kingdom led to a happy, optimistic outlook. The concept of the afterlife—as a continuation of this life, not something better!—was reserved mainly to the pharaoh, his family, and perhaps a few key advisers. The Middle Kingdom saw a profusion of temples and new cults. Herodotus called the Egyptian the “most religious of all people.” This might have been a reemergence of predynastic religion or a response to unsettled conditions. At this time, the afterlife seems to have been considered available to all.

The concept of *Ma'at* became crucial, that is, the idea of truth, justice, balance, and order. The myth of Osiris revealing the Middle Kingdom was popular.

As later people, Greeks and then Romans, admired the Egyptians; they were very interested in preserving these Egyptian preservations' memory.

The New Kingdom saw the remarkable religious experiment of Akhenaton. He abandoned traditional worship to promote the cult of Aton (henotheism or monolatry), but this died with him.

Scientific and artisanal advances were striking. The use of papyrus facilitated writing and record-keeping. Hieroglyphic (= pictographic) writing gave way gradually to demotic, which was more

efficient than cuneiform. The desire to preserve bodies intact (mummification) for the afterlife led to advances in medical science, including surgery and knowledge of anatomy.

Greeks and Romans were impressed, even dazzled, by the Egyptians, as have been most visitors to Egypt since antiquity. Seeing just what influence Egypt

actually had, however, is not so easy. Political control lasted a short time. Divinized kingship recurred but not necessarily because of the Egyptians. No new literary forms were added. Monumental architecture as propaganda recurred, but this idea is not “Egyptian.”

Early Egyptologists were eager to claim the ancient Egyptians for the West. After World War II, as colonial empires crumbled and black consciousness arose, some people claimed that Egypt was an African civilization, indeed, that Egypt was Africa and vice versa. In its most extreme forms, this view has held that Western civilization was stolen from the Egyptians by the Greeks. This view again puts a sharp focus on Egypt but without solid reasons for doing so. Perhaps these historical mysteries explain the mysterious smile of the Sphinx. ■

Suggested Reading

Bernal, *Black Athena*, vols. 1 and 2.

Murnane, *Penguin Guide to Egypt*.

Redford, *Akhenaten*.

Strouhal, *Life of the Ancient Egyptians*.

Questions to Consider

1. Explain the impact of geography on the course of Egyptian history.
2. How is Egyptian historical development both like and unlike that of Mesopotamia?

The Hebrews—Small States and Big Ideas

Lecture 4

What the Phoenicians did, in particular, was this: they planted trading colonies all over the Mediterranean. They began doing this probably about 900 B.C., and they created, in the process, one of the first great commercial empires that the world had ever seen.

After the Egyptians and Hittites exhausted themselves, and before other large, powerful states emerged, there was a brief period of importance for some small states and peoples. Sea peoples, most famously the Philistines, attacked along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean after about 1200 B.C.

The Phoenicians managed to avoid conquest. They were Canaanites who spoke a Semitic language and who had been present in the region of what is today coastal Syria and Lebanon for centuries. After about 900, they created one of the first great commercial empires the world had seen, anticipating the Athenians, Venetians, and Dutch. Creating colonies all over the Mediterranean, including at Carthage and Massilia, the Phoenicians played a role in spreading Mesopotamian culture and in beginning the creation of a Mediterranean cultural network. By 600 B.C., they had almost certainly circumnavigated Africa and, by about 450, they had reached Britain.

The other significant people who emerged in this big-power pause were the Hebrews. Again, much of the Hebrews' history is shrouded in legend. A pastoralist, Abraham, who has been dated between 2000 and 1550 B.C., was the leader of a people who were on the outs with the settled city-dwellers and grain farmers of Sumer. Abraham and his God made a pact, and Abraham was told to leave Ur for the land of Canaan/Palestine. For some centuries, Abraham's descendants farmed the land, quarreled among themselves, and tried to ward off enemies.

Eventually, they were swept up in the struggles between the Egyptians and Hittites. The familiar story says that the Hebrews were carried off in bondage to Egypt. Some probably were prisoners of war, but others doubtless migrated

there voluntarily because the area was more peaceful and prosperous. Moses arose as a leader who forged a people during the Exodus, a long process of departing from Egypt and reentering the “promised land.”

For a time, the Hebrews lived under numerous independent judges, but the threat of the sea peoples, chiefly the Philistines, induced them to choose kings, first Saul, then David, and Solomon. Under Solomon, the kingdom reached its high point, and considerable commercial wealth flowed in. But a distaste for strong central authority led to a division of the kingdom into Israel in the north, with its capital at Samaria, and Judah in the south, with its capital at Jerusalem. Eventually, these small kingdoms were conquered by more powerful neighbors: Israel fell to the Assyrians in 722 and Judah, to the Neo-Babylonians in 586. The Assyrians in particular physically dispersed the Hebrews all over the Near East: the “Exile.”

Never has a people been so politically insignificant, yet culturally so critical in the history of Western civilization. It is the religion of the Hebrews that has left so deep an imprint. Our knowledge of the beliefs of the Hebrews comes from a collection of writings that in some ways cover the period from about 2000 to 200 B.C., but that were mostly written down after 1000 B.C. These writings are properly called the Hebrew Bible, or the Hebrew Scriptures. To Christians, these materials are the Old Testament. The Hebrew Bible consists of three major kinds of materials:

The Torah: The first five books, sometimes called the “Books of Moses.” The name means “the teaching,” and these books contain the prescriptions that governed the life of the Hebrews.

The Prophets: This group of books contains both historical books, such as Kings, Samuel, and Chronicles, that reveal God’s unfolding relationship with His people, and the more obviously prophetic

Over time, this notion of a covenant and this notion of a chosen people led to a series of more mature reflections on the very nature of that deity.

books of the “Greater Prophets,” such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, and the “Lesser Prophets,” such as Amos and Micah.

The Writings: This is a catchall designation for the poetic material, such as the Psalms and Canticles, and for the beautiful and moving advice literature, such as Proverbs and Wisdom.

Three central religious ideas contained in the Hebrew Bible, taken together, constitute the key foundations of Western civilization.

The idea of the *covenant* was created between Yahweh and Abraham—between God and a tribe—and renewed between Yahweh and Moses—between God and a people. It was redefined by the Prophet Ezra during the Exile—between God and a people adhering to the Torah. The unique notion of reciprocity appears here for the first time. The covenant also embodies the unique notion of a *chosen people*: One God for one people, not a god for a place or a state.

The idea of *exclusive monotheism* has a long evolution, from henotheism, still present in the time of Moses, to monotheism in the time of Isaiah. This occasioned a profound tension between the idea that Yahweh was the only God and the God of the Hebrews, and the possibility of universalism. The idea is seen most vividly in the Book of Jonah.

The idea of *ethical monotheism* is the profound sense of social justice that runs through the prophetic books is unprecedented in the previous religious experience of known peoples. God demanded a particular kind of behavior as a guarantee of his continuing benevolence. This idea is seen in the *Decalogue* and *Shema*, in Micah.

Philosophers and theologians have long acknowledged the importance of monotheism for everything from natural philosophy to political ideology. Numerous peoples in the West have called themselves a “New Israel” as a way of claiming a unique, chosen relationship with providence. Historically, social justice has sometimes been a secular concern, but much more often, one with religious roots. Western literature is unimaginable without its fundamental, formative text: the Bible. ■

Suggested Reading

Drane, *Introducing the Old Testament*.

The Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). From a historical and cultural point of view, read Genesis, Exodus, Kings, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Psalms.

Moscatti, *World of the Phoenicians*.

Shanks, ed., *Ancient Israel*.

Questions to Consider

1. How do the religious and ethical ideas of the Hebrews differ from those of the Mesopotamians and Egyptians?
2. Does it seem odd to you that a people who were not politically, militarily, or economically powerful exercised such a potent influence on Western civilization? Can you think of any comparable examples?

A Succession of Empires

Lecture 5

The main achievement of the Neo-Babylonians, whose high point lasted only about a century ... was the massive rebuilding of the city of Babylon, creating there the famous Hanging Gardens, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, an elaborate palace complex with beautiful pleasure gardens surrounding it.

The period of Phoenician and Hebrew independence ended with the rise of the Assyrian Empire. The Assyrians were a Semitic-speaking people who had been important in northern Mesopotamia in the second millennium B.C., then declined, and reemerged around Nineveh in about 900. They began a series of campaigns that carried them to Persia in the East and Egypt in the West. Their success was facilitated by a huge army, iron weapons, and cavalry. In 722, the Assyrians conquered Israel and deported its inhabitants, the Ten Lost Tribes. Their policies were cruel; state terrorism was their normal practice. Even their art glorified fear and destruction.

The Assyrians eventually evoked a challenge from a coalition of peoples who were seen as liberators by those whom the Assyrians had conquered. One key group was the Neo-Babylonians. The dynasty of whom Nebuchadnezzar (r. 605–562 B.C.) was the most famous built a large realm in Mesopotamia after the fall of the Assyrians. The main achievement of this dynasty was the massive



Assyrian wall carvings.

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rebuilding of Babylon. The Hanging Gardens were one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

Minor players were the central Anatolian Lydians. The Lydians' main historical achievement was the invention of coinage around 700 B.C. Their most famous king was Croesus, whose wealth—probably because he heaped up coins—was legendary. The greatest members of the anti-Assyrian coalition were the Medes and Persians.

The Medes were from the Zagros Mountains, and the Persians were from the Iranian plain. They were ethnically related and spoke similar languages. Until Persian Cyrus (r. 559–530) assumed leadership, the Medes had generally been the dominant partner. Cyrus began a series of lightning campaigns that were continued by his successors, Cambyses (r. 530–525 B.C.) and Darius (r. 521–486 B.C.). They built the largest empire the world had yet seen.

There were several reasons for Persian success. The Persians had a huge army—up to 300,000 men—with an elite core of 10,000 “Immortals.” They practiced brilliant cavalry tactics and were the first to understand the significance of the cavalry. They were tolerant of the customs of local peoples and often left their own people in charge. They were highly skilled at administration. The Persians set up an elaborate administrative network under satraps. They developed common systems of weights, measures, and coinage; the Persian imperial post; and great roads, including the “Royal Road.” They also used the widely known Aramaic language instead of Persian.

The chief manifestation of Persian culture was the religion Zoroastrianism. Scholars dispute the dates for Zarathustra. He may have lived circa 1000, 750, or 550 B.C. His teachings are revealed by *gathas* (songs) preserved in the Avesta, the holy scriptures of Zoroastrianism. Zarathustra taught of a single, benevolent god, Ahura Mazda, who was the creator of all. But he also was much intrigued by the problem of evil.

**[The Persians]
left a profound
religious heritage
that interacted
reciprocally and
fruitfully with
Judaism, with
Christianity, and
later with Islam.**

Zarathustra taught that Ahura Mazda had twin children, one benevolent and one evil. These two played out a great cosmic challenge between good and bad, truth and falsehood, and so on. Human beings are endowed with free will to choose one path or the other. Zarathustra stressed superiority of the spiritual over the material. This dualism would recur time and time again in the West, such as among the Manicheans, Bogomils, and Cathars. The Assyrians and Babylonians left some impressive ruins but not much else. The Persians left a legacy of civilized rule, ideas about kingship and government, and a profound religious heritage that interacted reciprocally with Judaism and Christianity. ■

Suggested Reading

The Avesta.

Cook, *The Persian Empire.*

Saggs, *The Might That Was Assyria.*

Questions to Consider

1. Given the example of Assyrian failure, why do you think regimes have continued to believe that they can rule by terror?
2. Can you think of inheritances from Zoroastrianist dualism, for example, in the realms of art or literature?

Wide-Ruling Agamemnon

Lecture 6

What we do know comes overwhelmingly from archaeology. These Minoans left us some pretty impressive hints about themselves, about what they were like.

Civilization in the Greek world began on the Mediterranean island of Crete about 2000 B.C. The civilization there has been long called the Minoan, from the mythical King Minos. We do not yet know exactly who these people were. Examples of their writing have been discovered, but the language is unknown. It is not Greek.

The massive palace complex at Knossos, which covers 5 acres and has a central courtyard that is 55 meters by 25 meters, provides clues about the Minoans. The size, beauty, and decorations of the complex suggest wealth, leisure, and a developed aesthetic sense. Storehouses and Linear A documents suggest bureaucracy. Artistic motifs and, perhaps, architectural forms suggest contacts with the Near East and Egypt. The complete lack of fortifications suggests that the people were peaceful and nonaggressive.

This is the period of the great cities of Mycenae and Corinth and Pylos, the very cities that are mentioned in Homer's *Iliad*.

Minoan civilization flourished from 1800 to 1550 B.C. In 1626 B.C., a volcanic eruption on Thera, 70 miles away, caused heavy damage and may have initiated the decline of the Minoans. Much of the island was devastated by conquest circa 1550 B.C. The conquerors almost certainly came from mainland Greece. Civilization took hold slowly in Greece. The land is rocky; the soil, poor; and the climate, especially in the north, harsh. By 6500 B.C., villages showed signs of the Neolithic Revolution. Around 3000 and again around 2300 (or, to some, c. 1700), the Balkans saw impressive migrations. By 2600–2200, we see the first signs of urban development and the “Mediterranean triad” of crops: cereal grains, grapes, and olives. From about 2000 B.C., we can discern



Corel Stock Photo Library.

The Temple of Apollo, at Delphi, Greece.

Mycenean civilization—named for the great citadel at Mycenae. Almost certainly, the Myceneans conquered the Minoans. Apparently, they had been learning from, and grew jealous of, the Minoans. The highpoint of Mycenaean civilization was from 1400 to 1200 B.C.

The sources of our knowledge of the Myceneans are three.

Linear B documents: Linear B documents were found in profusion. These were deciphered by Michael Ventris and others in the early 1950s. They revealed a world of bureaucratic regulation.

Archaeology: Impressive remains have been found at several major sites, such as Mycenae, Sparta, Pylos, Corinth, and so on. Large fortified sites with strong defensive works and imposing royal residences suggest strong kingship and military rule. Tomb complexes suggest historical memory and dynastic continuity.

Homeric poems: Homeric poems, especially the *Iliad*, are the most important sources, but also difficult and controversial. The Homeric poems were put into something like their current shape after 800 and probably around 725 B.C., then written down about 550. How can they tell us much about the period from 1400 to 1200 B.C.?

After World War II, Milman Parry and Albert Lord studied poetic bards in Yugoslavia and discovered that they could recite up to 500,000 lines of material. Think of Alex Haley and *Roots*. Or of performers today with scripts and lyrics! Therefore, it is legitimate to think that much authentic material was transmitted over a long time to “Homer.”

The Mycenaean elements in the story are the basic and concrete details: names of key places and, perhaps, people; some aspects of warfare in the “old” days; a vague sense of the diplomatic structure of the time. The Trojan War (traditional date 1194 B.C.) was probably a trade dispute and may have been a Mycenaean inheritance from the Minoans. The ethical teachings of the *Iliad* relate more precisely to the period when the poems were put into coherent form, our next subject. ■

Suggested Reading

Allen, *Finding the Walls of Troy*.

Dickinson, *The Aegean Bronze Age*.

Edwards, *Homer*.

Finley, *The World of Odysseus*.

Homer, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.

Questions to Consider

1. Assess the impact of geography on the historical development of the Minoans and Myceneans.
2. What similarities do you detect between the Myceneans and the peoples of the Near East whom we have encountered?

Dark Age and Archaic Greece

Lecture 7

It's very important to say, in other words, that Greek glory did not rise in a straight line from the Mycenaeans to the world of Pericles and Plato. There were a few bumps in the road along the way.

Greek civilization did not grow to glory in a straight line from the Mycenaeans. Between 1200 and 1100 B.C., there is evidence for widespread destruction of the major Mycenaean sites, some of which—not least Mycenae itself!—were never reinhabited. These invasions were traditionally associated with the Dorians, a people from northern Greece who pushed south and settled primarily in the Peloponnese with Sparta as their key city. But the Dorians were not alone in disrupting Mycenaean Greece; they were alone in being remembered.

Introducing the Dorians provides an opportunity to clarify some terms. We speak of Greeks, oddly, because the Romans called them *Graeci*. The “Greeks” called themselves Hellenes and their land, Hellas. There were four major groupings of Greeks with modest ethnic and linguistic differences: Attic, Ionic, Aeolic, and Doric. The Dorian invasions ushered in a period traditionally called the Dark Ages. This was a time of small, illiterate communities. The Greeks forgot how to write! This period also saw depopulation, de-urbanization, and scant construction.

Between 800 and 700 B.C., the Greek world began to show signs of life and energy. Historians speak of the transition to the Archaic period (c. 750–550). The great achievement of this period was the *polis*, the city-state that was the key Greek political institution. We will take a detailed look at Athens and Sparta in the next lectures. For now, we will look at origins. Dark Age Greece was relatively peaceful, and after about 900, the population began to grow. This gradually produced fierce competition for resources in a poor land.

Also around 900 or 800 B.C., the commercial exploits of the Phoenicians were a spur to at least some Greeks. Wealth generated by trade also upset the delicate balance in modest agricultural communities. Beginning in around 750 B.C., various Greek cities displayed one or more of three responses to the tensions of the age.

Conquest: Sparta conquered and enslaved their neighbors to the west, the Messenians.

Trade: Athens, but also Corinth and other cities, entered into widespread commercial ventures. The Athenians and others may have been emulating the Phoenician example.

Colonization: Corinth above all, along with many other Greek cities, exported surplus population to colonies that maintained emotional, political, and economic relations with their “mother-cities” (literally, *metropoleis*).

Of these processes, the commercial and, especially, the colonial, were of immense historical significance. Greek cities, language, culture, art, architecture, literature, and political institutions were scattered all over the Mediterranean world. But the Greeks learned, too. For example, they got their alphabet from the Phoenicians.

The later Dark Ages and the Archaic period give evidence for the emergence of some of the most familiar aspects of Greek culture. Decorations on pottery are revealing. Geometric designs show rationalism but also a sense of order, balance, and harmony. Figured pottery shows a tendency to abstraction, an attempt to discern behind what is visible to what is really “more” true. Aesthetic tastes and technical virtuosity are also on display.

Sculpture shows a steady progression that may have owed much to Egyptian styles but that



The Teaching Company Collection.

The Calf Bearer statue is typical of the Archaic period.

also advanced the Greek quest to explore the particularities of the human condition. A return to Homer's poems also opens up a vista on the values and ideologies of the age and hints at some of that age's changes.

So the Greek world, Homer's world, provides us a vista on Greek politics, on Greek religion.

Intense competition, both verbal and physical, is portrayed in the poems. Compare the athletic contests. The poems evidence reflections on brains (Nestor) versus brawn (Achilles). The poems address respective obligations of the individual and the community. They examine the nature of authority: kings and great advisers versus the ordinary man. We also see changes

in warfare in Homer's poems, from the single combat of the heroes to the *hoplite phalanx* featuring the ordinary soldier. This formative period, then, brought into view, albeit in embryonic form, many of the features of Greece's "classical" period. ■

Suggested Reading

Boardman, *The Greeks Overseas*.

Burkert, *Greek Religion*.

Desborough, *The Greek Dark Ages*.

Murray, *Early Greece*.

Questions to Consider

1. You have learned how the Greeks responded to population pressure and competition. Can you think of examples of how other peoples have handled these challenges?
2. Did anything surprise you in the list of Greek values that you encountered in this lecture? Does anything seem to be missing?

The Greek Polis—Sparta

Lecture 8

We'll speak, in particular, about the *polis* of Sparta and then Athens as political and then social entities, and we'll then turn in a series of lectures to the *polis* as a cultural phenomenon.

The classical polis (plural: *poleis*) was a political, social, and cultural entity. Over the next several lectures, we will look at it from each of these points of view. First, we address some preliminary considerations. The physical characteristics of a polis may be expressed by a formula: *asty* + *chora* = polis. *Asty* is the Greek word for the city proper, the core of the polis. *Chora* means region or district; in our formula, it refers

Supposedly, a mythical law-giver by the name of Lycurgus, on the command of the gods, gave Sparta a constitution, all at once, in about the year 750 B.C.

to the agricultural hinterland around a polis. A polis, therefore, is always an urban core and a rural zone: Athens + Attica = Athenian polis; Sparta + Laconia = Spartan polis.

The urban area usually had an *agora* (market area), temples, a building or area where public decisions were reached, and entertainment facilities, such as theaters and stadiums. Some

poleis had natural fortifications: *acropolis*. Aristotle believed that people “naturally” lived in *poleis*. He and his pupils studied more than 100 Greek *poleis*. The amount of variation from one to another could be considerable. We shall look in detail at only two.

Sparta's early development is shrouded in legend. Supposedly, Lycurgus, a mythical law-giver, on the command of the gods, gave Sparta a constitution all at once circa 750 B.C. In fact, the Spartan system emerged piecemeal after the conquest of the Messenians circa 725 B.C.

One outstanding feature of the Spartan system was the social classes. The *homoioi* (equals) were adult male Spartan citizens over the age of 18. They

had substantial rights of political participation, which was unusual at so early a date. The *periokoi* (dwellers about) were what we would call “resident aliens.” These people were not citizens but enjoyed basic protection. There are many theories about just who they were. The *helots* (state slaves) were, essentially, the conquered Messenians; the helots belonged to Sparta and not to individual Spartans.

There were two kings, drawn from the same two families, who had veto power over each other. One was usually at home, and one away with the army. And there were two deliberative councils. All equals belonged to the assembly. This body could propose laws, wars, or treaties but could not legislate by itself. Real power was vested in a council consisting of the kings, the *ephors* (whom we will discuss in a moment), and equals over the age of 60. This body could ignore or act on suggestions from the assembly of equals.

There were five *ephors* (overseers) whose job it was to ensure that any law passed by the council or any verdict passed by a court was in accordance with Spartan tradition. They were always old and wealthy equals. *Krypteia* (secret police) were young men between 18 and 20 who primarily spied on the helots but also snooped on ordinary equals.



Spartan statue of a sphinx.

The Spartan constitution depended on the social system, the *agoge* (the training, or upbringing). Babies were inspected at birth, and the healthy ones were returned to their parents until age seven. At age seven, boys were enrolled in military brotherhoods to which they belonged the rest of their lives. From seven to 18, they underwent rigorous

physical and military training. From 18 to 20, many served in secret service, then entered a regular army unit until age 60.

Marriage was not companionate; its sole function was the production of more equals. The system aimed to create military excellence, discipline, and loyalty. Spartan life was austere and simple. Spartans believed that book-learning made men effeminate. Spartans used iron money to make hoarding unattractive.

The Spartan system aimed to hold the helots in check (their labor made the life of the equals possible) and to ward off any threat of attack. By about 550, Sparta had formed the Peloponnesian League, which gave it the opportunity to control the constitutions of member states. Sparta tried to prevent democracies and social turmoil. The Spartan system was still in place when Rome conquered Greece in the 2nd century B.C., but there were only a few equals left by then. Contemporaries admired Sparta's strength, simplicity, and stability. ■

Suggested Reading

Cartledge, *Sparta and Lakonia*.

Questions to Consider

1. Would the Spartan constitutional system have functioned without the *agoge*?
2. Why do you think that authoritarian regimes, like Sparta's, have been so attractive throughout history?

The Greek Polis—Athens

Lecture 9

It is probably safe to say that at no moment during Athens' long political evolution did any leader wake up one morning and say, "I have an idea: let's invent democracy. Let's have a democracy," though the system became more and more democratic.

The great story in Athens is the gradual shift of political power from the *eupatrids* (the well-fathered ones) to the *demos* (the people). With the luxury of hindsight, we can see an orderly process that has, almost, an air of inevitability. That process also seems natural to us because we suppose that others would share our admiration for democracy, that is, for rule (*crateia*) by the people. But ancient writers disliked democracy in general and the democracy of Athens in particular. Athens created democracy accidentally as the city's leaders responded to one crisis after another.

In the 7th century B.C., most of the Greek world, except Athens and Sparta, experienced tyranny. This was rule by a strong man who set himself up as the leader of the people. Popular discontent, as we have seen, arose from economic and demographic stresses as the beginning of the Archaic period. We have seen how Sparta escaped tyranny. Now we turn to Athens. Circa 621 B.C., Draco codified the laws of Athens and posted them in the Athenian agora. This code was harsh—"Draconian"—but it represented a concession to those who opposed the arbitrary rule of the eupatrids. Athens was, in principle, now ruled by laws, not by men.

Ordinary Athenian farmers still suffered cycles of boom and bust, and the city was home to more and more rich merchants who had no place in a society dominated by wealthy land-owning eupatrids. In 594, Solon, a eupatrid who had made a fortune in trade, was appointed lawgiver, with wide authority to introduce reforms. Solon was a moderate without personal ambition. He abolished many debts and debt slavery. He changed the basic qualifications for office holding from birth to wealth and distributed offices and the right to vote quite widely according to a sliding scale of wealth. He created a Council

of 400 that set the agenda for the assembly of all citizens. (This is just the opposite of Sparta's system.)

The next generation saw squabbling among many who felt that Solon had not gone far enough and some who felt that he had gone too far. The lowest classes elevated Peisistratus to a mild tyranny in 560. He and his sons dominated Athens for about 40 years. He respected most of Solon's system but did redistribute land. Peisistratus also inaugurated festivals and initiated public building projects, partly to make people loyal to, and proud of, Athens and partly to put them to work. Eventually, the Athenian eupatrids allied themselves with some eupatrids and drove out the Peisistratids. A blueblood named Cleisthenes was given powers to make reforms.

From Cleisthenes to Pericles, Athenian democracy came into full force. Because Cleisthenes was disappointed with the eupatrids, he turned to the demos. He created a new Council of 500 based on residence, not birth or tradition. He bound together people of different social and occupational backgrounds. He opened almost all offices to almost all men. He introduced *ostracism*.

Themistocles was a popular leader during the Persian Wars. Because many of Athens's sailors were still denied some political rights, he worked to remedy this situation.

Between 461 and 450, Ephialtes and Pericles ended all aristocratic privilege by stripping the eupatrid *Areopagus* of the right of judicial review and by instituting pay for public service.

We will reflect on the Athenian system. How did it work? The Athenian system encompassed a weak executive; powerful role for the assembly, that is, for participation of ordinary people; and vigorous debate. There was a danger of *demagogues*. There was no necessary continuity in policy.

**As Athens's
leaders responded
to problem after
problem, crisis,
indeed, after crisis,
they accidentally
stumbled upon a
democratic system.**

For whom did it work? For Athenian citizens, that is, adult males with two Athenian parents, perhaps 10 percent of 400,000 people. Not for women; *metics*—resident aliens; or slaves, which were increasingly numerous.

How was it financed? By tribute from the Athenian Empire. By slave labor. Who defended it? Pericles, in his “Funeral Oration.”

Who criticized it? Almost all ancient writers. Plato and Aristotle believed that it did not advance the “best” men. The “Old Oligarch” believed it lacked deference and was too unstable, changeable, and subject to demagoguery. Historian Thucydides gave examples of folly, cruelty, and perversity.

What was the verdict? The Athenians demonstrated *what* a democracy might be. It remained for others later to show *for whom* a democracy might work. ■

Suggested Reading

Andrewes, *The Greek Tyrants*.

Forrest, *The Emergence of Greek Democracy*.

Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens*.

Sealey, *Greek City-States*.

Questions to Consider

1. Can you think of examples in U.S. history where the “law of unintended consequences” extracted very different political or institutional results from policies designed with different ends in mind?
2. Think of some of the democratic regimes in the world today and ask yourself how they differ from one another and how well they measure up to an ideal standard of democracy.

Civic Culture—Architecture and Drama

Lecture 10

Let's begin with the most public of cultural manifestations, the most public of art forms. In Athens, this means architecture and drama.

No art form is so public and communal as architecture. We know that at least some temples already existed by about 725 B.C. because Homer mentions them. In the Dark Ages and Archaic period, Greeks no longer built palaces as in the Mycenaean period. Architecture was increasingly civic. Colonies usually built buildings that mirrored the ones of the metropolis. Peisistratus, as noted, initiated a building program in Athens. In the Persian Wars (490–478 B.C.), Athens was sacked and burned, and her public buildings were left in ruins. The restoration of peace and the revenues from the Imperial Tribute permitted rebuilding on a grand scale.

We may take the Parthenon in Athens as the finest example of a Greek building and as an example that teaches us a great deal about the people who built it. The Parthenon was built between 447/446 and 438 B.C., with its sculptures finished in 432.

The chief architects were Ictinus and Callicrates; the main sculptor was Pheidias.

To appreciate the Parthenon, let's consider the basic elements of a Greek building. The key elements of a floor plan were: stylobate with colonnade or peristyle; interior chambers; passageways. The key vertical elements were:

stereobate and stylobate; column (shaft and capital); entablature (architrave and metope). Note, too, the Doric and Ionic orders. These were the most common in ancient Greece. The Greeks knew the Corinthian, with its Acanthus-leaf capitals, but it was the Romans who popularized this order.



The Parthenon.

© Anthony Haigh/Alamy

The building was in almost perfect condition until 1687 when a Venetian shell hit it. Fortunately, there were 1674 drawings of the sculptures *in situ*. Many of the best sculptures—the “Elgin Marbles”—are in the British Museum and a bone of contention. The building is more than 100 feet long with eight columns across the front, instead of the usual six, and 17 columns on each side, instead of the usual 12 to 15. The floors all curve outward to the corners; the columns lean in slightly. The building is huge but elegant and graceful.



Corel Stock Photo Library.

A portion of the Panathenaic frieze from the Acropolis.

The Parthenon has three great sculptural programs. Pediments (triangular ends) show the birth of Athena and the battle between Athena and Poseidon for control of Athens. Metopes have scenes of battle, both historical (Greek and Trojan) and mythical (Lapiths and Centaurs, Greeks and Amazons). The continuous frieze around the cella depicts—probably—aspects of the Panathenaic Festival.

The building was meant to make several points to and about Athenians. Its immense size was meant to be impressive. The cost of the building was to make Athenians proud and to make them accept the empire. The “Historical” (including the mythical) sculptures put Athens’s long and proud history on display for all to see, embrace, and cherish. The unusual secular scene of the Panathenaia held up a mirror to the Athenians themselves.

In Athens, the other great public art was drama, performed in impressive open-air theaters. Citizens got free tickets. The origins of the word *tragedy*, which means “goat song,” are remote and go back to wild celebrations in honor of Dionysus (called Bacchus by the Romans; think of a “bacchanal”).

In tradition, Thespis (hence, “thespian”) performed the first dramatic tragedy in Athens in around 530 B.C. The oldest surviving play dates from about

470. We know the titles of more than 100 plays, but fewer than two dozen survive intact and all are by three playwrights: Aeschylus (525–456 B.C.), Sophocles (c. 496–406 B.C.), and Euripides (485–406 B.C.).

For Aristotle, whose *Poetics* is the world's first work of literary criticism, tragedy was a kind of poetry that was serious; written in beautiful language; dramatic, not narrative, in form; arousing fear and pity that purify the emotions. In sum, a tragedy is an elegant story of an admirable person struggling nobly against insuperable odds.

When we think of the Parthenon as a building, when we think of the poetic arts of the Greek plays, we see an interest in craftsmanship almost unrivaled.

Aeschylus wrote trilogies, one of which, the *Oresteia*, survives. It is an account of the fall of the house of Agamemnon and becomes a parable for the origins of justice. The trilogy was performed in 458, just when the Areopagus was stripped of its last powers in Athens. Aeschylus also wrote *The Persians*, the only play about a contemporary theme.

Sophocles abandoned the trilogy. His plays explored justice and principle and the consequences of right action (*Antigone*) and of just punishments for unintentional acts (*Oedipus Rex*). He reflected and participated in the deep philosophical debates of his day.

Euripides was unconventional in all ways. He adapted dramatic forms (for example, choruses were less important) and looked at the power of emotions—love, jealousy, and revenge. His plays show the disillusionment of Athens as the Peloponnesian War dragged to a sorry end.

Not all drama was tragic. There was also comedy. Tragedy was set in the remote past amongst mythical characters, even though it often commented in pointed ways on current affairs. Comedy was set in the present and satirized, sometimes even ridiculed, prominent contemporaries. Comedy could be vulgar, but it still had a certain elegance and grace.

The most famous ancient comedian, and the only one whose plays survive, is Aristophanes (455–385 B.C.). *Lysistrata* is a famous anti-war play. In it, the women of Athens stage a sex-strike to end the war. In fact, there are serious themes and social commentary running through the play. *Clouds* pokes fun at currently popular philosophers and scoops up Socrates, unfairly, into the criticism.

Public arts, then, provide us with three insights: the pride of Athens; the technical mastery of Athenian craftsmen; and the remarkably open way in which ideas were aired. ■

Suggested Reading

Beye, *Ancient Greek Literature*.

Biers, *The Archaeology of Greece*.

Boardman, *Greek Art*.

Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, or Aristophanes.

Questions to Consider

1. What are the most prominent public arts today and how do they work in our society?
2. Is your view of, or appreciation for, art affected by knowing that it was often the result of intense contemporary preoccupations of a nonartistic type?

The Birth of History

Lecture 11

What we can see in the best of these Greek historians is people engaged with the world of their day, engaged with the art forms of their day, engaged with the great intellectual issues of their day, speaking to their contemporaries, yes, and speaking to the future as well—to us.

What is history? Voltaire said that it was lies the living told about the dead. Henry Ford said it was “bunk.” The Greeks invented it. What did they think it was? Greeks did not invent historical mindedness. This we see among Mesopotamians, Egyptians, and vividly, among the Hebrews. For the Hebrews, history was a way of revealing the unfolding relationship between God and his chosen people. In a richly paradoxical sense, history was also prophetic for the Hebrews: The past pointed to the future. That was true for the Greeks also but without the religious component.

The Greeks invented history as a specific literary art. But Aristotle, who knew a bit about literary art, said that poets would never lie, but historians usually did. He meant, basically, that poets capture real motivations, while historians haggle over mere details. The greatest Greek historians wrote down many details, but they also developed large themes about human life and conduct, themes that they believed to be universally valid. The Greek histories, thus, have an “epic” quality about them.

Herodotus (c. 485–425 B.C.) is the “father of history.” He wrote a long, highly entertaining account of the Persian Wars, which he saw as the watershed moment in Greek history. Born in Ionia of a good family, Herodotus was widely read (he quotes Homer and Hesiod) and voraciously curious. He traveled all over the Greek world, to Egypt, through central Mesopotamia, and in the northern Balkans. He constantly interviewed people. He placed primary reliance on “what he had seen with his own eyes,” but he also collated “what he had heard.”

Why did he write? He was fascinated by how the Greeks were able to defeat the Persians. To get an answer, he decided that he needed to know all he could about the Persians, about the lands conquered by the Persians, and about how, exactly, the war had begun. For Herodotus, *historiai* meant “researches” or “investigations.” He took something of a dramatist’s view of his task. There were underlying causes for historical events but also immediate triggers.

When I say that the Greeks invented history, I am saying that the Greeks invented a particular literary form that we know as history, or that we have come to know as history.

In the case of the Persian Wars, Herodotus believed that the attack by Croesus of Lydia on the Persians was the proximate cause because it brought the Persians into Anatolia, then into Ionia. But the longer term or underlying cause was the arrogance of great states coupled with a certain inevitability in the clash between East and West, the struggle between slaves and free men, as he saw it.

Thucydides (460/555–c. 400 B.C.) knew and admired the work of Herodotus (he even borrowed from it), but he put the writing of history on a new path. He wrote of the Peloponnesian Wars. This was the great contest between Athens and Sparta, between the Peloponnesian League and the Athenian Empire, which lasted from 432 to 401 B.C. but had begun brewing in the 450s. His account stops abruptly in 411.

Although Thucydides’s work is incomplete and unrevised, enough survives to reveal his working methods and his overall views and intentions. He viewed the causes as Sparta’s inordinate fear of Athens, stirred up by some of Sparta’s allies. He is cautious about Athens’s rise to greatness but thinks the glory of the Periclean age was worth the cost of empire and the danger of war. Pericles’s “Funeral Oration” is Thucydides’s great statement about Athens. Yet war itself can cause a society such stress as to make its savage character emerge, to change the quality and character of its leaders. His account of the Mitylene affair reveals his thinking.

Thucydides was subject to many influences of his time. Like Herodotus, he was influenced by the dramatists, even down to his use of archaic poetic language. The medical writers taught him something about the etiology, progress, and diagnosis of political and social problems. Sophists (more about them in the next lecture) taught him about rhetoric, the power of language to influence people, and about the problems surrounding ideas of absolute truth and justice. The Melian Dialogue is his famous treatment of this theme. Xenophon (428/427–354 B.C.) carried on the *History* of Thucydides and wrote independent works.

Historical writing has been a key feature of Western culture since the Greeks. Partly to preserve accounts of great deeds. Partly to teach one's own generation "lessons." Partly to fashion and shape how later generations will see things. ■

Suggested Reading

Anderson, *Xenophon*.

Connor, *Thucydides*.

Gould, *Herodotus*.

Questions to Consider

1. Do the essential criteria that the Greek historians set for themselves measure up to what you think a historian does or ought to do?
2. Are you tempted to read one of the Greek historians? Which one?

From Greek Religion to Socratic Philosophy

Lecture 12

The Greeks invented philosophy as a form of intellectual discipline, with its own rules, with its own system, with its own way of asking questions and of answering questions.

The Greeks invented philosophy as a particular, formal intellectual discipline. *Philosophy* is a Greek work, as is *philosopher* (it appeared about 400 B.C.). Conventionally, the history of Greek philosophy is divided at the person of Socrates (469–399 B.C.). In this lecture, we will consider the pre-Socratics. The Greeks were not the first to marvel at the world around them or to accumulate large amounts of practical information.

People asked why everything, or anything, exists. Early Greek poets had done this and had provided “cosmological” answers. On reflection, it was seen that all peoples attributed the coming-into-being of the world to various religious beings. Their answers were contradictory and conflicted with experience.

People also asked how things worked. This might lead to an inquiry into first principles or might remain at the level of “applied” knowledge. Greeks began to inquire into the nature of things that exist all around us and into the processes whereby they had come into being and by which they changed. Consider, for example, a seed that is planted, grows, bears fruit, dies, withers, and decays. What is going on here?

The Greeks also saw that explanations about how the world “out there” worked demanded some hard thinking about the process of knowing and the means of communicating knowledge. Three questions may be said to lie at the base of Greek, and subsequent, philosophy: What is the world made of? How can we know? And what should we do?

The quest for wisdom, according to Aristotle, and to most modern commentators, began in Ionia. This was a land open to Persia and, through the Persians, to Mesopotamian knowledge. The people there were familiar,

too, with the Greek world and literature. Around 600 B.C., Thales of Miletus began to think about what exists and how it came into being. He decided on water as a primordial element. It is not clear if he thought that everything started as water and turned into other things or if everything we can see is somehow composed of water.

Some of Thales's successors posed other "materialist" answers to the question "What is the world made of?" Namely, earth, air, fire, and water.

Parmenides (fl. c. 450) said that being is one, motionless, uniform, and eternal. In this view, change was illusory, which was a response to Heraclitus's idea that change was itself, so to speak, the one immutable thing. But Anaxagoras responded that the mind was critical. Things existed to the degree, and only to the degree, that they were perceived. By the middle of the 5th century B.C., Greek thinking on being had been put on the path it would follow thereafter.

**Nothing is finally
right. Nothing
is finally wrong.
Nothing is absolute.
This quest for truth
is foolish.**

As thinkers reflected on being, they began to turn to the problem of knowledge. We may capture this issue with four questions: What does it mean to know? Can we really know anything? What means are available to us for knowing? How is the world constituted, and how am I constituted so that I can know something about the world?

Initially, knowledge was equated with what I have seen, what I have experienced myself. (Think of Herodotus and his eyewitness reporting or of the diagnostics of the medical writers.) Soon, this extended to the other senses (hearing, smelling, tasting, touching). But sense perception as a basis for knowledge evoked severe criticism. Senses are unreliable to the extent that they are subjective. There is the problem of hearsay, or second-hand knowledge: I know something because you have told me.

With the critique of senses came a critique of language: Is language capable of capturing and communicating reality? One way out of the impasse was offered by Pythagoras (fl. late 6th century). Pythagoras formed a mystical

brotherhood in southern Italy. His philosophy was based on the idea that wisdom came only from a life wholly dedicated to intense thought.

Pythagoras somehow came upon the mathematical relationships between the musical intervals (and, perhaps, the Pythagorean theorem, too, although one of his disciples may have discovered this). This suggested—like Anaxagoras's concept of mind—that material answers were insufficient and that human reason might discover and reliably communicate law-like propositions that pertained to reality, to the world as it actually is.

After some Greeks had spent a century and a half of thinking about reality and knowledge, the Sophists turned to the practical matters of ethics: How should we behave? Sophists and sophistry have a bad name, not without some justification. Sophists were wandering teachers who for a fee—sometimes an exorbitant fee—would teach people the artful use of language. This was important in Athenian assemblies and law courts. This art was so much taken for granted that Thucydides larded his *History* with speeches. Aristophanes pilloried the Sophists in his comedies.

Sophistic ethics were based on a few fundamental propositions. A distinction was made between *nomos* (law, convention) and *physis* (nature, the natural order of things). The Sophists held that because society's rules were not eternal, not imprescriptibly right, not universal, they were matters of convention, and people could change them if they wished or flaunt them if



Bust of Socrates.

they could. “Man is the measure of all things,” said Protagoras. The aim is to prevail, not to be “right.”

Gorgias posed the hermeneutic paradox: “Nothing exists; if anything existed, I could not know about it; even if I could know about it, I could not communicate my knowledge. At this juncture, Socrates appeared, desiring to vindicate reality, knowledge, and absolute truth. But the Sophists had left their mark indelibly, as in Thucydides, Sophocles, and Euripides (and Aristophanes, as noted). In 399, when Socrates was put to death, the future of the now 200-year-old Greek philosophical heritage was an open question. ■

Suggested Reading

Brunschwig and Lloyd, *Greek Thought*, pp. 3–93.

Irwin, *Classical Thought*.

Lloyd, *Early Greek Science*.

Questions to Consider

1. If you hear the word *philosophy* what comes to mind?
2. Do any of the key aspects of pre-Socratic philosophy seem useful to you today?

Plato and Aristotle

Lecture 13

First and foremost, how much of Plato is Socrates, and how much of Plato is Plato?

Socrates was smug, pompous, cantankerous, and brilliant. An Athenian jury condemned him to death for corrupting the young. His death disillusioned many of his followers, but caused one of them, Plato, to dedicate himself to defending the master's teachings. Socrates wrote nothing and almost all we know, or think we know, comes from Plato's dialogues. Plato clearly defended much of his teacher's thought, but gradually, Plato's thought became his own. The starting point was that there is something "out there" that we can know; that we have the tools to apprehend that something; that, having apprehended that something, we can reliably communicate about it with others.

Plato (429–347 B.C.) was a consummate stylist, an influential teacher, and a wide-ranging thinker. He came from a wealthy and influential family and traveled widely. He devoted his adult life to philosophy, founding his school, the Academy, around 385. To begin with, let's review the problems: Change appears to be a constant, and stability, elusive; the senses are flawed tools of perception; language has severe limitations as a tool of communication; laws are human contrivances, not eternal regulations.

Plato addressed himself to two big questions: What is the nature of knowledge and what means do we have of obtaining and holding it? What is morality and what is the best form of human life? Plato was a prolific writer. His earliest works were in dialogue form, perhaps because this accorded with Socrates's teaching methods. Gradually, the works became straightforward treatises.

At least three things are controversial about Plato's thought. How much of Plato is attributable to Socrates? Did he use the Socratic *elenchus* and essentially demonstrate what was wrong with other views, or did he advance

positive doctrines of his own? And did he have a coherent system of thought, or is Platonism attributable to his commentators?

In general terms, we can understand Plato's theories of knowledge and morality. In his *Republic*, Plato said, "We are accustomed to posit some one form concerning each set of things to which we apply the same name." The "form" is the very thing to which the name is applied. The form is invisible and is grasped by thought, not by the senses. Its relation to the named thing is as original to copy. Such knowledge as we have of the form is true knowledge and all else is mere "opinion." In the "Myth of the Cave" from the *Republic*, Plato came as close as he ever did to making clear what he meant. We can for purposes of discussion take two examples, a concrete one—a shoe—and an abstract one—love. Plato speaks of an immortal soul. This is eternal and has knowledge of the eternal, transcendent realm that it communicates to each sentient being.

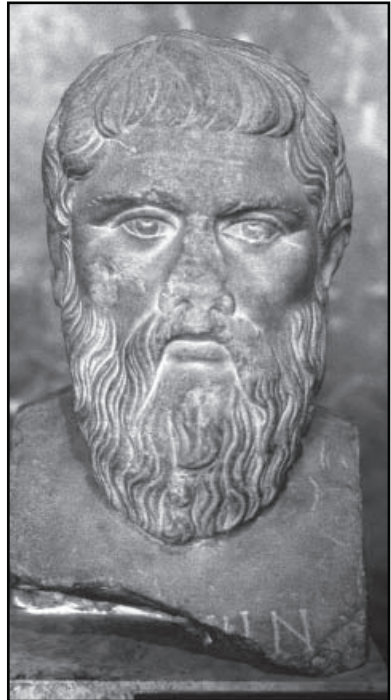
Also in his *Republic*, Plato reflected on the human soul before it is imprisoned in the body, on the embodied soul, and on the kind of state that properly arrayed souls could create. The soul has appetites, courage, and reason. Virtue, which equates to knowledge, is a proper arrangement of these three. An ideal polity, therefore, would have: farmers with all desirable possessions; soldiers without property or family (Sparta?); and philosophers who had such elevated understanding that they felt a duty, not a desire, to rule and whose desires did not attach to material things.

Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) came from the far north of the Greek world. His father was a doctor and had ties to the Macedonian court. At 17, Aristotle entered the Academy. He spent some time as tutor to Alexander the Great and lived in Ionia for a while after Plato's death. In 335, he founded his Lyceum in Athens. Aristotle learned much from his master, and the differences

They did understand, they had come to understand in a profound way, that world out there may not be as it seems, and therefore we've got some work to do to figure out how it actually works.

between them should not be exaggerated. Aristotle was a prolific writer but also a rigorously systematic one.

Marked by what one scholar called “inspired common sense,” Aristotle based his ideas on observation and close study, not on pure thought. His earliest work was in zoology and his most durable, in biology. Perhaps we see here the influence of his doctor-father. But we can also see the long reach of the Ionians, beginning with Thales. Aristotle did not see change as illusory or as a proof of the contradictory nature of being. The fact that an acorn became an oak tree, for example, did not prove somehow that being became non-being or that being came from non-being. Change is a natural process that can be explained (alternatively, there is actually no such thing as change). Forms do not have existence separate from the things by which they are named. Reality is in the specific and observable.



Bust of Plato.

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Aristotle had a profound love of order. He classified all sciences (that is, branches of knowledge) as theoretical (those that aim at knowledge), practical (those that aim to improve conduct), and productive (those that aim at making beautiful, useful things). He wrote on specific disciplines, such as logic, rhetoric, poetics, and politics. He believed that the communication of what is known (or knowable) depended on careful description. Hence, his “categories”: substance, quantity, quality, relation, location, time, position, condition, action, and affection.

Aristotle also laid down rules for syllogisms as a way of testing propositions, which in turn, helped him to discuss both knowledge and communication. He classified 256 kinds of syllogisms, with only 24 of them valid. Thinkers had long understood that knowledge of being depended on causation—how things came to be.

Pierre Pellegrin describes Aristotelian causation theory this way: There are four ways in which something “is said to be” responsible for something else. In one sense, the responsible element in the statue is the bronze from which it is made; in another sense, a certain numerical relation is responsible for the octave; in still another sense, the one who has promulgated a decree is responsible for it; finally, the health I would like to recover is responsible for the fact that I waste my time at sports. ... There are four causes at work in nature: taken in the order of the above examples, these are the material, the formal, the efficient, and the final. The concepts of essence and accident, act and power, provide for his way of assessing being and (non-) change.

Ethics for Aristotle were habits that could be inculcated by careful training from earliest youth. The goal of life is happiness, which Aristotle equated with virtue. Man’s goal is to be happy, not to know what happiness is. The virtue of the shoemaker is not to understand the concept “shoe,” but to be able to make a shoe. True happiness is achieved by moderation and self-control. But every person is different, and some are “high-minded.”

Raphael’s famous painting *The School of Athens* has Plato and Aristotle walking side by side. Plato points upward. Truth, reality, and knowledge of them are not here. Now we have only vague hints or impressions. Aristotle points down (or perhaps right out in front of himself). Truth, reality, and knowledge of them are right here in this world, but we must study attentively and reason correctly. As Plato and Aristotle built on the foundations of Greek thought before them, so Western thought ever since has been built on these two pillars. ■

Suggested Reading

Annas, “Plato,” in Brunschwig, ed., *Greek Thought*, pp. 672–692.

Kraut, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*.

Pellegrin, “Aristotle,” in Brunschwig, ed., *Greek Thought*, pp. 554–575.

Plato, *The Last Days of Socrates*.

The Pocket Aristotle.

Questions to Consider

1. In what ways can you see Plato and Aristotle responding to the challenges thrown up by pre-Socratic philosophy?
2. What do you see as the most significant similarities and differences between Plato and Aristotle?

The Failure of the Polis and the Rise of Alexander

Lecture 14

Suffice it to say ... that the 4th century B.C., the period after the Peloponnesian War, was an extremely difficult period for the Greek world. Eventually, the Greek world fell to the Macedonians to the north.

The 4th century was a terribly difficult time for the Greek world, but the difficulties were not unprecedented. During the Persian Wars, there were quarrels over strategy and some Greek cities *medized*, went over to the enemy. During the Peloponnesian Wars, most of the Greek world was dragged into the battle. Brutality became a way of life. Sparta won and threw out the Athenian democracy, but the Thirty Tyrants quickly discredited themselves, and a more moderate democracy was restored. To finish off the war against the sea-wise Athenians, the Spartan landlubbers turned to Persia, the ancient enemy.

For a generation, the Spartans, aided by Persia, which was really pulling the strings, dominated the Greek world. The Thebans then pulled together an alliance to put an end to Spartan rule and established a hegemony for about a decade. The Athenians now recreated a smaller version of their former empire and liberated Greece from Thebes. Meanwhile, to the north, the Macedonian storm cloud was gathering force.

The Macedonians were a tough people whom the Greeks called *barbarians* (essentially, “babblers,” people who did not speak Greek). Macedon’s kings were, however, accomplished rulers. By conquering important silver mines, they secured access to financial resources. Philip II (382–336 B.C.) was a particularly accomplished soldier, a reasonably cultivated man (he hired Aristotle to tutor his son!), and ambitious.

Meanwhile, in the Greek world, idealized states and “Panhellenism” were taking hold. Aristotle called man a “political animal”: He meant a being who naturally lives in a polis. But he knew perfectly well that poleis had failed badly; he and his pupils studied 158 of them. He imagined an ideal state

governed by an oligarchy of aristocrats, that is, “rule by a few” and “rule by the best.” It is not so clear how this could come into being. Plato imagined his ideal republic where “Kings would be philosophers and philosophers would be kings.” But by the end of his life, he gave up on this ideal and settled for a very small state where a carefully chosen few saw to the implementation of the laws.

Isocrates (436–338 B.C.) gave rise to Panhellenism (literally, “all-Greekism”). His dream was that all of Greece would unite under Athens and Sparta to undertake a crusade against Persia. He imagined that the Greeks had once been united. Then, realizing that the Greeks would not bow to one of their own, he tried to persuade people to unite under Philip of Macedon.

Meanwhile, Demosthenes (384–322 B.C.), Greece’s, indeed antiquity’s, greatest orator, raised his voice in defense of the autonomy of the polis. But he also would have wished for a war against Persia. He delivered four *Philippics* against Philip and saw Macedon as such a threat to Greek liberty that he actually entertained the idea of allying with the Persians against the Macedonians.

Amidst a welter of wars, alliances, and idealistic dreaming, Philip attacked. At Chaeronea in 338, Philip’s army won a decisive victory over the Greeks. The attacking wing was led by Philip’s 18-year-old son, Alexander. Philip created a league with himself at its head to govern Greece. He began making preparations to attack Persia. This might have been his own idea, or it might have been suggested to him by the Greeks. In 336, Philip was murdered in a palace intrigue, the outlines of which are still not clear. After some work to patch up relations with his father’s supporters, Alexander became king.

Alexander (356–323 B.C.) is an enigmatic figure: large, handsome, athletic, intelligent, charismatic, but also ruthless and immeasurably ambitious. He was ideologically clever. He depicted his war against Persia as a crusade

**We must
dismantle the
polis. Actually, to
be more accurate,
we must watch
the Greeks
dismantling
their own poleis.
For, in the end,
the polis failed.**

to even the account for the long-ago Persian attack on Greece. But he was using this as a cover for sheer imperialism. He also used his campaigns as a way to distract and reward the Macedonian nobles who might have turned against him at any moment.

Still, one should not minimize the extent of Alexander's military achievement. With a force not larger than 35,000 men, he conquered the Persian Empire and marched beyond it into central Asia and northern India. His tactics and personal courage were important, but so, too, was his attention to materiel and supply lines. Scholars have long thought that Alexander was cosmopolitan, that he fostered a kind of multicultural world. He incorporated foreigners into his command structure. He married an Asian princess. He promoted the study of the regions he conquered.

Alexander died, probably of malaria, shortly before his 33rd birthday. He left no institutions in place and no plans, as far as we know. The question of what he might have done had he lived longer remains open. Alexander unintentionally inaugurated what we call the Hellenistic world. This was a period when Greek values and culture would dominate the Mediterranean basin. On a grand scale, this is like the other colonizing and imperializing ventures that we have encountered. The spreading of a culture in this way played a decisive role in pouring the foundations for a Western civilization with deep Greek roots, instead of a Greek civilization that passed into oblivion. ■

Suggested Reading

Connor, *Greek Orations*.

Green, *Alexander of Macedon*.

Questions to Consider

1. Why do you suppose that people are inclined to adhere so firmly to ideas that they must know to be flawed?
2. Was Alexander "Great"?

The Hellenistic World

Lecture 15

This is a world that we generally date from the death of Alexander in 323 B.C. until the Battle of Actium, when the Romans defeated the last of the great Hellenistic rulers in 31 B.C.

H*ellenistic* is the name given to the period from the death of Alexander to the Roman triumph in the Mediterranean: 323–31 B.C. The name is meant to distinguish between Hellenic proper and Hellenic-influenced. Greek became the *koiné*; Greek art dominant in influence; Greek philosophy regnant but revised. This was a world of empires and kingdoms, not of poleis.

On Alexander's death, his leading generals carved up his vast realm. Antigonos—his descendants are called the Antigonids—took Macedon and the Balkans. Gradually, the Greek lands broke away into a league of their own under nominal Antigonid supervision. In the western Balkans, the kingdom of Epirus emerged (we will meet the inhabitants again as enemies of Rome). Syria, Palestine, northern Mesopotamia, and southern Anatolia fell to the Seleucids.

Mostly named Seleucus and Antiochus, they turn up in the last books of the Hebrew Bible: Judas Maccabeus revolted against them. They shared rule in Anatolia with Pergamum. Egypt fell to the Ptolemies, whose last ruler was Cleopatra. These kingdoms warred against, and allied with, one another repeatedly, until the Romans conquered them one by one.

It is the cultural, not the political, history of the Hellenistic world that is interesting and important. The Hellenistic world was one of vast wealth, easy movement of peoples, rapid cultural dissemination, and genuine cosmopolitanism.

Developments in Alexandria are revealing. The city was founded by Alexander (he founded more than 20). It had 500,000 people by 250 B.C. and a million by 50. The scholars in its *Museum* (that is, “house of the muses,”

or academy of all the branches of knowledge) were learned and professional, not great civic figures as in the polis.

Culture was increasingly an object of study, not a part of daily life and debate. Learned, elitist scholars began to develop the idea of a literary canon, of normative texts, of critically defined tastes and standards. Here, we see for the first time, the “ivory-tower intellectual.” This opened the gap characterized by C. P. Snow in *The Two Cultures* insofar as many Alexandrians were “scientists” while philosophers worked elsewhere: hence, the division between the arts and sciences instead of the integration that had been the ideal of the Academy and Lyceum.

The Hellenistic world was a time of important scientific breakthroughs. Euclid (c. 300) formulated the rules of geometry. Archimedes (287–212 B.C.) created all sorts of gadgets and advanced experimental science. Aristarchus (c. 275 B.C.) formulated the *heliocentric* theory: the sun is at the center of the “universe.” Eratosthenes (c. 225 B.C.) calculated the circumference of the earth. Ptolemy (127–48 B.C.) systematized astronomical information, created a theory of the motion of the planets and the moon, and added a crucial mathematical element to astronomical theory.

The Hellenistic world spawned new literary forms. Apollonius (B.C. 295) wrote *Argonautica*, a work on an epic scale but not an epic; an adventure story and a love story. Jason and his argonauts go in search of the Golden Fleece, but it is the cunning of Medea, not the bumbling brutishness of Jason, that wins the prize. Jason is a hero but not like, say, Achilles. And no epic would have told a love story. This was entertainment.

Menander (342/341–293/289 B.C.) was the greatest writer of “new comedy.” His *Curmudgeon* is the only surviving complete play. It is intricate, verbally adroit, and very funny. It treats ordinary domestic concerns, the stuff of daily life—sort of *I Love Lucy* Hellenistic style. New, and long influential, philosophies also arose. The greatest of these—Stoicism and Epicureanism—may be called “therapeutic” philosophies. Classical values seemed to have failed. The world of the citizen had vanished. Alienation was common. The focus shifted to ethics: How to live seemed more important than how to know or what to know.

Stoicism rose with Zeno (335–263 B.C.), who taught at the painted porch (*stoa poikilé*) in Athens. He believed that knowledge was possible, and he equated knowledge with virtue. He believed that there was a divine reason that permeated all creation. Virtue consisted in becoming acquainted with this divine reason, in learning its laws, and in putting oneself into harmony with reason (natural law philosophy would later derive from this way of thinking). One has, then, a moral duty to learn the laws of nature and to live in accord with them. To do so would bring happiness to individuals and justice to societies.

Things were built, very largely, because the Romans conquered this Hellenistic world and conquered its culture.

Pain or distress in life, and even death, are not absolute, final evils. They can be overcome by apathy, which does not mean, “I don’t care” but instead means, “I am beyond all pain.” Suicide is permitted as, curiously, a form of happiness should pain become too great. Stoicism taught that all visible differences in the world are accidental and of no fundamental significance. The king and the slave are essentially alike. Stoicism had a deep influence on Roman and Christian writers.

Epicureanism takes its name from Epicurus (341–270 B.C.), who also taught in Athens. The aim of philosophy, for the Epicureans, was happiness, or pleasure. But this did not mean the hedonism that is often nowadays, and quite wrongly, associated with Epicureanism. Happiness was defined by Epicurus as “an absence of pain from the body and trouble from the soul.” This philosophy was austere in the extreme. Pleasure was equated with renunciation.

Epicurus urged withdrawal from the world, avoidance of stress, and avoidance of extremes. Pain is occasioned by unfulfilled desire. Therefore, it is sensible to desire only those things that are easily obtained. The events of life are accidental, and death is merely dissolution of the chance combination of atoms that made us in the first place. Conditions of life are not to be regretted, and death is not to be feared.

Rome conquered this Hellenistic world, but its culture conquered the Romans. For several centuries, Roman imperialism locked Hellenistic culture into place and stamped it deeply on all the cultures that would follow the Romans. ■

Suggested Reading

Apollonius of Rhodes, *The Voyage of Argo*.

Green, *Alexander to Actium*.

Lloyd, *Greek Science after Aristotle*.

Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*.

Menander, *Plays and Fragments*.

Questions to Consider

1. Do any aspects of the Hellenistic world seem comparable to aspects of our world today?
2. Can you see the debts owed by Zeno and Epicurus to Plato and Aristotle?

The Rise of Rome

Lecture 16

The area where the Romans emerged, the plain of Latium (which gives its name to Latin, it is Lazio today) is in the center of the Italian peninsula, but it's not a very big area.

The Romans have been central to the Western tradition. They created stable, efficient political institutions that have been admired and emulated for centuries. They created the most influential secular legal system in the history of the world. They were masters of what we might call civil engineering: Need water 50 miles away? No problem. Rome will build an aqueduct. Need to conquer an enemy ensconced on a 1,300-foot-high plateau? No problem. Rome will build a ramp.

In many ways, the Romans were unlikely players on the world stage. They emerged in the plain of Latium (which gave its name to Latin and is called Lazio today) in the center of the Italian peninsula. Italy as a whole is some 750 miles long from the Alps to the sea. But Roman Italy ran from the Rubicon River to the sea. The whole Italian area divides into several distinct regions.

The Po River valley lies in the north, called by the Romans Cisalpine Gaul (Gaul “on this side of the Alps”). The area has rich agricultural land and a mild continental climate. Liguria-Tuscany was the region north of Latium and Rome. People called the Etruscans lived here when the Romans came on the scene. Campania, literally “the countryside,” was the area south of Latium. The Samnites lived here amidst high (more than 2,000 meters), rough mountain ridges. Magna Graecia was the area in the south, the “heel” and “toe,” as well as Sicily, where Greeks were a major presence from the 8th century.

The Iron Age came to central Italy circa 1000 B.C. The first settlements around later Rome date from circa 800. Roman tradition says that their city was founded in the year we call 753 B.C. Rome was pretty well sited: 15 miles inland on a navigable river at a good ford; seven hills provided

residential areas above the swampy lowlands and defense in case of attack. But Italy's best harbors faced west and all the "action" in the Mediterranean was in the east; north of Rome, the Etruscans and, south of Rome, the Greeks were major threats; Latium itself was a region of small villages not yet under Roman sway.

Tradition says that the Romans expelled the last Etruscan king, Tarquin the Proud, in 509 B.C. and created a republic. That tradition bears a little scrutiny. During these two centuries, Rome progressed from a few scattered settlements to a city. Romans created their first *forum*, built their first stone buildings, laid out streets, and erected the first walls. Probably the influence of the Greeks to the south was decisive.

This renders controversial the relationship between the Romans and the Etruscans to their north. The Etruscans are a somewhat mysterious people who lived in 12 small cities and who became rich from farming, mining, and trade. Roman legend says that the Etruscans conquered the Romans, who then liberated themselves, but probably, there was a long period of rivalry and mutual influence.

**The kings
were assisted
in ruling Rome
in these early
times by a group
of men called
"fathers," *patres*.
Hence, *patricians*.**

Tradition says that Rome was ruled by seven kings: kings, yes; seven, maybe. Kings had broad powers in war, religion, and daily life and left a deep imprint on Rome's later institutions. Kings were assisted by "fathers" (*patres*, hence *patricians*, "well-fathered ones," like the Greek *eupatrids*) who formed a council called a *Senate* (from *senex* = old man: compare Sparta). Ordinary

people were *plebeians*. There was an assembly of all citizens that could take legislative initiative, although its measures had to be approved by the Senate. Early Rome was very much open to foreigners, unlike most Greek cities.

Almost all the evidence for the creation of the Roman Republic is late and tends to collapse into a short time development that took decades, maybe centuries. Two basic changes were crucial: *liberty*, the freedom of the people to participate rather than be ruled by a king, and *republic*, from *res publica*,

the “public thing”—government, the state itself, was an affair that belonged to everyone. It was not *res privata*, the “private (or personal) thing” of a single ruler. Because Romans did not embrace the idea of equality, the idea of who the “people” were who were allowed to participate was worked out in the early years of the republic.

Two basic mechanisms drove political and institutional change in the early republic. Poor plebeians wanted land, debt relief, and published laws, while rich plebeians wanted access to public offices that were restricted to patricians. Rome’s patricians carried out a policy of “expanding defense.” Towns and regions around Rome were seen as potential enemies; therefore, the Romans attacked and either neutralized or conquered them. This more-or-less continuous warfare demanded participation of the plebs.

Several times, the plebs “seceded” from the Roman state to wrangle concessions from the patricians. Plebs organized themselves into a plebeian council that could pass laws binding on all the plebs. This created solidarity. Eventually, the plebs got 10 tribunes as defenders of their interests. They could veto acts of magistrates or laws of patrician assemblies. In 449, Twelve Tables bearing laws were erected in the forum. By 367, the plebeians could be elected *consul*, the highest office in the Roman state. In 287, the Licinian-Sextian law granted the legislation of the plebeian assembly full binding power on all the Roman people.

By the early decades of the 3rd century B.C., Rome was, formally at least, a democracy and dominant in central Italy. It remains for us to see how that Roman political system worked. The middle years of the 3rd century also saw the initiation of the military activities that gained Rome an empire. Yet already we can see that Rome had been a relatively stable and efficient system, with mechanisms for reforming itself, for much longer than any of the Greek poleis had managed. ■

Suggested Reading

Barker and Rasmussen, *The Etruscans*.

Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome*.

Livy, *The Early History of Rome*.

Questions to Consider

1. Thinking about Rome's early political development, what comparisons with the Greek world suggest themselves to you?
2. Can you discern in early Roman history any durable terms or practices of the Western political tradition?

The Roman Republic—Government and Politics

Lecture 17

The Roman government, like others, was partly institutions; it was partly ideologies—fundamental governing underlying ideas. It was, fundamentally, social practices that evolved, that changed over time.

The Roman republican constitution was a combination of institutions, ideologies, social values, and historical experience. We are fortunate to know a great deal about it. The Roman magistrates operated on the basis of *collegiality* and *annuality*: The officers cooperated formally and informally, and they changed every year.

The highest magistrate was the consul. Two, elected annually, convened the voting assemblies and led the army; ex-consuls entered the Senate automatically. *Praetors* were the judicial officers. Originally, there were two but, finally, as many as eight. They presided in courts and issued “praetor’s edicts” on taking office—these added to the body of Roman law. Ex-praetors entered the Senate automatically.

Quaestors were the financial officers of the state. They received taxes, fines, and tributes and let out state contracts for such things as waterworks. They were elected annually but could also be appointed by consuls. Originally, there were two, but this rose to an undetermined number. Ex-quaestors entered the Senate automatically. *Aediles* had responsibility for the food supply, public buildings and streets, games and entertainments.

Ten tribunes were elected from the plebs and continued to have responsibility for the best interests of the ordinary people and the power to veto acts of the magistrates and assemblies. Two censors were elected every five years and served for 18 months. Their primary task was to set the census status of every citizen (see below) and to legislate on public morality.

Rome’s assemblies present a slightly confusing image. The Curiate Assembly from the royal period withered under the Republic, and the Plebeian Council declined after 287. The Senate was originally restricted to patricians, then

opened to former holders of high offices. It passed treaties but could not legislate. The Tribal Assembly constituted the Roman people organized according to districts, of which there were 33, four in the city and 29 in the surrounding countryside—always a boon to wealthy landowners.

The Centuriate Assembly constituted the Roman people organized according to wealth into 192 *centuries*. The wealthiest Romans made up the majority of the centuries. Legislation could be introduced by magistrates or ordinary

**Stoicism taught
that all visible
differences in the
world are illusory
and accidental.**

Romans. Bills were read three times in the Roman forum, vigorously debated, and then voted on. Assemblies used the system of “block voting”: There were 33 votes in the Tribal Assembly and 192 in the Centuriate (think of the U.S. Electoral College).

The big question is, how did this system work?

The first critical point to remember is that deference was paid to age, experience, and tradition. The oldest member of the Senate—the “prince of the Senate”—spoke first. The Senate did not pass laws but issued influential opinions (*Senatusconsulta*). The Senate was made up of former holders of high offices. Tribes and Centuries caucused before voting, and the *seniores* spoke and voted before the *iuniores*.

Patron-client bonds were critical to the operation of Roman society as a whole. The rich and powerful had large numbers of people in various bonds of obligation. A remarkably small number of families—fewer than 100—provided almost all of the officers of the Roman Republic for the first 400 years of its existence. Historians speak of a “senatorial aristocracy.” This is perhaps understandable before the attainment of essential equality between patricians and plebeians but harder to understand thereafter.

The central Roman political and social values contributed to the preservation of the system. *Auctoritas*: Romans placed great stress on the eminence, the inner dignity, of their greatest citizens, past and present. This was not, in principle, a matter of wealth or birth. *Mos maiorum*: The “custom of our

ancestors” was to the Romans the guiding light in all things. This is how most speeches began.

Perhaps the greatest critique and assessment of this system came from the Greek historian Polybius (c. 200–c.118 B.C.). Polybius was a learned Greek captured by the Romans in Greece and brought back to live for decades in honorable captivity among the most influential Romans. He wrote a history of his times, the sixth book of which is a penetrating evaluation of Rome’s system. He wanted to understand how a people so recently barbarian had come to conquer the known world in such a short time.

He attributed their success to their “mixed” constitution. Consuls were like kings: monarchy. Senators were like aristocrats: oligarchy. Assemblies were like demos: democracy.

Polybius had a characteristic Greek view of the cyclical evolution of politics: Monarchy → oligarchy → democracy → mob rule → monarchy. He believed that the Romans had escaped the cycle.

Was Polybius right? Yes and no. The Roman system was remarkably stable for a long time, and the “mixed” dimension of the constitution was there for all to see. Polybius said nothing about the culture of deference or the senatorial aristocracy. Polybius’s views could not address the strains on a small, tradition-bound city-state of the acquisition of world empire.

The Roman system has been, in concrete institutional structures and in fundamental ideological notions, formative in later Western political development. ■

Suggested Reading

Brunt, *Social Conflicts in the Roman Republic*.

Polybius, *Histories* (esp. Book 6).

Scullard, *Roman Politics*.

Questions to Consider

1. Can you see how the Roman system was theoretically open and, in practice, closed?
2. Can you detect the influences of the Roman constitution on the Founding Fathers of the United States?

Roman Imperialism

Lecture 18

When, finally, the Roman Republic collapsed into a military dictatorship, Rome had emperors. Then the word “Roman Empire” refers to a particular kind of political regime. That regime still had an empire as a geographical entity.

In this lecture, we will explore the emergence and early history of the Roman Empire and discuss some of the ways in which that empire affected Rome. But first, let’s clear up the language that we will use. Hearing the term *Roman Empire* may conjure up an image of the far-flung territories over which Rome ruled, or it may suggest the imperial regime, the government of the caesars.

In fact, both terms are appropriate, but in different ways at different times. Under the republic—and this is the subject of the current lecture—Rome acquired provinces all over the Mediterranean world, acquired, that is, an empire. Amidst civil wars, Rome’s republic collapsed into a military dictatorship: The Roman Empire was born in the sense of a Roman regime in which power was in the hands of emperors. But the empire, in a physical, geographical sense, kept right on expanding.

Before Rome got entangled with other peoples in the Mediterranean world—in the *Hellenistic world*—the Romans waged war for two and a half centuries in Italy. (In the last lecture, we alluded to some of the political and institutional consequences of that warfare.)

Rome gradually forged the Latin League in Latium. The Latins revolted in the period 340–338 B.C., but the Romans successfully put down the revolt. In 354 B.C., Rome made a treaty with the Samnites. A border provocation led to a series of three Samnite Wars (343–290 B.C.), which brought Rome to a frontier with Magna Graecia. Some Greeks had aided the Samnites, which Rome considered a provocation. To protect themselves, the Greeks called in King Pyrrhus of Epirus, who was defeated by Rome (Pyrrhus lost because of

“Pyrrhic victories”!) during the period 280–276 B.C. Rome then dominated Magna Graecia and all of Italy.

Certain fundamental and longstanding aspects of Roman military tactics and diplomatic practice emerged already in this Italian phase of Roman expansion. Early Romans seem to have borrowed the *hoplite phalanx* from the Greeks. This demonstrates a constant theme of Roman history: a pragmatic willingness to borrow what works.

But in mountainous Samnite country, the phalanx was not useful. (Ask a World War II veteran who fought through that country what it is like!) Gradually, the Romans changed their tactics. By the end of the Samnite Wars, Romans had developed and deployed the legion, bodies of troops arrayed in a checkerboard pattern with great mobility and flexibility.

Roman diplomacy was the stuff of legend in antiquity and has been admired and emulated ever since. Roman diplomacy’s first key principle was that of the “just war”: The gods would not give Rome a victory in a war of aggression; therefore, the Romans always had to assure themselves that they were avenging an attack or, as the theory evolved, forestalling an attack. The second key principle was generosity toward the conquered. Beginning with the Latins in 338 B.C., Rome’s conquered enemies (at least in Italy) were offered very favorable peace terms and accorded a second-class Roman citizenship.

The third key principle was “divide and rule.” The Romans rarely made the exact same deal with any two people. Thus, potential foes did not have the same grievances. A corollary of this was the Roman principle that “Your friend is your neighbor but one.” A fourth element was Rome’s sheer tenacity. Once embarked on a policy, Rome simply did not abandon it. Rome’s enemies came to know this.

In conquering the Greeks of southern Italy, Rome came face to face with the Carthaginians, who had important trading bases in Sicily and who may have lent some aid to Rome’s enemies in the Pyrrhic Wars. Rome fought three Punic Wars with the Carthaginians (264–241 B.C., 218–201, 149–146). Carthage, the old Phoenician colony, was a naval and commercial power.

Some conflict of interest between Rome and Carthage was inevitable once Rome became dominant in Italy.

Wars are full of great stories and famous characters. In the first war, Rome had, initially, no navy. Sources tell us of Romans building ships while would-be sailors practiced in mock-ups. In the second war, the brilliant general Hannibal crossed the Alps (from secure bases in Spain: Rome now had a navy!) with elephants. Faced with a large army and a superb general, Rome first adopted delaying tactics, that is, fought a guerrilla war. Astonishingly, Rome rallied from a terrible defeat at Cannae in 216.

In 204, Rome took the war to Carthage when Scipio invaded North Africa. The third war was largely caused by Cato the Elder who ended every speech in the Senate with *Carthago delenda est* (“Carthage must be destroyed”). He would bring in fresh figs to show just how close Rome’s foe was. (One is reminded of certain American senators and their nightmares about Cuba.) Why did Rome win? Tenacity and determination played a role. Flexibility in military tactics was important. Critical was that Rome’s Italian allies did not fall away. Roman diplomacy proved its value.

During the Second Punic War, the Antigonids had provided some slight assistance to Hannibal. Rome remembered this affront. Rome fought three wars in the Balkans (199–197 B.C., 171–167, 150–146), the first against Macedon and the other two because various Greek cities and leagues had supported the Antigonids.

In the Second Macedonian War, the Seleucids rendered some aid to King Philip V. In 188–187, Rome reckoned accounts with Antiochus III and swept his forces from the eastern Mediterranean. The Seleucid heartlands and Ptolemaic Egypt were still independent, but Rome was already meddling in their internal affairs. After the First Punic War, Rome annexed Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica. These were the first provinces. By 146, Rome had

The Romans believed, absolutely, that the gods would not give Rome a victory in a war of aggression.

annexed Greece and Carthage. In 133 B.C., King Attalus III of Pergamum, having no heirs, bequeathed his kingdom to Rome. This act symbolized Roman domination of the Mediterranean world.

The consequences of empire were great for Rome. The institutions of a city-state had to be adapted to govern foreign territories. War provided opportunities for wealth and prestige outside the traditional Roman social and political order. Being constantly at war gradually had a corrosive effect on Rome's society. Veteran soldiers became a disruptive force in politics. ■

Suggested Reading

Badian, *Foreign Clientelae*.

Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome*.

Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*.

Livy, *The War with Hannibal*.

Questions to Consider

1. Scholars debate whether Rome was drawn into its conflicts (sometimes called “defensive imperialism”) or whether the Romans were aggressive all the time. What do you think?
2. What connections do you perceive between Roman social values and military activity?

The Culture of the Roman Republic

Lecture 19

As in their political life, as in their diplomatic life, as in their military life, Roman cultural life also looks staid, stable, conservative, structured and measured.

Like its politics and diplomacy, Roman republican culture was staid, stable, and serious. To understand it, one must start in the Roman household. An aristocratic Roman household comprised a *familia*—the totality of persons living together in one or more associated dwellings. The head of the household was the *paterfamilias*—the oldest male member of the *familia*, who had life-and-death power over all members. This society was relentlessly male and hierarchical. Romans had a positive cult of their ancestors. Statues, or burial masks, of dead ancestors were kept in every house. Family history was taught to children, especially to boys.

Shakespeare to the contrary, Cato the Elder was the noblest Roman of them all; at any rate, he was the most exemplary. Cicero wrote a book on *The Old Age of Cato the Elder* to stress, in his own troubled times, how magnificent the Romans of old had been. Cato (234–149) lived through momentous times. He fought in the Second Punic War and the First Macedonian War. He held the quaestorship, consulship, and censorship.

Cato affected a rustic demeanor to avoid all pretense of sophistication. He stood for the sturdy, manly Roman values of olden times. He helped to pass sumptuary laws regulating women's public appearance with respect to cosmetics and jewelry. He also helped to pass a law aimed at keeping "philosophers"—that is, Greeks—out of Rome. He disliked all alien influences.

He wrote a book, *Origines*, for his son. It was the first history of Rome written in Latin and was designed less to tell all the facts than to parade examples of Roman virtue. He also wrote *De agricultura*, a manual of farming. Cato's ideal was the citizen-farmer-soldier.

But as his attempt to ban Greeks shows, the current was already against Cato. From their conquest of the south and their introduction to the Hellenistic world, Romans learned the culture of the Greeks. Rome's earliest writings, of which little survives, were in Greek. High-born Romans began regularly to hire Greek tutors to instruct the *familia*.

The Romans refused to build a theater for a long time. They thought that that was too Greek, so the plays were just performed outdoors.

In 155 B.C., Carneades (214/213–129/128 B.C.), the head of Plato's Academy, lectured in Rome and launched Greek philosophy on its course among the Roman elite. This is what Cato objected to.

When Latin literary forms began to emerge, they were deeply influenced by Greeks. The comedian Plautus (254–184 B.C.)

brought the Greek "new comedy" of Menander to Rome. Plautus used stock figures: misers, spendthrifts, braggarts, parasites, courtesans, and conniving slaves. He is riotously funny but not very original or literarily polished. Terence (c. 190–159 B.C.) was likewise influenced by Greek comedy, but his plays present elegant Latin, well-developed characters, and restrained comedy. It is worth noting that the Romans refused to build a theater.

By the last decades of the Roman Republic, Greek influences and a growing Latin literary maturity and confidence had begun to produce poetry of a very high order. Catullus (84–54), from Verona in northern Italy, emulated Greek poets, mastered poetic meters, and treated themes of love with sympathy and emotion. Two poems by Catullus may stand for the others:

No. 8

Break off / fallen Catullus / time to cut losses,
bright days shone once, / you followed a girl / here & there
loved as no other / perhaps / shall be loved
then was the time / of love's *insouciance*, / your lust as her will
matching./ Bright days shone / on both of you.

Now / a woman is unwilling. / Follow suit
 weak as you are / no chasing of mirages / no fallen love,
 a clean break / hard against the past. / Not again Lesbia.
 No more. / Catullus is clear. / He won't miss you.
 He won't crave it. / It is cold. / But you will whine.
 You are ruined. / What will your life be? / Who will "visit"
 your room?
 Who uncover that beauty? / Whom will you love? / Whose girl will
 you be?
 Whom kiss? / Whose lips bite? / Enough. Break.
 Catullus. / Against the past.

No. 70

Lesbia says she'd rather marry me
 than anyone, / though Jupiter himself came asking
 or so she says, / but what a woman tells her lover in desire
 should be written out on air & running water.

In many ways, the greatest—the most prolific, profound, and synthetic—of the republican writers was Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 B.C.). Cicero was an influential public figure in his own day and widely read and admired ever since. His most well-known writings are his forensic speeches. These evince a mastery of the rhetorical arts second to none. Cicero upheld standards of absolute integrity in the conduct of public life (remember that Cato was his ideal).

His political writings, especially *On the Republic*, *On the Laws*, and *On Duties*, took the harvest of classical Greek political thought and added to it Stoic concepts of natural law and traditional Roman ethics. He attempted to make a case that “advantage can never conflict with right for ... everything that is morally right is advantageous, and there can be no advantage in anything that is not morally right.” He also spoke eloquently, but in the end, ineffectively, against tyranny.

We may sum up this account of Roman republican culture by thinking about Rome's greatest hero, Aeneas, the central figure in Rome's epic, *The Aeneid*.

We will come back to Virgil and his *Aeneid* in a later lecture, but Virgil lived through the late republic and, in writing his great poem, he looked back ruefully at what might have been. He created, in his Aeneas—*Pius Aeneas*—perhaps the dullest figure in epic literature.

But he endowed Aeneas with qualities that the best of the Romans always wished to believe were their natural inheritance. *Pietas*: This does not mean piety in our sense. It means loyalty, reliability, honor. *Gravitas*: This literally means “weightiness,” that is, seriousness. *Constantia*: This means perseverance, commitment, dedication. *Magnitudo animi*: Literally, this means “greatness of spirit,” but by extension, it implies a devotion to higher causes, not to praise, power, or material well being. It may be that few Romans lived up to these ideals, but the ideals themselves reveal much to us about what the Romans, at their best, wished to be. ■

Suggested Reading

Bradley, *Discovering the Roman Family*.

Cicero, *Selected Works*.

Grant, ed., *Latin Literature: An Anthology*.

Ogilvie, *Roman Literature and Society*.

Rawson, *Cicero*.

Questions to Consider

1. How do the Roman public values that we have discussed here compare with those of the Greek poleis?
2. Can you see actual examples of these values in practice in the political life of Rome?

Rome—From Republic to Empire

Lecture 20

Some of the old conservatives, the more traditionalists in Roman politics, had begun to think that this empire is not necessarily such a good idea. It's really costing us a lot in terms of domestic order.

Now we will watch the Roman Republic turn into the Roman Empire even as—mind the terms—the Roman Empire goes right on expanding. We'll ask why a system that was so stable for so long collapsed. Was the system itself intrinsically flawed? Did the men who operated within this system in the last century of its existence twist it all out of shape?

When Attalus of Pergamum willed his kingdom to Rome, there was a sharp public quarrel. A conservative party wanted no part of the legacy for fear it would just lead to more entanglements in the East. A progressive party led by the brothers Tiberius (d. 133 B.C.) and Gaius (d. 121) Gracchus wanted to accept the legacy.

The Gracchi wanted to use the money to fund land redistribution to put idle farmers back to work. Conservatives feared that this was a scheme to win political supporters, and some of them illegally held a good deal of the land that was to be redistributed. Tribunes were bribed, and when he himself tried to stand for the tribunate for a second consecutive year, Tiberius Gracchus was murdered. This was the first instance of political bloodshed in Rome.

When Gaius carried on with his brother's plans, he and 250 of his allies were murdered by senatorial agents. Perhaps 75,000 people got land, and after the deaths of the Gracchi, the Senate began trying to take the land back. The Roman people now were increasingly factionalized into *optimates* and *populares*.

Amidst these political crises, Roman armies under traditional senatorial leadership were faring badly in several places, especially in North Africa. In 107, Marius (157–86 B.C.), a “New Man” (a man without

a family history of political office), was elected consul. He took over the Numidian campaign and quickly had success. He was a fine soldier and an honest man. He also professionalized the Roman army, which made the army proper, in addition to veterans, a force to be reckoned with in Roman politics. Senators were furious at Marius, even before he held the consulship several times in a row. This was not strictly illegal, but it was highly unusual.

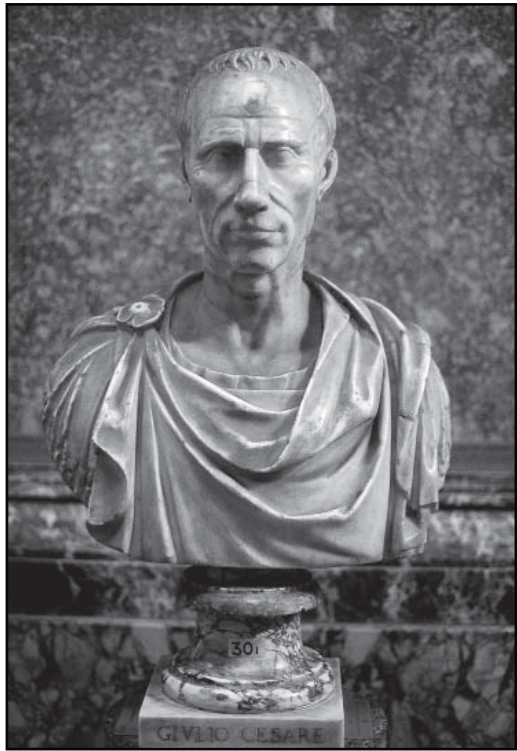
After 100, Marius withdrew a bit from the public scene, but he remained an influential *popularis* leader. In 90, Rome's allies in Italy rebelled. Marius won the "Social War" (war with the *socii*) of 90–88 B.C., and in the end, the allies got Roman citizenship. Marius's recent successes alarmed the *optimates* even more.

Simultaneously, in Anatolia, Mithridates attacked Roman territory and killed Roman merchants and tax collectors. The Senate assigned to the *optimatus* Sulla (138–78 B.C.) the task of punishing Mithridates. Marius was jealous and waged a battle against Sulla and his forces. When Sulla returned from the east, Marius was dead, but Sulla marched on Rome and massacred Marius's followers, then issued proscription lists. This was the first time that such violence, on such a scale, had been seen in Roman politics.

One immediate lesson of the careers of Marius and Sulla was that a man had to gain control of an army to make his way in the new Roman politics. The first to act on this lesson was Pompey (106–48 B.C.), who began with a command to clear pirates from the Mediterranean and wound up with several further campaigns. Close on his heels came Julius Caesar (100–44 B.C.), who got a consulship in 63 and began angling for a major military campaign.

Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus wound up pooling their financial and political resources in the "First Triumvirate," an ad hoc arrangement forged in 60 B.C. Caesar wanted a military command in Gaul to win wealth and glory and enhance his political support. Crassus was the richest man in Rome but a rather unsavory character. He wanted a military command in the East to gain an aura of legitimacy. Pompey wanted laws passed providing for landed pensions for his veterans. Cicero and others protested in vain against this outrageous manipulation of the Roman system.

While Caesar was spending eight years in Gaul, Roman politics changed dramatically. Crassus, a better swindler than soldier, died on campaign and vanished from the scene. Pompey became the creature of the *optimates* and helped to pass laws designed to ruin Caesar. By 49 B.C., Caesar had been backed into a corner: If he laid down his command and returned to Rome as a private citizen, he would be destroyed judicially. If he retained his command, he was, in effect, declaring war on Rome. Believing he had no choice, he “crossed the Rubicon.”



Bust of Julius Caesar.

Corel Stock Photo Library.

Rome now plunged into a generation of civil war. In the first phase, Caesar defeated the forces of Pompey and established himself as dictator. Many key figures of late republican politics lost their lives in this period, including Cicero. Caesar’s dictatorship was reasonably enlightened and included many reforms, such as the calendar. In general, Caesar, and everyone else for that matter, was trying to find a solution to the almost complete collapse, or corruption, of the traditional Roman political system.

In 44, a group of disgruntled senators murdered Caesar. They may have honestly believed that Caesar was the obstacle to a return of republican politics and values, but this was a foolish hope. Rome now degenerated into

13 years of renewed civil war. There was, first, a “Second Triumvirate,” consisting of Marcus Antonius (Shakespeare’s Mark Antony), the heir to Caesar’s forces; Octavian, Caesar’s nephew and adopted heir; and Lepidus, who happened to have an army under his command.

The triumvirs first defeated the forces of those who killed Caesar. Then Lepidus was shunted aside. For several years, Octavian and Antony stared each other down. At Actium in 31, Octavian defeated Antony and became supreme in the Roman world. But what was Octavian’s position? We’ll answer this question in the next lecture.

What happened to the Roman Republic? The opportunities and challenges presented by the empire devastated the old political system. Power, influence, and unimaginable wealth could be won in the empire and deployed in Rome with no checks by the traditional system. People became inured to violence and quite willing to use it against fellow citizens.

Finally, Greek culture, for all its glories, eroded the simple, sturdy values of the Romans—turned them more cosmopolitan.

Disruptions in the countryside led to countless numbers of landless, rootless people who felt no sense of commitment to any old-fashioned values. Greek culture, for all its glories, eroded the simple, sturdy values of traditional Rome. Aristotle once said that in an ideal state, all citizens could be summoned by the cry of a herald. That may not be practical, but the Roman experience makes one think. ■

Suggested Reading

Bernstein, *Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus*.

Gelzer, *Caesar*.

Gruen, *Last Generation of the Roman Republic*.

Questions to Consider

1. Can you think of other political systems in which people manipulated the rules to gain their own advantage?
2. In looking at the last century of the Roman Republic, do you see a story of human failures or of the crush of impersonal trends and forces?

The Pax Romana

Lecture 21

Historians do indeed refer to this period, from Augustus to Marcus Aurelius, as the Pax Romana, the “Roman Peace.”

Moving quickly and deftly, Octavian (31 B.C.–A.D. 14) inaugurated a new regime at Rome that proved stable and successful for two centuries. The brute reality was that Octavian controlled Rome’s armies. Instead of flaunting his military power, of ruling like a dictator or despot, Octavian, in 27 B.C., made a show of offering to return all his powers and authority to the Senate.

Even those who opposed him realized that without Octavian, the state would descend into anarchy. Therefore, Octavian was confirmed in power and awarded a number of honorific titles. Among these titles, *Augustus* became the commonest.

Augustus decided to rule as *princeps*, “first citizen,” and his new regime has been called the “Augustan Principate.” Central to the principate were two basic policies. Augustus sometimes held one or more of the republican magistracies but regularly permitted elections to be held and prominent citizens to hold office.

Augustus retained control of the richest or most militarily insecure provinces but permitted elite citizens to hold important posts in other provinces. Augustus was also personally committed to traditional Roman morality and culture; even those who opposed his political control nevertheless embraced his cultural orientation. Most important, Augustus brought peace and security after a century of chaos.

Augustus was faced with a succession problem. Partly this was attributable to the central contradiction of the regime: a despotism masquerading as a magistracy. Partly this was attributable to the fact that Augustus had no heir: He had only one child, a daughter, Julia, who did not produce an heir. Finally, Augustus adopted as his heir Tiberius, a son of his second wife by

her first marriage. He assumed the imperial office without incident; there was no return to civil wars.

From 14 to 68, Rome was ruled by members of the Julio-Claudian family, direct or indirect descendants of Julius and Augustus Caesar. The Julio-Claudians were an odd lot: Tiberius was old and suspicious and probably a pederast; Caligula was crazy; Claudius was physically handicapped and paranoid; Nero was an unbalanced genius. Caligula was assassinated, Claudius was poisoned, and Nero committed suicide. Nevertheless, new territories were added (for example, Britain), the empire was well governed, and Roman finances were put on a sound footing. The Julio-Claudian period is an eloquent tribute to the genius of Augustus's regime.

“The Romans made a great desert, and called it peace.”—Tacitus, Roman historian

A year of civil war in 69 did not return Rome to the turbulence of the late republic. Four generals in succession competed for the imperial office, with the last of them, Vespasian (69–79), making good his claim. The Flavian dynasty of Vespasian and his sons, Titus (79–81) and Domitian (81–96), ruled effectively until Domitian's growing autocracy earned him assassination.

Rome then experienced a century of stability, prosperity, and good government under the “Five Good Emperors”: Nerva (96–98), Trajan (98–117), Hadrian (117–138), Antoninus Pius (138–161), and Marcus Aurelius (161–180). Under Trajan, the empire reached its greatest extent in territory with the conquest of Dacia (roughly today's Romania). Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius were serious intellectuals. Of this world, the incomparable Edward Gibbon said:

In the second century of the Christian era, the Empire of Rome comprehended the fairest part of the earth, and the most civilized portion of mankind. The frontiers of that extensive monarchy were guarded by ancient renown and disciplined valor. The gentle but powerful influence of laws and manners gradually cemented

the union of the provinces. The peaceful inhabitants enjoyed and abused the advantages of wealth and luxury. The image of a free constitution was preserved with decent reverence: the Roman senate appeared to possess the sovereign authority and devolved on the emperors all the executive power of government. During a happy period (A.D. 98–180) of more than fourscore years, the public administration was conducted by the virtue and abilities of Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and the two antonines.

Historians refer to the period from Augustus to Marcus Aurelius as the Pax Romana: the “Roman Peace.” The wry historian Tacitus (whom we will meet in more detail in the next lecture) made two critical points about this period. First, he said, the “Romans have made a great desert and called it peace.” Second, he observed that the unspoken secret of the principate was that the army could make, and unmake, the emperor.

Nevertheless, at the heart of the regime, a partnership between the emperors and the senatorial elite worked well. It was important here that Augustus had remade and expanded the old republican elite, incorporating more Italians and even some provincials. Senators did not try to seize the imperial office or to restore the republic.

Even if Rome’s peace was imposed by force on people who had not asked for it, it provided many benefits. Peace within a vast zone promoted trade, and a lack of local disturbances permitted agriculture to flourish. Provincials did not have to fear cross-border depredations. Roman law, roads, public amenities (baths, theaters, temples, markets) served the interests of all people. Cities flourished.

How did the Pax Romana work? First, Rome asked for relatively little, primarily, taxes and loyalty. The Roman regime was too small to demand much, and Rome had no desire to interfere in people’s daily lives. The process of Romanization was a slow, steady, largely voluntary project. Local elites wanted to get on good terms with the Romans and eagerly adopted Roman ways.

Despite all the positives, and Gibbon's glowing assessment, the storm clouds were gathering, as we will see in a later lecture. Still, the fact that Rome's empire eventually vanished should not blind us to the remarkable successes of its first two centuries. A betting person would have put a substantial wager on Rome in 180. ■

Suggested Reading

Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Empire*.

Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World*.

Raaflaub and Toher, eds., *Between Republic and Empire*.

Shotter, *Augustus Caesar*.

Syme, *The Roman Revolution*.

Questions to Consider

1. Put yourself in Octavian's position in 31 B.C. What would *you* have done?
2. Do you agree with Tacitus's assessment of the Pax Romana?

Rome's Golden and Silver Ages

Lecture 22

The reign of Augustus has often been called the “Golden Age.” This was the age of many of Rome’s greatest cultural achievements. It was also one of the great ages of poetry in all of Western history, and a remarkable array of gifted poets at this time.

The inception of the principate established several crucial conditions that were conducive to a high level of cultural achievement: Peace and security after a century of disturbances. Wealth and a willingness to use it to promote culture—patronage. A climate in which reflection on Rome’s past and character was natural.

The reign of Augustus, often called the “Golden Age,” was one of the greatest ages of poetic achievement in all of Western history. Virgil (70–19 B.C.), called by Tennyson “wielder of the stateliest measure ever formed by the mouth of man,” was incomparably the greatest of them. His is a “composed” epic: Although there are stories and legends behind the *Aeneid*, Virgil composed this poem from beginning to end.

Although remembered mainly for the *Aeneid*, Virgil also composed the *Georgics* and *Eclogues*, moving and technically accomplished poems in praise of the countryside and the charms of traditional rural life. But the *Aeneid* is one of the true masterpieces of world literature. Its theme is the somber dignity of Rome’s past. In the almost dirge-like quality of the poem’s dactylic hexameters (six-footed lines, the fifth foot of which is always a dactyl), we meet, at line 33 of Book I: *Tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem*. No pompous cheerleader, Virgil!

This means: “Oh what a tremendous job it was to found the Roman people.” From the time when Aeneas carries his aged father, Anchises, on his back out of a burning Troy, we know that he has embarked on a mission from which he will not be deterred. Along the way, we see family devotion, honesty and integrity, determination, courage, and humanity: all the “typical” Roman

virtues. Yet Aeneas was harried by Juno, the goddess who had favored the Trojans.

Venus, Aeneas's patroness, went to her father, Jupiter, to ask if he were going to remain true to his promises. Virgil put these words into the mouth of the chief of the gods and, in doing so, told us something about the optimism of the early years of Augustus's reign and of the ways the Romans saw themselves:

... fate remains unmoved
 For the Roman generations. You will witness
 Lavinium's rise, her walls fulfill the promise;
 You will bring to heaven lofty-souled Aeneas.
 There has been no change in me whatever. Listen!
 To ease this care, I will prophesy a little,
 I will open the book of fate. Your son Aeneas
 Will wage a mighty war in Italy,
 Beat down proud nations, give his people laws,
 Found for them a city ...
 To these I set no bounds in space or time;
 They shall rule forever. Even bitter Juno
 Whose fear now harries earth and sea and heaven
 Will change to better counsels and will cherish
 The race that wears the toga, Roman masters
 Of all the world. It is decreed.

Ovid (43 B.C.–A.D. 18) was learned, accomplished, and prolific. He wrote love elegies (the *Amores*), a didactic spoof (*The Art of Love*), an epic-scale encyclopedia of mythological tales (*The Metamorphoses*), and other works. There is, in Ovid, a spirit of play and a sense of deep feeling. Consider one of his elegies:

Maidens, give ear, and you shall hear
 What is your chiefest duty,
 Pray listen well and I will tell
 You how to keep your beauty.
 'Tis care that makes the barren earth

Produce the ripened grain.
'Tis care that brings tree-fruit to birth
With grafting and much pain.
Things that are cared for always please,
And now each man's a dandy,
A girl must be as spruce as he
And have her powder handy.

The elegant Horace (65–8 B.C.), sage, urbane, Epicurean, was prized in his own time and ever since. Patronized by Macaenas (who gives his name to patrons and patronage), Horace was one of those who flourished under Augustus. He wrote odes, epodes, satires, letters, and a treatise on poetry. Here is a 17th-century translation of one of the odes:

Strive not, Leuconoë, to know what end
The gods above to me or thee will send;
Nor with astrologers consult at all,
That thou mayest know what better can befall:
Whether thou livest more winters, or thy last
Be this, which Tyrrhene waves 'gainst rocks do cast.
Be wise! Drink free, and in so short a space
Do not protracted hopes of life embrace:
Whilst we are talking, envious time doth slide;
This day's thine own; the next may be denied.

Epic in scale, uncommonly beautiful in language, but all in prose was the great *History* of Livy (59 B.C.–A.D. 17). He did in prose what Virgil had done in verse: told the Romans the tale they wanted to hear about themselves. In the process, he tells us a great deal of what we actually know about early Rome and how the Romans in the time of Augustus “constructed” their own past.

The period after Augustus until well into the 2nd century produced another literary outpouring, usually called the “Silver Age.” History, philosophy, rhetoric, and satire were its chief achievements.

In history, three authors command attention.

Tacitus (c. 55–c. 117) was the greatest of Rome's imperial historians. He wrote monographs, such as *On Britain* and *On Germany*, but is chiefly remembered for his *Histories* and *Annals* that treated the imperial period. He created fine pen portraits of individuals but mainly wished to put virtue and vice on display. He had made his peace with the imperial regime but not with the excesses it produced.

Suetonius (c. 70–c. 140) was not a great stylist, but his *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* (that is, of the emperors beginning with Julius Caesar) created unforgettable portraits.

Lucan (39–65) was a Spanish poet and historian who was put to death by Nero. He wrote the *Pharsalia*, a verse account of the civil wars of the late republic between Caesar and his foes. His work is full of trenchant political commentary, often providing a ringing defense of political freedom.

Among philosophical writers, pride of place goes to the Stoic Seneca (4 B.C.–A.D. 65), another writer who fell afoul of Nero. He wrote tragedies, dialogues, treatises, and letters. The emperor Marcus Aurelius was also a significant Stoic writer. His brooding *Meditations* was read for centuries as the deep reflections of a man faced with the awesome responsibilities of power who was all too aware of his human shortcomings.

In rhetoric, one name stands out, that of Quintilian (c. 35–c. 100), whose *Institutions of Oratory* constituted for the West the standard manual of the rhetorical art until modern times. These works remind us that in classical antiquity, education was based on training in public speaking. Rome produced several satirists.

Lucian (c. 125–c. 200) came from Syria and wrote prose satires in Greek in which he poked fun at both mythical and historical characters and, by implication, at almost anyone.

Juvenal (c. 60–c. 136) wrote 16 verse satires dealing with hypocrites, the travails of the poor (especially of poor writers like himself), women’s faults (as he saw them!), ambition, pretentiousness, and people’s despicable treatment of one another. His language is rhetorically sophisticated, but his message is earthy and unsparing.

Martial (c. 40–104), a Spaniard, composed some 1,500 mostly satirical epigrams. He could be rough and crude for effect, but he was a polished stylist and, at his best, hilarious.

Consider this from Martial:

You disappoint no creditor, you say?
True, no one ever thought that you would pay ...
You blame my verse; to publish you decline;
Show us your own, or cease to carp at mine ...
The verse is mine; but friend when you declaim it, It seems like
yours, so grievously you maim it ...
Why don't I send my book to you
Although you often ask me to?
The reason's good, for if I did,
You'd send me yours—which God forbid!

The principate was also a time of stunning architectural achievements. Some of these were at once remarkable pieces of engineering and powerful ideological statements. The Pont du Gard was a bridge built in the time of Augustus as part of the aqueduct that brought water to the city of Nîmes from the hills near Uzès some 50 miles away. Hadrian’s Wall stretched right across Britain, partly to control the movement of people and partly to make a statement in the landscape about the might of Rome. Other buildings were urban amenities that also made ideological statements and have been recognized as masterpieces of architecture. The Pantheon in Rome (27–25

The Romans were among the first to use architectural details as a way to decorate a building and not to serve functional purposes.

B.C.) was round, with an arched roof and architectural details as decorative elements. The use of the arch, in the roofing and as supporting elements in relieving arches, permitted the Romans to span greater spaces than Greek post-and-lintel construction could. The Flavian Amphitheater (that is, the Colosseum) is a felicitous mixture of architectural styles both structural and decorative. Seating some 80,000, it permitted games and displays on a vast scale in Rome.

Today's traveler in the Mediterranean world can see the ghosts of Rome all around. Until recently, schools taught the authors of the principate. Architects still study the buildings of this era. All roads still lead to Rome, in a way. ■

Suggested Reading

Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*.

McNeill, *Horace*.

Ogilvie, *Roman Literature and Society*.

Ramage, *Roman Art*.

Virgil, *The Aeneid*.

Questions to Consider

1. Are you familiar with Roman authors of this period? If so, what can you discern about the period from the authors you know?
2. Roman architecture was to a degree ideological. Can you think of ideological messages connected with modern buildings?

Jesus and the New Testament

Lecture 23

One of the things that began to happen in the 2nd century, in what we call the post-apostolic age, and what we may also think of as the post-biblical age, is that a group of Christian writers, whom we call the apologists, began explaining their new faith to the ancient world.

In the long run, the most momentous development of the Pax Romana was the emergence of a new religious faith that would eventually sweep the Roman world before it. This is not a phenomenon that contemporaries expected or that seems so obvious in prospect as it does in retrospect.

Christians were a tiny sect in a small, backward, unimportant province. The Mediterranean world was rich in mythical, religious, and philosophical experience. It would not have been easy for any newcomer to make its way. The cults of the Roman world were not casual, not parts of people's private sphere. Religion constituted *ta patria*, one's paternal inheritance. The calendar, basic events of life, public buildings, literary culture, and so on were all deeply marked by religion.

In the second place, *from a strictly historical point of view*, our sources are late and limited in what they tell us. The oldest written materials are the Pauline and Catholic Epistles that date from 49 to 62. These represent a first attempt to begin to systematize teaching and to create an official version of the past. They give evidence of controversy.

The Gospels were written between the 60s and the 80s, perhaps even the early 90s. Mark is the first Gospel, circa 65, but Papias said in the 2nd century, "Matthew wrote the oracles in Hebrew." No such text survives, but it is possible that Matthew prepared an Aramaic book of some kind, then revised it, in Greek, in line with Mark's narration.

The Gospels differ a good deal: Only Matthew and Luke have the "infancy narrative" (the Christmas story), and they differ. The version most people have in their minds is a composite. Matthew's is the most Jewish of the

Gospels and begins with the long narration of the genealogy of Jesus (all the “begats”). Luke frankly admits that some others have told the story, but he is going to try again. John offers less narration and more focus on doctrines.

Scholars have long discussed the “synoptic problem”: the literary relationship among the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Of the 661 verses in Mark, more than 600 appear in Matthew and some 350 in Luke. But there are about 200 in Matthew and Luke that do not appear in Mark.

The commonest explanation is the “two document hypothesis”: Mark plus “Q” (*quelle*, German for “source”) yields Matthew and Luke with the differences between them attributable to authorial style and intent. No one has ever seen Q. It is, by the hypothesis, a collection of the *logoi*, the sayings of Jesus. (In older Bibles, these were the words printed in red.) In antiquity, history was “the public deeds of great men” and biography was the revelation of character. Thus, we cannot expect biographical accounts of the life of Jesus to tell us all that we would like to know.

What, then, do we know with reasonable certainty? Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in Judaea, but grew up in Nazareth, in Galilee. He was presented in the temple for his circumcision a few days, presumably, after his birth, and he appeared in the temple at about the age of 12. These are the only surviving details of his youth. When already a man, Jesus went down to the Jordan River and was baptized by John (“the Baptist”). Jesus then began to preach publicly throughout Galilee. After a period that is traditionally said to be three years, but the length of which cannot be fixed precisely, Jesus went down to Jerusalem.

In Jerusalem, the teaching of Jesus aroused the ire of various factions, who denounced him to the Romans. To maintain peace, the Romans acquiesced in Jesus’s public execution on a Friday. In the firm belief of his followers, Jesus rose from the dead on the following Sunday. For a few weeks more, he appeared from time to time to various groups of people before he ascended into heaven.

This narrative has to be patched together from the four Gospels because no single one of them gives the whole story straight through. The account

is riddled with historical puzzles. We can mention only a few by way of example.

Luke says that when Jesus was born, Quirinius was governor of Syria and that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, where his parents had gone to register for a census. Inscriptions prove that there was a census when Quirinius was in Syria, but this was in what we call A.D. 6 or 7. There was another census in what we call 8 B.C., but no Quirinius in Syria as yet. Matthew and Luke both mention King Herod. He died in what we call 4 B.C. Most scholars, therefore, believe that Jesus was born between 8 and 4 B.C.

The Gospels offer us a series of very interesting, but sometimes also conflicting, pictures.

Luke says (3.1–3) that John the Baptist began preaching in the 15th year of the reign of the Emperor Tiberius. This would be A.D. 26–27 AD in the Syrian reckoning and 28–29 in the Roman. Did Jesus meet John immediately after he began preaching or some time later?

Tradition—and only tradition—says that Jesus was 30 when he began his ministry and that he preached for three years. Much later, Christian chronographers decided that he began his ministry in what we call A.D. 30 and that he died in 33. In fact, he would have been somewhere between 30 and 36 when he began his ministry, and we have no sure information on when he died. We need to remember that these are historian’s puzzles left for us by writers who did not share our interests or curiosity.

What can we say about the teaching of Jesus? As to technique, we have a number of indications. Jesus used parables, an old Jewish custom. He regularly quoted the Hebrew Scriptures, then explained their meanings; this is just what a rabbi would do. He spoke in all sorts of places, before all kinds of different groups. What seems most striking is his relative familiarity with women. On occasion, he appeared as a charismatic healer; he let his actions speak for him.

Jesus himself and those who wrote about him anchored him in the Jewish tradition. He, and they, spoke constantly of fulfilling prophecies. He said he had come to fulfill, not abolish, the law. When a Pharisee tried to trick him, he quoted the law (these are the two great laws, love God and love your neighbor). The central elements in his own teaching were few and simple.

He had come to call people to repentance. The Kingdom of God was at hand (although what this meant was, and is, subject to interpretation). He subverted the world's ways: Love the poor, the meek, the hungry, the suffering; take up for the Samaritan; hurl accusations only if you are totally pure. The disposition of the heart is more important than the letter of the law, as we see in many different parables.

Still, however attractive he and his teachings may have been, Jesus had been executed as a common criminal and he did not appear to have many followers. As things stood in the mid-30s, Jesus was no more than a minor footnote in ancient history. But we *know* that things turned out rather differently. We'll turn to that story in the next lecture. ■

Suggested Reading

Johnson, *The Real Jesus*.

New Testament (esp. Matthew, Romans, I Corinthians, Acts).

Questions to Consider

1. Compared with other figures from antiquity, do you have the impression that we know more or less about Jesus than we do about them?
2. How does Jesus compare, in both methods and ideas, with other great teachers from antiquity?

The Emergence of a Christian Church

Lecture 24

The apostles, who were the original disciples of Jesus, accompanied him during his ministry on the earth. We meet them, with him, again and again and again in the Gospel stories.

What sort of a movement did Jesus think he was founding? This matter is deeply controversial, and history can provide only some clues. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus twice used the word *church*. This does not appear to be the same as the Kingdom of God. By the 2nd century, *church* was a name for an institution that had emerged because of the teachings of Jesus. The question that each person who cares must answer for himself is whether this institution was foreseen by Jesus.

Some clues come from his earliest followers. After the resurrection, a group of about 120 met to choose a successor to Judas, who had betrayed Jesus. This implies a certain "corporate" mentality. In Acts of the Apostles (2.42), we read, "They remained faithful to the teachings of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread, and to prayers." This implies communities that assumed they were to behave in common ways.

The apostles were the original disciples of Jesus who accompanied him during his ministry. After Jesus's death, they decided, consciously and as a body, to obey his last command to them: "Go forth and teach all nations." Paul, an early Jewish convert to Christianity and the new faith's greatest missionary and second



Icon of Apostle Paul.

greatest teacher, founded new communities, corresponded with communities, and corresponded with other leaders.

There was clearly some sense of a network of leaders and, implicitly, some kinds of connections among different communities (at the very least, they received visitors and prayed for one another). Paul uses the word *church* regularly of the community in a particular place.

From some of Paul's letters, we get hints about the organization of individual Christian communities. We read in various places in Paul's letters of officials called *overseers*, *elders*, and *servants*. These words have passed most commonly into English usage as *bishop*, *priest*, and *deacon*. It is hard to see how bishops and priests differed in Paul's thinking. They both presided at worship, taught the faithful, and instructed new converts. It appears that every community had officers like this. It is not clear, but initially unlikely, that there was any hierarchical distinction between them.

From some of Paul's letters, we begin to get hints about the organization of individual Christian communities.

Deacons were clearly people (usually, but not exclusively, men) who facilitated the work of the leaders and served the community. Around 100, Bishop Ignatius of Antioch speaks of "monarchical bishops." By the end of the 2nd century and the beginning of the 3rd, we hear of "metropolitan bishops."

It appears that the expanding Christian church was adapting itself to the administrative geography of the Roman Empire. Many communities (we might say "parishes" today) existed in most cities, and gradually, the oldest priest (or elder) came to have a hierarchical and supervisory role over all the communities in the town. He was the overseer in a literal sense. Within provinces of the empire, there were "mother cities," that is, provincial capitals, and the overseers in those cities began to supervise the overseers in individual towns. A highly articulated structure was growing.

Early Christian apologists began to explain the new faith to the ancient world. Justin Martyr (c. 100–c. 165) wrote *A Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*

to differentiate between Christianity and Judaism, and he wrote his *First Apology* to Emperor Antoninus Pius to argue that Christians were good and loyal subjects of the empire.

Bishop Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35–c. 107) wrote a series of letters to other Christian communities affirming basic doctrines and warning against false teachers. In the 2nd century, then, we can see a clear sense that Christianity was a distinctive faith, not a version of something else, and that it had teachings that were regarded by some, but not by all, as authentic and binding.

What factors primarily account for the success and spread of Christianity? Most converts were not articulate. Those who were stressed the compelling nature of the basic teachings. Even Christianity's bitterest foes praised the admirable quality of the lives of the Christians. The heroism of the martyrs attracted people. From the time of Domitian, Christianity was illegal, but Christians were not harassed systematically before the 3rd century.

Christianity was a universal faith: open to all ethnic groups, all social classes, both genders. Most ancient cults, by contrast, were severely restricted. Christianity was an exclusive faith. Christians could not just add one more god to all the old ones. They had to renounce all other religious allegiances. Christianity was compatible with many aspects of classical culture and particularly similar to Stoicism.

Christianity was a historical faith. Jesus had lived and taught in the present. Roman writers (such as Tacitus) mentioned him. This was not one more myth placed at the dawn of time. Christianity had a particularly strong appeal to women. Christianity developed a large-scale and highly articulated organization, something no pagan cult had. The peace, security, and ease of transportation provided by the Pax Romana aided Christianity immensely. ■

Suggested Reading

Fox, *Pagans and Christians*.

Frend, *Rise of Christianity*.

Meeks, *First Urban Christians*.

Questions to Consider

1. Can you think of ways in which a historical view of Christianity's growth might conflict with a doctrinal view of the same topic?
2. How would you assess the various factors offered in this lecture to account for Christianity's success?

Late Antiquity—Crisis and Response

Lecture 25

Now we talk about late antiquity, and the term, as you'll see, is very neutral. I suppose "late" carries just a slight negative connotation, but it isn't meant to. It is meant simply to be a label, to mark off this period as one that we can explore on its own terms.

This lecture opens a series of four in which we will explore the period from about 300 to about 700. To the extent that it has been thought about at all, this is the period when the Roman Empire "fell," when classical antiquity suffered a civilizational collapse and succumbed to the forces of chaos and barbarism, became the "Dark Ages."

Hollywood, journalists, and high school history books may still speak that way, but specialists in the period that is now called "late antiquity" (and has been for about two generations) take a very different view. The traditional view owes much to Renaissance humanists, about whom we will say more as we go along, but also to Edward Gibbon and his masterpiece, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Gibbon saw internal and external reasons for Rome's fall.

Gibbon spoke of Rome's "immoderate greatness": Basically, he meant that the empire was too large, too complex to be kept together for much longer. Gibbon also said that Rome succumbed to "barbarism" and "superstition." He meant by the former, the barbarians—of "barbarian invasions" fame (we'll meet them in the next lecture)—and by the latter, Christianity. Historians still speak of internal and external forces in Rome's transformation.

But the critical point is that today, specialists speak of *transformation*; of continuity and change working in tandem; of slow, sometimes almost imperceptible alterations in age-old patterns of life. Historians are generally suspicious of any theory that claims direct, abrupt, wholesale, and calamitous change. There has always been the interesting problems of just what *fall* is supposed to mean: A civilizational catastrophe? The collapse of

a political regime? A change in the basic conditions of life for the great mass of people?

In this lecture, we will look closely at selected aspects of the history of the Roman regime itself. Our starting point must be the “crisis of the 3rd century.” The Roman world experienced one long period of civil wars, usurpations, and violent transfers of power. The army made and unmade emperors with disconcerting regularity. The contradictions implicit in a despotic magistracy had come home to roost. The empire, which had ceased expanding in the time of Trajan, now began to feel challenges along its frontiers, especially along the Rhine-Danube frontier in the north and in Mesopotamia. The Roman economy was spiraling into deeper and deeper inflation with irregularly rising prices and falling wages. The prosperity of the Pax Romana was gone. Everywhere there is evidence of a lack of confidence: A sense of gloom and dread pervades literature; wills and temple prayers are full of angst; private contributions to public building stopped almost completely.

At this critical juncture, Rome found two rulers who, in nearly a half-century of rule, addressed the problems of the 3rd century and put Rome on sound footings. But they also changed the empire fundamentally. And here is one theme we must pursue: the degree to which Rome managed her own transformation.

Diocletian (284–305) came from a poor Dalmatian family and rose through the military. He was clever, decisive, and an astute judge of the problems faced by his world. In 293, he introduced the *tetrarchy*, or “rule by four.” He chose a colleague as *Augustus* (this was now a title, not a name, as before). He also assigned each Augustus a subordinate *Caesar* (again, a title). The idea was to provide more rulers with authority in the huge and challenged empire and to provide for more orderly succession.

One historian, Walter Goffart, has said that Rome’s experience in this late antique period was “a creative experiment that got a little out of hand.”

Over the course of his reign, Diocletian reorganized the provincial administration of the empire. He more than doubled the number of provinces by carving large ones into smaller ones. He dramatically increased the size of the imperial administration, from a few hundred to 30,000 to 40,000. He created overarching administrative structures: prefectures and dioceses. These were governed by Prefects and Masters of the Soldiers chosen by the Augusti.

He significantly expanded the size of the Roman army. His aim seems to have been to double the standing army from about 300,000 to 600,000 men, but he probably never got more than 450,000. Rome was faced with the terrible problem of long, exposed frontiers.

Hoping to get some control of inflation, Diocletian froze prices, wages, and occupations. Diocletian accentuated 3rd-century trends toward a more despotic form of rule: pompous titles, elaborate courtly ceremonies, and so on (many of these were borrowed from Persia). Historians often speak of a shift from the principate—the ruler as *princeps* or “first citizen”—to the “dominate”—the ruler as *dominus*, lord and master.

True to his ideals, Diocletian retired in 305 to his magnificent palace at Split. His tetrarchy did not, however, provide for an orderly transmission of power. There was a brief, sharp civil war that saw Constantine (306–337), a soldier whose roots were in Britain, come out on top, although he continued struggling against rivals for two decades.

Constantine continued the work and policies of Diocletian. He extended the military reforms of Diocletian (who had himself built on some precedents of his predecessors). He generalized the use of “mobile field armies”: These were armies stationed inside the provinces, back behind the frontiers, where they could respond effectively to incursions. This changed Roman strategy from a relatively static line of defense to defense in depth. Frontiers were left to inferior auxiliary forces and to barbarian allies called “federates” (because they had concluded a *foedus*, a treaty, with Rome).

At one time, the army had been a path to citizenship, but in 212, the government had granted citizenship to almost everyone in the empire—

largely to tax them; therefore, military service was now attractive to foreigners living along the frontiers. Constantine issued the *solidus* with a constant weight of gold. This remained the basic money of account in the Roman world for a millennium. This reform eased but could not end the rampant inflation.

Constantine refounded the old Athenian colony of Byzantium and named it after himself—Constantine’s polis, or Constantinople (Istanbul today). This move took some of the prestige away from Rome. However, emperors had rarely ruled from Rome since the 2nd century, and Diocletian’s tetrarchy had foreseen rulers in several places. These reforms sensibly addressed the 3rd-century crisis, but they also altered the Roman regime forever and provided a stable framework for even more changes.

The Roman world became an armed camp. People lived with soldiers in their midst as never before. The fiscal apparatus of the state was now more intrusive and extracted more and more money for military causes. Political stability was achieved but at a price. Because familial loyalties could not be overcome, Rome was governed by a combination of the tetrarchal and dynastic systems. The army still mattered a great deal in politics. The roles of barbarian military officers grew greater and greater. They did not seek the throne but were often the power behind it. The increasingly intrusive Roman government damaged Rome’s historic ties with local elites, who were less loyal to the regime and more loyal to their particular localities.

Increasingly, the courts in the East and West were rivals and reacted differently to their challenges. Threats posed by barbarians along the Danube frontier induced the government at Constantinople to move those barbarians to the West. As a result of sheer bad luck, the West rarely had competent political or military leadership after 395, whereas the East had a number of extremely gifted rulers.

It should be clear, then, that Rome responded creatively and effectively to the challenges that the empire faced. Yet, by 500, the Western empire was gone, even as the Eastern survived for another thousand years. To understand how this happened, we must turn in more detail to those barbarians we have been talking about. ■

Suggested Reading

Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine*.

Cameron, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–430*.

MacMullen, *Roman Government's Response to Crisis*.

Williams, *Diocletian and the Roman Recovery*.

Questions to Consider

1. Put yourself in the shoes of Diocletian and Constantine. You know what the 3rd-century problems were. How would you have addressed them?
2. Can you see evidence for the “law of unintended consequences” in the history of the Roman Empire in the 4th century?

Barbarians and Emperors

Lecture 26

The Romans built this very large empire, and accorded various kinds of privileges to people who lived inside this empire. For them, barbarians were not very problematic. They were the people who lived outside the empire.

To open up our discussion of the barbarians, let's pose a series of questions. What or who is a barbarian? In an earlier lecture, we learned that, to the Greeks, barbarians were babblers, people who did not speak Greek. The Romans adopted and adapted this point of view: Barbarians were those who lived outside the empire. Naturally, the word had negative connotations, but it was not fundamentally a cultural concept.

What are we to make of the Cecil B. de Mille, "cast of thousands" picture of the "barbarian invasions"? Surely, this is one of the most familiar images of the late Roman world. The Romans knew, traded with, made treaties with, fought with, and spied on the barbarians for centuries. Right away, we must get rid of all ideas about surprise. We can say that the barbarians were primarily Germanic peoples, that is, people who spoke Germanic languages (we must be careful to avoid seeing them as the direct ancestors of today's Germans).

There was no single, coordinated barbarian invasion. The Romans and barbarians did not face each other like teams at the kickoff of a football game. There were a thousand incidents all of which demand individual explanation. The Romans wrote about "tribes" and many moderns have been duped into following them, but in fact, the various peoples formed, unformed, and reformed many times. The peoples who entered into the history of the late Roman world were polyethnic confederations.

We can assign a coherent history to "peoples" only *after* they entered the Roman Empire, wherever it was, and why it was, that they did so. The barbarians were not nomads. They were settled agriculturalists; therefore,

whenever we find any group of them on the move, we need to explain this movement, not attribute it to migratory habits.

What is at stake in our discussion? As we saw in the last lecture, Diocletian reorganized the Roman administration. In, say, 300, the western half of the Roman Empire consisted of several dozen provinces. In, say, 600, that Roman Empire was gone in the west and, in its place, were several barbarian kingdoms. We need to assess the relative roles of the Romans and the barbarians in this transformation.

A case study of the Visigoths will help us to understand the dynamics of the late Roman world. But remember, we could, and for a full understanding would have to, make case studies of a couple of dozen peoples. The people whom we later know as the Visigoths were a loose confederation living along the central Danube in the early 4th century when Constantine made a treaty with them, assigning them responsibility for guarding a stretch of the river.

In the 370s, some of the Visigoths formally requested permission from the Roman government to cross the Danube and enter the Balkans. They were being hard pressed by the Huns, who really were nomadic and who had come on the scene a generation or so earlier in the Black Sea region. The government had just experienced a dynastic struggle and had lost an emperor in battle with the Persians in Mesopotamia. Rome had admitted modest-sized groups before but had tended to disperse them in the military. A request for a large number of people to enter the empire *en bloc* was unprecedented.

Thinking themselves loyal allies and fearful of the Huns, the Visigoths crossed the Danube in 376 and immediately began negotiating to regularize their status. They wanted land to settle on and farm. The government panicked, and Emperor Valens marched north with a small army, which the Goths defeated thoroughly at Adrianople in 378. Now, the Emperor Theodosius came to the east and pacified the situation.

After Theodosius's death in 395, his sons ruled, one in the east and one in the west. They were bitter rivals. The Goths, meanwhile, continued to press for a generous landed settlement and now began asking for a Roman military command for their king. Basically, it was during these years that a gaggle,

so to speak, of peoples (some of whom were ethnically Goths) became *the* Visigoths.

At the opening of the 5th century, the Goths, tiring of being pawns in Roman politics, entered Italy. They threatened Rome, then, in 410, put the city to the sack. This seemed a cataclysmic event to some people, but the Visigoths were only trying to bring maximum pressure to bear on the Romans. The Visigoths marched north through Italy into southern Gaul. They settled around Toulouse and continued to request recognition. In 418, the Romans accorded the Goths a new treaty. They were settled under their king in Gaul and assigned responsibility for protecting Gaul's western coasts against pirates, suppressing brigandage, and guarding the Pyrenees frontier.

**Patrick Geary
has called
the barbarian
kingdoms
"Rome's last
creative act."**

There was now a kingdom on Roman soil amidst Roman provinces. A barbarian people were acting on behalf of the Roman government but were nevertheless largely autonomous. It is hard to see this as an invasion. Clearly, Roman policy had as much to do with all of this as anything the Goths did.

A brief look at the ongoing situation in Gaul shows further developments. An allied people called the Burgundians were living in the Savoy region of Gaul and began to press to the north. The Roman military commander in Gaul, Aetius (c. 396–454), had grown up among Goths and Huns. He decided to try to use the Huns as mercenaries against the Burgundians.

The Huns realized the tenuousness of the Roman position and began widespread depredations in Gaul. Aetius put together a coalition consisting chiefly of Visigoths and Franks, which defeated the Huns in 451. Contemporary sources called Aetius's forces "Romans."

In 476, the pathetic Romulus Augustulus was deposed, and a barbarian general sent his imperial insignia to Constantinople, saying that the west no longer needed its own emperor but would carry on under Constantinople's authority. If there was a "fall of the Roman Empire," that's all it was.

By 500, the former western provinces of the empire had changed into several kingdoms: The Frankish kingdom in northern and central Gaul.

The Visigothic kingdom in southern Gaul, but they were about to be defeated by the Franks and driven into Spain, where they persisted until 711. A Burgundian kingdom in east-central Gaul, but this kingdom would be absorbed by the Franks. An Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy that would collapse amidst attacks by Roman forces sent by Constantinople. The Ostrogoths were followed in Italy by the Lombards. A Vandal kingdom in North Africa that was also defeated by Roman forces.

Rome had pulled its troops out of Britain between 370 and 410. What would happen in Britain was not yet clear in 500. Historian Walter Goffart has said that Rome's experience of accommodating the barbarians was "an imaginative experiment that got a little out of hand." Historian Patrick Geary has called the barbarian kingdoms "Rome's last creative act." ■

Suggested Reading

Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans*.

Heather, *Goths and Romans*.

Pohl, ed., *Kingdoms of the Empire*.

Thompson, *The Huns*.

Wolfram, *History of the Goths*.

Questions to Consider

1. Does the account presented here persuade you that it is fruitless to speak of "barbarian invasions"?
2. The lecture ends with quotations from two historians. Do the conclusions offered by Goffart and Geary seem sensible to you?

The Emergence of the Catholic Church

Lecture 27

Whatever else we might say about it, we may certainly say, in comparison with the various pagan cults, there is a vast chasm of difference on the level of organization and structure. No pagan cult ever had anything like the organizational structure that the Catholic Church built up.

We saw in an earlier lecture that the Christian church was spreading in the Roman Empire, that it was creating an organizational structure, and that its members had some sense of belonging to a community larger than their own local church. Now, we must turn to the emergence of an empire-wide church that can be called Catholic in three senses: institutionally, legally, and doctrinally. First, then, we address the institution.

The key question is how did the primitive Christian communities grow into the Roman Catholic Church? There are (as always!) hints in language: *ekklesia* and *kuriakon*. Bishops gradually became important personages in towns throughout the empire. They commanded respect, wore distinctive clothing, controlled important forms of patronage, and provided an outlet for talents.

Institutionally, the key step was the emergence of the bishops of Rome, the popes (originally a term of endearment), to a position of leadership. “Apostolic succession” applied everywhere to the legitimacy of the local clergy, and Rome was doubly apostolic, with Peter and Paul. From the 3rd century, Rome placed great stress on the “Petrine” text in Matthew (16.16–19) to assert that just as Peter had been the leader of the apostles, so, too, were Peter’s successors leaders of the whole church.

In reality, the historical associations of Rome itself were important, although the Roman Church did not emphasize this. In the midst of great theological battles (we will speak of these later), people frequently turned to Rome for advice or even decisions. This slowly turned into a precedent. The Emperor Theodosius commanded all people in the empire to believe as the bishop of Rome believed.

Pope Leo I (440–461) was the great theoretician of papal leadership. Pope Gregory I (590–604), in the absence of an imperial government in Rome, took over much responsibility for the food supply, urban amenities, and even defense against the Lombards. He was a quasi-ruler in the old imperial capital. But there were quarrels over *monarchical* versus *collegial* models of church government. In late antiquity, the popes generally lacked the power to impose their will.

Ironically, the very Roman state before whose officials Jesus was tried eventually became a major supporter of the Christian faith and the Catholic Church.

Christians encountered the Roman state only sporadically for a long time. Nero made them scapegoats in Rome. Domitian outlawed Christianity. Pliny wrote to Trajan to ask what to do about Christians. Provincial officials occasionally moved against individuals or communities but usually in circumstances about which we are ill-informed. In 250–251, Emperor Decius undertook the first systematic persecution of Christians. Diocletian undertook the “Great Persecution” from 303 to 306. This was part of his ideological realignment. He attacked clergy and assemblies, gathered and burned books, required people to appear in temples to make an act of sacrifice, and encouraged denunciations.

Diocletian’s efforts failed, and Constantine began the close association between the emperors and the church. His mother was a devout Catholic, and he seems to have converted very late in his life. In 313 in the Edict of Milan, Constantine granted Christianity legal toleration in the empire. He granted tax exemptions and fiscal privileges to the church and made massive personal donations, not least the Lateran basilica in Rome; he also saw to the building of St. Peter’s and St. Paul’s basilicas in Rome.

For a brief time, Emperor Julian the “Apostate” attempted a pagan revival, but he failed. Between 378 and 380, Theodosius passed laws effectively making Roman Christianity the state religion of the empire. Pope Gelasius (492–496) wrote a famous letter to Emperor Anastasius in which he explained that the world was governed by the *authority* of priests and the



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Colossal statue of Constantine, originally from the Basilica Maxentius.

power of kings. This was to elevate the religious hierarchy over the secular, a remarkable transformation.

The record of imperial relations with the church is a mixed one involving both benevolence and ruthless interference. We must remember that Roman officials had always seen their duties, at least to some degree, in religious terms, and emperors were the state's chief religious authorities. There was no concept of the "separation of church and state."

Catholicism as a matter of belief involved the development of a canon of scripture and the elaboration of a creed, a basic statement of faith. From the early 2nd century, it became clear that the scriptures were central to the authentic teaching of the emerging church. But what scriptures? Palestinian rabbis established the Masoretic (that is, "traditional") Text of the Hebrew Scriptures. But this posed two problems for Christians: Should they use the Hebrew Bible at all, and what use, if any, should they make of the Greek text of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint?

Eventually, it was decided that the “Old Testament” would be retained. But there were disagreements in antiquity, which persist today, on the authority of the seven books that appear in Septuagint and not Hebrew. By the 5th century, a canon of “New Testament” writings had become definitive. A substantial amount of post-biblical material was, thus, left out. The earliest versions of the New Testament were in Greek. An “Old Latin” version began to circulate too, as well as other Latin versions. In 382, Pope Damasus (366–384) commissioned St. Jerome (342–420) to prepare a new Latin translation. He spent the rest of his life working on the “Vulgate.”

The point that I'm trying to emphasize is that the Roman Church never put any stress at all on the importance of the city of Rome.

Once Christianity could function publicly, some serious differences in teachings began to appear. The differences turned around two basic elements of Christian doctrine: that God

was triune, three persons in one God, and that Jesus was true God and true man. In an attempt to preserve strict monotheism Arius (c. 250–336), a priest of Alexandria, taught that Jesus was slightly subordinate to God the father. Fierce controversies drove Constantine to call the Council of Nicaea in 325. Arius was condemned, and the Nicene Creed (still recited in many churches in a version revised at a council in Constantinople in 381) spelled out Trinitarian theology.

Arianism did not die immediately, however. Some of Constantine’s successors were Arians, and many of the barbarians were converted to Arian Christianity. In the late 4th and early 5th centuries, the great controversy turned around the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ. At the Council of Chalcedon in 451, the teaching that Jesus was fully God and fully man was defined and



Right hand from the colossal statue of Constantine.

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affirmed. Some *monophysite* (literally, “one-nature-ite”) Christians persisted in their beliefs, especially in the eastern provinces.

By the end of the 5th century, then, Christianity had an empire-wide organization at least nominally under Rome’s authority; a well-defined legal status in the empire; a definitive body of authoritative writings; and officially proclaimed definitions of some of its most important and difficult doctrines. All in all, that is a remarkable achievement in a relatively short time. ■

Suggested Reading

Chadwick, *The Early Church*.

Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World*.

Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*.

Questions to Consider

1. Would you say that the church, in the end, gained or lost from its relationship with the Roman state?
2. Is it surprising that Christians disagreed on the sources of their faith and some of its basic teachings?

Christian Culture in Late Antiquity

Lecture 28

For a long time, of course, Christians had been illegal, and they weren't going to draw attention to themselves by battling out in public. Once those problems began to become public, a group of thinkers began addressing themselves to those problems, and to much else besides, as we'll see as we go along.

Our final look at the world of late antiquity will involve asking how and where we can see the impact of Christianity on the culture of the Roman world. Three main areas of inquiry will hold our attention: Under what circumstances did Christianity go from struggling for intellectual respectability to becoming intellectually dominant? If many Christians made their peace with classical culture and the Roman world, what are we to make of the monks, those who opted out? If by the end of late antiquity the vast majority of people were Christians, how did this affect their daily lives?

The intellectual culture of Christianity is inextricably bound up with the “church fathers,” the figures who dominated cultural life in the “patristic” (from *pater*, father) era. Already in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, Christian writers had addressed important questions. How did Christianity differ from Judaism and from pagan philosophy? How could one live as a Christian in a pagan world? Some pagan writers had also begun to take Christianity seriously enough that they critiqued some of its teachings.

Once Christianity became legal, the patristic era dawned and lasted until about 600 in the West and 750 in the East. The greatest work was done in the period from 350 to 450. This was also the time when Christian art and architecture began to emerge. The church fathers addressed three big sets of questions: How is the Bible to be understood? How are fundamental Christian doctrines to be explained? How does Christianity relate to classical culture: “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” as one of them asked.

This was the third great age of Latin literature (and there were Greek fathers, too). The first great Latin father was Ambrose (339–397) a local nobleman

who was elected bishop of Milan. His greatest contribution was to translate Greek philosophical ideas and the writings of Greek Christian writers, such as Origen of Alexandria, into intelligible form for Latins. He also developed and propagated the use of allegory in the Latin West as a key mode of biblical interpretation.

Jerome (342–420) we met in the last lecture as the translator of the Vulgate. He, too, was a blueblood attracted to the church. He wrote numerous letters to explain Christian teachings. He played a key role in opening up Christian doctrine for small groups of high-born Roman women. His writings were much prized in the Renaissance for their elegance.

The greatest of the Latin fathers was Augustine (354–430). He was born in North Africa to a middling sort of family, and his mother, Monica, was a devout Catholic. He studied in local schools and became a teacher of rhetoric before moving to Rome, then to Milan, where he fell under the influence of Ambrose. Augustine was not a systematic thinker. He addressed problems as they came up. In the course of his long life, he spoke to many problems of Christian theology. His *Confessions* chronicled his conversion and stands as the first work of true introspection in Western literature.

His *On Christian Doctrine* was the first systematic exposition of how Christianity related to classical learning. His *City of God* was a magnificent theology of history occasioned by the Gothic sack of Rome. His aim was to show that in the grand scheme of things, Rome did not matter much. This was a decisive break with the classical ideal that the world would last exactly as long as Rome itself.

The last of the Latin fathers was Pope Gregory I, who wrote biblical commentaries, letters, lives of saints, and the *Pastoral Rule*, a book in the classical tradition that explicated the responsibilities of bishops. It was influential for centuries. In the eastern Mediterranean, there were fathers, too.

The “Cappadocian fathers,” Basil the Great (c. 330–379), his brother Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330–395), and Gregory of Nazianzus (329–389), were formidable biblical scholars and spiritual writers but most important for their

participation in the Trinitarian and Christological struggles of the age. John Chrysostom (“Golden Throated”) (347–407) was patriarch of Constantinople and a preacher of great skill and power. Above all, he charted the Christian moral life, going so far as to criticize the imperial court for immorality and setting a bad example.

In this age of great intellectual achievements, when the church gained power and status in society, there were those who opted out, who turned their backs on the civic society of antiquity. These were the monks. There had always been an ascetic tradition in Judaism, early Christianity, and most religious traditions. There were people who believed that by rigorous self-denial and discipline, it might be possible to gain virtual union with God. Sometimes, these were solitaries and, sometimes, they lived in community.

Christian monasticism rose in 4th-century Egypt. Anthony (251?–356) was a solitary and established the eremitic ideal (from *heremos*, desert). Pachomius (290–346) began as a solitary, then created the first communities, men and, later, women, living the cenobitic life (from *koinos bios*, meaning “common life”). Monks are, therefore, *monachoi*, “lone ones,” who live in a *monasterion*, a “monastery.” Especially after Pachomius, they follow a Rule (*regula*) and are called “regulars.”

**A culture that
had produced
a small number
of writings ...
has become
the dominant
culture of the
Roman world.**

From Egypt, monasticism spread for several reasons: A *Life* of St. Anthony that became a late antique bestseller. Collections of wise sayings and teachings of the “desert fathers.” Popularization by Jerome’s writings. People who traveled to Egypt to sit at the feet of great religious masters.

Eremitic monasticism spread in the eastern Mediterranean through the work of St. Basil, whose Rule was normative for centuries. Eremitic monasticism originally got a foothold in Gaul through St. Martin (c. 336–397) at Tours and St. Honoratus (c. 350–429) at Lérins. This form spread in Ireland through the work of St. Patrick (390?–460?).

In the West, the future belonged to St. Benedict of Nursia (c. 480–c. 550). He came from a modest Roman family, then abandoned secular studies to pursue a life of Christian retreat and virtue. Eventually, a community gathered at Monte Cassino, where in about 540, he wrote what has become the most famous and widely adopted Rule in all of monastic history. Benedict composed his Rule for his own monastery, but Pope Gregory I admired it and popularized it, and Benedict, with a biography. Benedict's Rule was particularly prized in early England, and English missionaries promoted it on the continent. Anglo-Saxons influenced the Franks, whose greatest king, Charlemagne, imposed the Benedictine Rule on all monasteries.

How did Christianity affect culture and life? Christians continued to use Latin and Greek and, thus, assured the preservation of these languages while enriching them with new vocabulary and conceptual frameworks. One should not press too hard the famous thesis of Adolf von Harnack that classical culture captured Christianity. Christians knew how to “spoil the Egyptians.”

Christian patronage put an end to the building bust of the 3rd-century world and created a new and dynamic architecture. Christian art spread widely and found creative ways to reinterpret classical motifs and styles while adding new ones. Christian poets carried on the classical tradition. By assigning power to celibate men, Christianity created a new kind of society that also was a “democracy of sin.” Christian martyrs and saints created a new kind of hero-figure. A new morality assured women a more secure place in society. Slowly but surely, Christian ethics pervaded secular law.

In the lands that had been the western provinces of the Roman Empire, we see that power had come to be shared between Germanic warrior elites and urban bishops. The rich were still, as for centuries, landowners. Much of the cultural landscape still looked classical, but in fact, the dominant cultural orientation had become Christian. Europe's Middle Ages were dawning, although no one really recognized this at the time. ■

Suggested Reading

Augustine, *Confessions*.

Brown, *Augustine*.

———, *The World of Late Antiquity and Cult of the Saints*.

Chitty, *The Desert a City*.

Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity*.

Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture*.

Kelly, *Jerome*.

Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*.

McLynn, *Ambrose*.

Questions to Consider

1. Why do those who opt out always exert such a powerful magnetic pull on the societies they have left behind?
2. Review and assess some of the ways in which Christianity altered the patterns of life in the Roman world.

Muhammad and Islam

Lecture 29

Muhammad came from an old, wealthy and very well-connected Meccan family. He, himself, seems to have come from a relatively minor branch of this family, perhaps not from one of the wealthier parts of the family.

The world of late antiquity produced three heirs: the Islamic world, the Byzantine Empire, and the Germanic West. This lecture examines the first of these. The Islamic world was the least predictable of the three as an heir for anyone looking at the ancient world. Arabia was large, turbulent, and contested among various powerful neighbors, chiefly, the eastern Roman Empire and the Persians. The area was subject to a wide array of influences from neighbors and from both Christianity and Judaism. But the Arab lands had never been fully conquered by anyone; therefore, autonomous development was important, too.

A key moment can be found in the career of the prophet Muhammad (570–632). Muhammad came from an old, wealthy, and well-connected Meccan family. He entered the caravan trade as a young man and earned a reputation for probity. He married Khadijah, a widow some years older than he. As a young man, he began to retire to the hills and caves outside Mecca, where he received a revelation from Allah.

He was soon preaching a new monotheist, ethical, and exclusive faith that galvanized followers. His teachings were contrary to traditional Arab religion. His teachings also threatened the privileged status of the *ka'aba*, a shrine in Mecca visited by pilgrims from all over the Arab world. Facing grave problems in Mecca, Muhammad and a few followers departed for Medinah in 622, an event remembered as the Hijra (622), the beginning of the temporal era for the world made by Muhammad and his followers.

The basic teachings of Muhammad are contained in the Quran, *hadith*, and *sunna*. The Quran constitutes the scriptures of Islam (defined just below). They are “recitations,” not interpretations, and Muhammad is not

the “author.” The *hadith* are collections of Muhammad’s own sayings. The *sunna* is, in effect, the “good practice,” the customs of Muhammad himself.

Taken together, these teachings add up to a faith with just a few basic requirements. First and foremost, people had to make *al-Islam*, the “surrender” to Allah. Those who had made *al-Islam* were Muslims. The essential requirements are usually called the Five Pillars. These are a profession of faith (“There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet”); fasting (especially during the month of Ramadan); prayer (five times daily facing Mecca and, if possible, Friday in a mosque); generous almsgiving; and at least once in one’s lifetime a pilgrimage to Mecca. The faith is one of “orthopraxy” more than “orthodoxy.” The critical idea is the Umma Muslima—the community of all those who had made *al-Islam*.

On Muhammad’s death, his old associate Abu Bakr became *caliph*, or “successor to the prophet.” Abu Bakr fought wars against “apostates” (632–634).

These were people in Arabia who felt that their loyalty died with Muhammad. Then, he and his successors fought lightning campaigns that, in just over a century, brought Muslim armies to central Gaul in the West and to the frontiers of China in the East.

It is possible to identify some reasons for this astonishing military success. Constantinople and Persia had worn themselves out in a series of wars. There were deep religious divisions in the eastern Mediterranean going back to the patristic era. Raiding and plundering had been a way of life in Arabia for centuries before Islam prohibited Muslims from raiding one another. The prophet himself taught the need to expand the faith: *jihad*.

In 661, a new family of caliphs emerged, the Umayyads. They were soldiers from Syria who settled down to building the basic institutions of the caliphate. They moved the capital to Damascus.

**We have a new
universal faith,
a faith that is
taught to be
for all people.
We have a new
chosen people,
the Arabs.**

In 750, another change took place; the Abbasids came to power. These were ordinary soldiers and peoples from the frontiers. They moved the capital to a newly founded city, Baghdad. This was a period of brilliant cultural achievements. The caliphs were great patrons of scholars, and Muslim scholars began to tackle the massive Greek corpus of learning, especially the philosophical and scientific works.

Eventually, the caliphate began breaking up. Spain fell away in 750; Egypt and much of North Africa, in the 9th century. The once mighty Arab army was increasingly made up of uncontrollable Turkish mercenaries. The Abbasids ruled nominally until 1258.

What had been achieved in a remarkably short time was a newly dominant people, a new universal faith, a new chosen people, a new holy book, and a culture deeply rooted in antiquity. ■

Suggested Reading

Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*.

Denny, *An Introduction to Islam*.

Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*.

Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society*.

Von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam*.

Questions to Consider

1. How does Islam compare with Judaism and Christianity? Note similarities and differences.
2. Compare the emergence of the caliphate with that of the Roman Empire.

The Birth of Byzantium

Lecture 30

As I said, I think we can now talk about a Byzantine Empire as a way of thinking about this new world. “Byzantine” because, remember, Constantinople was the old Greek city of Byzantium, hence our name. It’s also important to say that that’s our name for it. They called themselves “Romans.”

The second of Rome’s heirs is Byzantium. As the western Roman Empire evolved into a series of kingdoms in the 5th century, the eastern empire persisted. Fewer and less acute frontier problems challenged the rulers. Generally, the eastern rulers were more skillful and competent. The east was more prosperous, urbanized, and intellectually cultivated.

But there were deep religious divisions because of large monophysite communities. No one in the 5th century thought of the empire based on Constantinople as anything but Roman. Only in hindsight can we see that the two cultural realms were drifting apart.

East Rome in the age of Justinian (527–565) provides some hints of the new directions. Justinian waged wars against the Vandals, Ostrogoths, and Visigoths in an attempt, vain as it turned out, to recover Rome’s lost western provinces. *We* can see that Constantinople’s sphere of influence was effectively reduced to the east. The imperial administration and finances were massively reformed, the first such comprehensive undertaking since Diocletian. *We* can see that a new kind of regime with an even less civilian character was emerging.

Justinian issued the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* (529–533: Tribonian as chief legist) in Latin as a major analysis, organization, and updating of Roman law, but it had to be translated into Greek to be useful. *We* can see that Roman would not mean Latin.

The Ecumenical Council of 553 was called to attempt to deal with monophysitism, and Rome and the western bishops were largely ignored.



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Hagia Sophia.

We can see that the east was going its own way in matters of theology. In building Hagia Sophia (Isidore of Miletus and Anthemius of Tralles, two mathematicians, were the chief architects), Justinian created a church that made nods in the direction of traditional Roman architecture but that was, on balance, something new. *We* can see the evolution of east Rome

If we fast-forward to east Rome in the Age of Heraclius (610–641), we can see an accentuation of the changes evident in the age of Justinian. The military policies of the Roman state were now oriented differently. Wars against Persians and Muslims showed that the eastern frontier was critical. Wars in the Balkans against Slavs and Bulgars showed that the northern frontier was critical. Little attention was paid to the west—apart from Italy, none at all.

Heraclius laid the beginnings of *theme* system. Soldiers were settled on the land and led in local contingents by military officers who answered up a hierarchy to *strategoi*. These were no longer citizen soldiers recruited and trained by the state and paid out of tax revenue. This system continued to

evolve for centuries and was a natural extension of the increasing combination of civil and military authority in the hands of individual officials. Heraclius and his successors called themselves “Basileus ton Romaion.” This means “emperor of the Romans.” That’s traditional enough, but they did so in Greek, not Latin. Official acts were rarely issued in Latin any longer.

Byzantium in the age of Leo III (717–741) and Constantine V (741–775), the Isaurian dynasty, shows the degree to which changes had seated themselves permanently. Wars were fought exclusively in Anatolia and the Balkans. Italy was no more than a source of conflicts with Italians and popes. Elaboration of the *theme* system continued unabated. Leo III issued a new law code, the *Ekloga* (c. 726), that was deliberately a summary of the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*.

We can see that, gradually, two cultural realms, East and West, or Byzantine Orthodox Christian and Western Latin Christian, were going to move apart, were going to drift apart.

Distinctive religious customs now marked sharp differences between east and west. It is possible to speak of Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic (although as yet neither side admitted or desired a rupture). Byzantine priests could marry. The Byzantine church used leavened bread in the Eucharist. Byzantine monks were tonsured differently

than those in the west. Icons—despite a harsh but sort-lived reaction against them—came to play a critical role in worship. It seems safe to say that we can now speak of Byzantium and Byzantine (although *they* continued to say “Roman”).

In 867, with Basil I, the Byzantines got a new dynasty of rulers: the Macedonians. They tended to be capable soldiers who secured the northern Balkans and, for a time, even rolled back the Muslim advance into Anatolia. They practiced clever missionary and diplomatic policies that won eastern Europe and incipient Russia for Orthodoxy. They promoted learning but always in Greek and in continuation of the Greek tradition. We see also in Byzantium, a universal faith, a new chosen people, a foundational holy book, and an orientation toward classical culture. ■

Suggested Reading

Browning, *Justinian and Theodora*.

Hussey, *The Orthodox Church*.

Obolensky, *Byzantium and the Slavs*.

Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium*.

Questions to Consider

1. Granted that Byzantium owed more to the Roman past than the caliphate did, can you compare the two historical newcomers in terms of the degree of their indebtedness to the past? In what ways were these historical siblings alike? In what ways, different?
2. Thinking about the period from Constantine to Basil, when would you say that there is something present that is clearly *Byzantine*?

Barbarian Kingdoms in the West

Lecture 31

You may recall that we had mentioned that many of the Germanic peoples were converted to Arian Christianity, either when they were living along the frontiers of the Roman Empire or when they actually entered the Roman Empire.

The period from 500 to 750 saw transformation of the Germanic West: Some kingdoms failed and others proved durable; the lands of Europe were Christianized. In Latin traditions, a cultural blend of classical, Christian, and Germanic elements formed. The early Mediterranean-centered kingdoms failed.

The Vandals were militant Arians, tyrannical, pirates in the western Mediterranean, and finally, defeated by Justinian in 532–534. The Ostrogoths, although Arians, were promising under Theodoric (493–526) and blended with Roman society. But they fell to Justinian’s wars of reconquest (535–555). For the Visigoths, the legacy of their defeat by the Franks, Justinian’s attack, Arianism (until 589), and political disunity left them in a weakened state, and they fell to Muslim invaders from North Africa in 711–716. The Lombards entered Italy in 568–569 in the wake of the Ostrogothic defeat. The Byzantines did not accept them (although they did little about them), but the popes opposed bitterly their attempts to extend rule all over Italy and, until about 680, their Arianism. Finally, the popes turned to the Franks, who defeated the Lombards in 755, 756, and 773–774.

The future was left, in a sense by default, to the Anglo-Saxons and the Franks. The Anglo-Saxons were many peoples who entered Britain circa 450–600 in the wake of the Roman withdrawal. They built several small kingdoms (traditions speak of the “heptarchy”) that competed with one another. The most effective kingdoms were those that were capably led and had room to expand: Kent and Northumbria, initially; then Wessex; and finally, Mercia. Kings ruled from impressive wooden halls, used scepters, and issued coins, laws, and documents.

A few documents speak of *bretwaldas* (“Broad-wielders,” or perhaps, “Britain-wielders”), and some scholars take this to be evidence of an awareness of political unity long before it really existed. Offa of Mercia (757–796) was the first to call himself “King of the English,” but in truth, it is hard to know what he meant by this. Kings maintained widespread commercial relations, as we can see from the fantastic ship burial at Sutton Hoo discovered in 1939.

The Franks were a confederation of peoples whom the Romans first encountered along the Rhine in the 250s. Rome made treaties with them, and they played an important role in the history of northern Gaul. Gradually, the Franks moved—by slow agricultural expansion—across modern Holland and Belgium into what is now France. The Franks expanded against their neighbors, defeating the Visigoths and driving them into Spain and conquering the Burgundians. They also expanded along, and to the east of, the Rhine. Franks blended with Gallo-Romans, especially through intermarriage.

The Franks converted from paganism to Catholicism (although some leaders may have had a brief flirtation with Arianism). From the late 5th century, Frankish leaders allied with the leading churchmen, abbots and bishops. The Franks maintained Roman traditions of rule: The official language was Latin; wills and laws were issued; courts were held.

Clovis (486–511), the greatest of the Merovingians, divided his kingdom among his sons; thereafter, there were usually three sub-kingdoms: Austrasia, Neustria, and Burgundy. Frequent strife among the Merovingians led to aristocratic leadership. The greatest of these aristocratic families was the Carolingian, the family that eventually produced Charlemagne (next lecture!). Ireland’s political evolution was embryonic, with literally dozens of tiny kingdoms on the island. No clear movement toward larger political entities, let alone kingdoms, was evident in Wales or Scotland by 800.

**But we see,
above all, the
evolution of
antiquity into
three different,
distinct, yet
kindred heirs
of Rome.**

The second great development of the years from about 500 to about 750 was the development of the Catholic Church. In Rome, the popes gradually turned away from the Mediterranean world and entered into relationships with the emerging political leaders of Western Europe. Popes continued to build their institutional leadership in central Italy—the papal state. Popes became great patrons of art and learning in and around Rome.

Bishops remained important local leaders. As new kingdoms grew, more bishoprics were created. In the Frankish world, this meant east of the Rhine. In Britain, this meant first Canterbury and York, then a whole network. Bishops coming together in councils could legislate for their whole realms long before kings could do so.

Bishops became key advisers to kings. Monasteries spread all across Europe. Monks played a key role in converting the people of the countryside. Many missionaries were Irish or Anglo-Saxon monks who traveled far to preach and teach. Monasteries were often important centers of learning.

A new cultural life began to manifest itself across Europe. Exuberant decorative motifs entered art with the Celts and Anglo-Saxons. Schools were generally located in monasteries or, sometimes, at cathedrals (from *cathedra*, meaning “seat”; a cathedral is the seat of a bishop). Learning, based on the Bible and church fathers, was intended to foster salvation, not bring pleasure or prepare people for jobs.

The greatest centers of education were in the north of England. Lindisfarne was a monastery with strong Irish connections that produced a gospel book, now in the British Library, that is a testament to biblical scholarship and a masterpiece of book art. The greatest single figure was the Anglo-Saxon Bede (673–735), who in a lifetime at Wearmouth and Jarrow, wrote history, biblical commentaries, theology, and books on time reckoning. He popularized A.D. dating.

By about 750, there was another region with peoples professing a universal faith, looking to one holy book, thinking of themselves as a chosen people, and entertaining complex relationships with the classical tradition. This shows us the shift of the center of power in the West from the south to the

north. We can see a volatile situation in the Mediterranean world. We can see the evolution of the world of late antiquity into three kindred but distinct heirs of Rome. ■

Suggested Reading

Bede, *A History of the English Church and People*.

Fletcher, *The Barbarian Conversion*.

Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*.

McKitterick, ed., *The Early Middle Ages*.

Riché, *Education and Culture in the Barbarian West*.

Questions to Consider

1. What patterns of similarity and difference do you see in the historical development of the Islamic, Byzantine, and European worlds?
2. What long-term consequences do you discern in the roles of religion in forming Rome's heirs?

The World of Charlemagne

Lecture 32

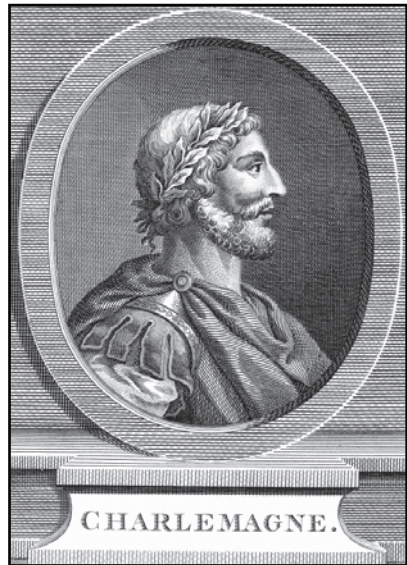
Charlemagne, Carolus Magnus, Charles the Great in Latin, was the greatest member of the Carolingian family, which arose in the early 7th century in the northeastern region of the Frankish world, in an area we call Austrasia.

Charlemagne was the greatest member of the Carolingian family, which arose in the early 7th century in Austrasia (northeastern Frankish kingdom). Initially, the family's power was based on vast landed patrimonies. Creative marriage policies unified even more lands in the family's hands and built relationships with other powerful families.

The Carolingians long controlled the office of Mayor of the Palace, sort of a prime minister to the Merovingian kings. They built up close relations to leading members of the clergy, both bishops and abbots. They waged military campaigns along frontiers that maintained the integrity of the kingdom. Charles Martel, for example, defeated a Muslim army near Poitiers in 733 and dramatically enhanced the prestige of his family.

In 751, the Carolingians finally took over the throne. Pippin III (751–768) wrote to Pope Zachary to ask if it was right that the person in Francia who had all the power lacked the title of king. Zachary

needed help against the Lombards and told Pippin that he should be king. Pippin had already carefully prepared his usurpation with Frankish elites,



Charlemagne (r. 768–814).

but papal approval conferred additional legitimacy. Pippin ruled effectively for 17 years and began rebuilding the prestige of the monarchy, which had suffered under the last Merovingians.

The reign of Charlemagne (768–814) marked a turning point in European history. He was a great but complex figure: moral and profligate, humane and vicious, barbarous and learned. His long reign provided many opportunities. His immense patronage brought key people to court, and he was a keen judge of people. Slowly, he worked out and implemented a coherent plan.

The historical work of Charlemagne falls under several distinct heads. His military campaigns helped to maintain the realm. He waged 53 campaigns in 46 years. Charles rarely led armies himself. His great talent was organization, not generalship. Essentially, he restored the borders of the Merovingian kingdom while rounding off some frontiers.

Institutional developments involved both reform and innovation. He made the royal court and courtiers key players in both government and politics. He created the impression of wide consultation and consensus. Annual assemblies were held at which the Franks assented to royal initiatives. Capitularies—legislation in *capitula* (“chapters”)—were issued at almost every assembly.

Key members of the Frankish people were made royal vassals and, thus, entered into personal relationships with the king. *Missi dominici* were wandering envoys sent out to inspect the work of all other officers and report back in an effort to avoid dishonesty and oppression of the weak and poor.

Ecclesiastical developments took place on several fronts. A close alliance with the papacy was a hallmark of Carolingian history. An extension of the church hierarchy followed closely on Charles’s institutional reforms and military advances. He saw church organization as a complement to, and even an advance on,

Still, a century of unified Carolingian rule went very far towards stamping a common historical and cultural imprint on Western Europe.

political organization. His attempts to attain uniformity in canon law, liturgy and worship, and monastic practices went far toward achieving a common culture in Western Europe.

The imperial coronation of Charlemagne is one of the signal events in Western civilization. It was occasioned by problems in papal Rome. It was also prepared by an emerging idea of a universal, imperial, hegemonic tradition in Francia.

The events of Christmas Day 800 led to the creation of a “New Israel” in Francia. By artfully altering St. Augustine’s theology, Charlemagne’s courtiers created a “political Augustinism” that served as the ideological foundation for the new regime. The idea of *Christendom* was born in Charlemagne’s reign.

The break-up of the Carolingian Empire was perhaps inevitable. Internal factors included: Family rivalries among the sons and grandsons of Charlemagne tore the realm apart. These reached a culmination of sorts in the Treaty of Verdun in 843. The sheer complexity of the lands and peoples over which the Carolingians ruled made uniformity difficult. Still, we should be impressed with what they achieved. There was, over most of Europe, an absence of any tradition of unified rule.

External factors included: Viking, Muslim, and Magyar attacks that began in the middle years of the 9th century. The militarization and localization of society as responses to the unpredictable attacks forced people to fall back on locally available resources. Bonds between the center and the localities were slowly dissolved. Still, the century of unified Carolingian rule went far toward stamping a common historical and cultural imprint on Western Europe. ■

Suggested Reading

Collins, *Charlemagne*.

Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*.

Riché, *The Carolingians and Daily Life in the World of Charlemagne*.

Roesdahl, *The Vikings*.

Questions to Consider

1. Does Charles “the Great” appear to deserve his epithet?
2. Can you think of things the Carolingians might have done to stave off the dissolving tendencies of the 9th century?

The Carolingian Renaissance

Lecture 33

The Carolingians themselves had a very profound sense that they were doing something novel, that they were doing something important, that they were engaged in reform, they were engaged in revival, that they were engaged in a great cultural project.

As early as 1839, Jean-Jacques Ampère referred to “la renaissance carolingienne.” He was writing a literary history of France. What can he have meant? One approach is to reflect on the terms *renaissance*, *reform*, and *revival* because each has been attached to the Carolingian period as a whole and to its cultural life.

Another approach is to inquire into the inspirations for Carolingian activity. The Bible was central—as a book, as a source of information, as a literary model. The Christian Roman Empire was important, too; that is, the empire of Constantine, not of Augustus. The fathers of the church were copied, studied, and transmitted by the Carolingians. Classical texts and authors are more difficult to assess in terms of their influence.

Another approach is to emphasize that the movement—whatever we call it—was encouraged, supported, and financed by the Carolingian family. They gave it a coherence and impetus that it could not otherwise have had.

The development of schools and the provision of basic education was the first step. The “seven liberal arts,” the basic curriculum in antiquity, still formed the basis of education. These arts were grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, and music. Alcuin divided these into the *trivium* (grammar, logic, rhetoric) and the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, and music). Thereafter, the former were the basic education and the latter, the advanced.

The school tradition on the Continent had not collapsed but was in serious disarray. The Carolingians came into contact with Anglo-Saxon missionaries on the Continent, especially Boniface, in the time of Charles Martel and

Pippin III. By the time Charles came to the throne, he attracted Alcuin (735–804), the greatest contemporary product of the Northumbrian tradition started by Bede.

Alcuin became a friend and trusted adviser to Charlemagne. He prepared theological works, biblical commentaries, poems, and letters. His works have sometimes been dismissed, unfairly, as elementary and unoriginal. But he was a teacher preparing basics. Alcuin urged Charlemagne to insist that every monastery and cathedral have a school where even lay boys could be educated.

Charlemagne also brought in scholars from elsewhere in Europe. They were attracted by his vision and impressed by his commitment of resources. Important grammarians came from Italy. Specialists in theology and liturgy came from the Spanish borderlands. The scholars who came brought books and sought out copies of books they already knew. Slowly, libraries were built up. Many monasteries and cathedrals developed a *scriptorium*, a writing department where manuscripts were copied. As a measure of the work, we have some 180 manuscripts before 800 and more than 6,000 from the 9th century.

The movement had several conscious goals. Enhancing the intellectual quality of members of the clergy to make them better preachers, better teachers, and less susceptible to heresy. The Carolingian ideal of rule derived from the Bible and Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Rule*: "ministerial kingship." This held that office was a burden entrusted by God to his servants and to be exercised on his behalf. It did not bring rank, wealth, or prestige.

One would be answerable for it. The clergy were to explain this. "Secular sanctity" is a good name for the ideal preached to the laity. Carolingian teachers did not urge everybody to go off to a monastery. Instead, they were urged to be good, to be holy, to be saintly, in their current status and occupation. Christian ethics were to be taught.

There were also several unexpected results. Latin was improved from a technical point of view but, ironically, "killed," turned into a dead language. The natural evolution of Latin was arrested; henceforth, Romance continued

to evolve as a living language and Latin became a precisely fixed scholarly language. Large amounts of Latin literature were produced, some of it of a very high quality.

Several major figures were poets who had mastered classical meters, had a fine sense of theme and language, and could write with real feeling. Einhard (c. 770–840) wrote letters, saints' lives, and a biography of Charlemagne based on the *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* by Suetonius. He also happened to be an accomplished architect. Theologians debated such questions as the meaning of baptism, the issue of predestination, and the proper role of religious images. Between 768 and 855, 27 cathedrals, 417 monasteries, and 100 royal residences were built. Of this awesome productivity, not too much survives because buildings were rebuilt again and again.

Although most manuscripts were homely books with no images, the Carolingian period witnessed the production of several dozen surviving books—and, one supposes, many more—whose painted images are masterpieces of European art. Some of these were produced for the court, such as the great Bibles produced for Charlemagne. Many more books were produced in *scriptoria* at such places as Tours, where Alcuin was abbot for the last eight years of his life.

A figure such as Theodulf (c. 750–821) reveals many trends of the age. He came to court as a theologian to formulate the Frankish response to Byzantine views on religious art. He seems to have been the only significant Carolingian writer who knew Hebrew and who could, therefore, deal intelligently with the Old Testament. Charlemagne used him as a *missus* in the south of France. He was appointed bishop of Orléans and issued important legislation governing the life and activities of the clergy of his diocese. He almost single-handedly produced an edition of the Bible that remains a marvel of learning. He was perhaps the finest poet of his age. He designed a beautiful chapel at Germigny.

The Carolingian period was formative politically, institutionally, economically, governmentally, but also culturally, religiously, ethically, morally, and academically.

Theodulf may have been unusual, but versatility was a hallmark of the age. Hrabanus Maurus (776/784–856) was Alcuin’s greatest pupil, a key adviser to Charlemagne’s heirs, abbot of Fulda, Archbishop of Mainz, a poet, a biblical scholar, and an encyclopedist in the tradition of Pliny the Elder. Hincmar of Reims (806–862) was an archbishop, an adviser to kings, a historian, a theologian of some renown, and the greatest legal mind of the early Middle Ages.

The Carolingian period provided the basis for a common European culture, at least at the highest levels of society. This period also built Catholic Christianity into every aspect of life in Europe. At the most basic level, the Carolingians established the framework for European intellectual life until the emergence of the universities in the 12th century. ■

Suggested Reading

McKitterick, ed., *Carolingian Culture*.

Porcher, et al., eds., *The Carolingian Renaissance*.

Sullivan, ed., “*The Gentle Voices of Teachers*.”

Questions to Consider

1. Do you think *renaissance* is an apt word to use of the Carolingian period?
2. In what ways was the Bible formative and fundamental for the Carolingians?

The Expansion of Europe

Lecture 34

The period from 900 to 1300 was one of the longest eras of sustained growth in world history. Growth was evident in almost every aspect of life. This growth is the crucial background to political and cultural achievements of the period.

The first fundamental fact is long-term rise in population. The increase began slowly in the Carolingian period, became most intense from 1050 to 1200, then slowed from 1200 to 1275, finally leveling off. The evidence is qualitative, not quantitative, including larger families; people living longer; no plague or famine; warmer, drier climate; new land under cultivation; and better diet.

There was modest technological innovation and dissemination. The Romans generally were not interested in technological gains. Medieval people vastly expanded cereal production. How? Production was expanded through greater use of horses as draft animals. This necessitated better harnessing and virtually universalized the horseshoe. The new heavy, wheeled plow, with an iron share, first introduced from the Slavic world in the Carolingian period, became more widely disseminated.

Water mills were widely used from the 11th century. Mills demanded engineering gains in gearing. Mills were imperative because of the increased availability of grain; this made more flour available for bread, the staple food. Land began to be more efficiently used. The three-field system, a Carolingian-era innovation, spread to much of Europe. With more land under the plow and a greater variety of crops, there was insurance against a season of bad weather. There was a growing tendency to agricultural specialization. People and regions combined to produce what they were best suited to produce.

Improved roads and transport vehicles made it possible for more goods to travel farther and faster. Agricultural gains in the countryside served to promote far-flung urban markets. Church and secular governments worked to protect trade and traders; agricultural specialization was also a major

impetus to trade. Trade was facilitated by fairs (as in the Champagne region); leagues of cities and ports; banking agencies; and contracts, partnerships, and insurance. Several vast commercial networks emerged in addition to intense local exchange: North and Baltic Seas; Danube Basin; Rhone-Saone route; Italian cities and eastern Mediterranean; Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean via caravan routes.

Europe, then, in what we call the High Middle Ages, was dynamic and prosperous. Such widespread prosperity had not been seen since the Pax Romana.

There were greater efficiencies in surface mining. This made available more iron and stone, which facilitated farming, warfare, and construction. Transport was crucial in this realm, as well. These factors put more money into circulation, facilitated economic specialization, and promoted the growth of towns.

Early medieval towns were usually seats of government or bishops' sees. In the Carolingian period, many towns had *faux-burbs* or sub-urbs, where peddlers and part-time merchants gathered.

After 1100, townspeople were increasingly permanent and engaged in trade or industry (artisanal more than "heavy," apart from cloth). Townspeople needed different things than the rural elites who dominated society and politics: peace, security, order, supplies of food, and raw materials.

Changed economic circumstances spawned reflections on the economy. The condition of the poor became more evident. Legislation and preaching turned against usury, the lending of money at interest. Theologians and lawyers defined the concept of the "just price." Europe in what we call the High Middle Ages was dynamic and prosperous. Such widespread prosperity had not been evident since the Pax Romana. ■

Suggested Reading

Bartlett, *The Making of Europe*.

Duby, *The Early Growth of the European Economy*.

Herlihy, *Opera Muliebria: Women and Work in Medieval Europe*.

Questions to Consider

1. Consider the signs of economic growth discussed in this lecture and look for ways in which they are interrelated and interdependent.
2. Do the factors that generated urban growth in medieval Europe still sustain cities today?

The Chivalrous Society

Lecture 35

King Alfred the Great of England, in the late 9th century, once said that a kingdom needed men who fought, men who prayed and men who worked. About a century later, two French bishops, one in prose and one in poetry, picked up that same theme and talked about a world of oratores, prayers; bellatores, fighters; and laboratores, workers.

Who were the people involved in this expanding Europe? King Alfred the Great said a kingdom needed men who fought, men who prayed, and men who worked. This point of view led to conflicts about the natural leadership of society. Some people were left out of this scheme, notably townfolk and Jews. The place of women was ambiguous in this society.

By those who fight, Alfred (and others) meant the nobility. The nobility initially consisted of large, loosely structured families who held large tracts of land and monopolized offices. By the 11th century, families began to practice primogeniture (*primus genitus* means “first born”) and to form into lineages. Such families worked to create compact blocks of land and sometimes took their names from lands or castles.

There were always several levels of nobles. The truly great (royal families at the top) who could operate on a kingdom-wide scale. The families of largely local power and influence. Ordinary knights, who often had to struggle to find a lord, a bride, an office, or an estate. The nobility was basically the governing class of Europe. They monopolized office holding in both church and state until kings could bring others into service. The nobility had a specific ethos: chivalry.

The word (*chevalerie*, that is) comes from *cheval* (horse) and meant, basically, “horsiness”—conduct becoming men who ride horses. More specifically, chivalry was a code of conduct for a warrior aristocracy, not rules governing relations between the sexes. The code laid stress on prowess, courage, loyalty,

and generosity. One encounters the code in literary works, such as *The Song of Roland* (c. 1100). This poem is full of medieval “guy stuff.”

Those who pray were the clergy of the medieval church. There were quarrels over whether monks or bishops should lead society, which order was the holier and stood nearer to God. Clergy members everywhere were, increasingly, aristocratic. The clergy was not a dumping ground for unwanted children. Clerical office brought prestige, a secure life, education, a decent diet, and better housing. Convents provided opportunities for women to live free of male domination and to have the amenities they might otherwise have missed.

The clergy shared in governing society. The clergy often played a role in defining the ideology that was dominant in any period. Clerics had excellent social and institutional connections; they came, after all, from the same families as the public office holders. The clergy shared the culture, values, and outlook of the nobility. The worldly clerics of medieval literature are not caricatures or exaggerations.

Clerical society was hierarchical: pope, bishops, priests. The clergy promoted hierarchical ideas in society, which tended to reinforce aristocratic ideas of rank and status. The clergy constantly sought to reform itself and the wider society. In 910 in Burgundy, the monastery of Cluny was founded to be free of all lay control.

From Gorze, Hirsau, Fleury, Worcester, and other places, reforms spread all over Europe and influenced both clergy and laity. Sometimes, reformers called for abandonment of the world and “freedom” for the church; sometimes, they called for active engagement. In the 12th century, the Cistercians, from a strict monastery at Citeaux, tried to create a purer Benedictine ideal. They thought the Cluniacs had grown too worldly and lax in their monastic life. The Cistercians were greatly facilitated by St. Bernard (d. 1153), whom we

It was in this Europe of the High Middle Ages that we can talk of those who fought, those who prayed, and those who worked—the basic groups of people.

will meet again in a later lecture as one of the great intellectual figures of the 12th century.

There were also eremitic monks and communities, especially in Italy but also in rural France and England. Regular canons sought to reform cathedral clergy and to make their life more like that of monks, even though they were not cloistered. Military orders, most prominently Templars and Hospitallers, were a curious sign of the times. The “mendicant” (begging) orders were crucial, too. Most prominent were those of St. Francis (1181/1182–1226) and St. Dominic (1170–1221).

The clergy sought to promote its own idea of a perfect layman: *Miles Christi*—the “Soldier of Christ.” This was another species of chivalry. In the turbulent 10th century, the clergy promoted the Peace of God and Truce of God. These were movements aimed at limiting the incidence of violence in society.

Finally, members of the clergy played other crucial roles, as well. They led the worship of the church and, thus, brought ordinary people face to face with their religion and their God. As we saw in the last lecture, the clergy began to speak on great social issues, such as poverty and wealth. Clergy were, for the most part, teachers in schools. Clergy officiated at the decisive moments of people’s lives: baptism, marriage, death.

Those who work were, in the tripartite scheme, peasants, that is, farmers. In this reckoning, only those who worked the land truly worked. There was a tremendous variation from slaves (especially in frontier regions) to well-off free farmers. The period from 900 to 1100 saw an increasing concentration of rural populations near castles. The presence of water, wood, iron, a church, and a cemetery anchored populations in one spot. The power of local notables—who were consolidating their holdings—more easily reduced people to subordination.

People lived in communities we usually call “manors.” Again, there was tremendous local variation in how manors were set up and operated. Basically a manor was a “bipartite” estate: One part of the estate directly benefited the aristocratic holder of the land, and one part of the estate benefited the people

who lived and worked there. The point of the system was to free important laymen for the duties of ruling.

The growing prosperity of high medieval Europe produced major changes in some areas. Personal services were sometimes commuted into cash payments. Aristocrats wanted disposable money to buy the fine things that merchants were making available. More serfs became free in France and England than elsewhere. Peasants began banding together to enforce “customs”: These were regulations governing the operation of a manor and, in prosperous times, were often shifted to benefit the peasants.

The village community was the locus of life for a majority of the population. People worked 250 to 270 days per year; there was a good deal of free time and time for celebration. Peasant villagers shared routines of work, worship, celebration, market, and court. In Europe in the High Middle Ages, the traditional order of European society, the order that persisted until the French Revolution, took shape. ■

Questions to Consider

Bisson, ed., *Cultures of Power*.

Bouchard, *Strong of Body, Brave, and Noble*.

Bridenthal, et al., eds., *Becoming Visible*, chs. 4 and 5.

Constable, *Reformation of the Twelfth Century*.

Glick, *Abraham's Heirs*.

Rösener, *Peasants in the Middle Ages*.

Suggested Reading

1. Think about all the roles played by the clergy in medieval society and ask yourself who plays those roles today.

2. Medieval society was hierarchical in every way. How many examples can you think of?

Medieval Political Traditions, I

Lecture 36

In the first place, then, this little kingdom of England basically held its shape despite being attacked again and again and again, and despite this rather long and curious dalliance with France.

In this lecture and the next one, we will explore several central themes in medieval European political development. This lecture focuses particularly on England and France, while the next one will look at Ireland, Iberia, Italy, and Germany. The first critical theme that we will follow is the development of—or the failure to develop—the territorial integrity of the state. The second theme is the elaboration of—or the failure to elaborate—effective central institutions of government.

A third theme is the expansion of government activity. This can mean the emergence of new states along the frontiers of the old Carolingian world. Or it can mean the growing size, complexity, and sophistication of governmental institutions within particular states. A fourth, and somewhat less prominent, theme is a look at changes in the governing classes.

England survived several conquests, foreign entanglements, and dynastic instability to create a well-defined state. England is relatively small and more homogeneous than other European states. This made coherent development somewhat easier than elsewhere but, by no means, inevitable. As we saw, the little kingdoms of the “heptarchy” often produced one leading member but never a truly national monarchy.

Then, England had a long and complex encounter with the Vikings. The first attack was at Lindisfarne in 793. Sporadic attacks took place down to 865, when the “Great Army,” having been defeated in France, attacked and began the conquest of England. Alfred the Great (871–899) began an English rally in Wessex and, by the time of his death, had moved the Viking—mainly Danish—frontier to the Thames valley. Through the first half of the 10th century, Alfred’s successors continued to move the frontier farther and farther

north into the Danelaw—the part of England under Scandinavian control and centered on Jorvik (= York).

In the late 10th century, political consolidation in Scandinavia led freebooting warriors to attack England again. England was conquered in 1014 by Swein Forkbeard who was succeeded by his son Cnut in 1016. Cnut reigned until 1035 and was succeeded by his sons until 1042, when the son of the last Anglo-Saxon king returned.

Edward the Confessor (1042–1066) had no heir and seems at different times to have recognized the claims of Harold of Wessex, the leader of the Anglo-Saxon nobility, and of William the Bastard, the duke of Normandy. Harald Hardrada, the king of Denmark, claimed England in succession to Cnut. Harold Wessex defeated Harald Hardrada, only to be defeated in turn by Duke William at Hastings in 1066. William's was the famous "Norman conquest," but it is important to see it as the culmination of two and a half centuries of Norman (that is, Northmen) attacks. William retained Normandy when he conquered England. This ushered in a centuries-long English territorial involvement with France.

William was succeeded by two sons in succession, but the second, Henry I (1100–1135), died without a male heir (the Anglo-Norman elite would not accept his daughter). Thus, a grandson of William the Conqueror on the French side was chosen, Stephen I (1135–1154), but he, too, died heirless. In 1154, Henry II became king. He was the son of Henry I's daughter and the Count of Anjou. He had also married Eleanor of Aquitaine. The accession of Henry II created the "Angevin Empire": The king of England had a controlling interest in 60 percent of France.

Henry was succeeded by his sons, Richard Lionheart (1189–1199) and John (1199–1216). John, called by some contemporaries "Softsword" and "Lackland," went to war with King Philip II of France and lost. At a gulp, France swallowed up most of England's continental holdings. For the next three centuries, England and France repeatedly squabbled over their competing claims to various bits of France. Through all of this, however, the basic shape of England did not change, although the English kings pressed

claims to overlordship in Wales and Scotland without actually taking over either region.

The situation in France is somewhat simpler to describe. The last Carolingians and, after 987, their Capetian successors began by controlling not much more than the Paris basin—the Ile-de-France. The Ile-de-France was strategically situated, and the early Capetians were clever at governing it well. When French princes started involving themselves in English affairs, the Capetian kings meddled effectively in their Continental holdings, creating expensive and troublesome distractions. Then, Philip II (1180–1223) defeated John and secured a large portion of France. As the 13th century wore on, the French monarchy extended its authority in the southeast by leading or promoting campaigns against religious heretics centered on the town of Albi.

Despite military and dynastic turmoil, the core of England was well, and remarkably consistently, governed. Conquerors did not come to plunder and destroy but to rule (and perhaps, indeed, to profit from ruling). England’s Anglo-Saxon kings already had some important centralizing tools at their disposal.

Key nobles, *thegns*, came to court, provided advice, and received appointments. Local officials—the shire reeves (= sheriffs)—were royal appointees. Kings could summon all free men to serve in the militia. Kings could always collect some taxes and, during the Viking period, they extended this prerogative with *danegelds*—literally, “Dane money”—taxes collected to buy off the Danes when it was inopportune to fight them.

William the Conqueror and his successors retained and advanced this system. William conducted the Domesday survey in 1087 to find out the wealth and resources of his new kingdom. Henry I began the long evolution of the Exchequer, the chief financial branch of the royal government. Henry also began sending out “itinerant justices” who, in effect, extended the royal court throughout the realm. Henry II vastly increased the scope and quality of the royal courts, gradually drawing in most nontrivial business. This laid the foundations for a “common law.”

By the time of King John, the English barons were distressed at the evolution of royal institutions over which they had little control. They forced John to sign the Magna Carta in 1215. This document insisted that the king was not above the law and demanded that the king cease abusing “feudalism.”

England and France were very different, but each had developed essentially the modern territorial limits of its state.

It was long assumed that one could easily speak of medieval government in terms of a tidy “feudal pyramid.” The king stood at the top. He had vassals, who had vassals, and so on, right on down to the lowest knights. There were lords and vassals. Vassals did indeed swear homage and fealty; agreed to provide *auxilium et consilium* (aid [usually military service] and advice); and received, in return, something of value (often a fief [*feudum* in Latin, whence “feudalism”]), plus moral and legal protection from a more powerful person. It is also true that feudalism played a role in governance: Royal vassals performed important jobs; John had outrageously abused his feudal prerogatives. But there never was a system: Not all vassals had fiefs; not all royal officers were vassals.

In 13th-century England, there were two great political and institutional questions: How can political decisions be made without recourse to violence? Who gets to participate in decision making? It was always assumed that the king would take advice in his council. Great barons tried in vain to control the council.

Then, in 1265 and 1295, meetings were held in which powerful nobles and the higher members of the clergy, as well as prominent but not necessarily aristocratic local men, met to talk together—*parliament* in the then-dominant French. Thus, somewhat accidentally, a great institution was born. But it was not yet clear what its powers were, who would attend, or how often it would meet. But the point had been made that there was a “community of the realm” consisting of the king’s “natural advisers” that was to have a share in governing.

Had we looked a little more closely at the household of the English kings, we would have detected the extension of personal, domestic responsibilities to the kingdom as a whole. This is also true for France. An officer kept the king's treasure, initially a chest in his bedchamber. This was the origin of the treasury that kept the revenues of the kingdom as distinct from the personal income of the monarch. The king had clerics who handled his correspondence and prepared formal documents. Gradually, some of these men became less personal servants of the king than public officers of the realm. They made the chancery.

The transport officer of the royal household—the *comes stabuli* (whence “constable”)—gradually became a military and police officer. One could go on like this, deriving the offices of state from the household. In France, the question was over what territories would this system extend. Initially, the kings ruled little more than the Ile-de-France, but we have seen how the kings gained more and more territory.

One great advantage for France was that a dynasty arose in 987 and ruled until 1328. This provided great continuity and stability. And in St. Louis (Louis IX 1226–1270), the family produced a revered saint of the church. The innovation in the French system was that after lands were conquered from the English, the French kings either assigned them in large chunks (called *appanages*) to members of the royal family or introduced direct royal officials into them.

This means, in effect, that French kings used non-feudal policies as soon as they were strong enough to do so. The result of French policy was that royal government was stronger than in England because, in England, a significant local elite had existed and played key roles since Anglo-Saxon times. But France is large and ethnically, socially, and economically complex; therefore, it was less cohesive than England.

England and France were quite different, but each had developed essentially the modern territorial limits of its state and an effective central government. This shows us two models of government. We should not assume either of them to be the normative situation in Europe. ■

Suggested Reading

Abels, *Alfred the Great*.

Baldwin, *The Government of Philip Augustus*.

Chibnall, *Anglo-Norman England*.

Douglas, *William the Conqueror*.

Holt, *Magna Carta*.

Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals*.

Van Caenegem, *The Birth of the English Common Law*.

Questions to Consider

1. War played an important role in the development of both England and France. Compare its varying effects in each realm.
2. In the 17th century, an English Parliament executed a king while a king of France said, “I am the state.” Can you see the roots of those two very different situations in the 13th century?

Medieval Political Traditions, II

Lecture 37

We must, in the first place, avoid the temptation to suppose that centralization was the normal pattern in Europe, that somehow, in the High Middle Ages, people's responsibility was to begin building the modern, sovereign, omniscient, territorially defined nation-state.

In this lecture, we will consider some areas that did not follow the kinds of patterns evident in England and France. We must avoid the temptation to suppose that centralization was the normal pattern in Europe and that, therefore, such places as Italy and Germany were retrograde. The borders and regimes of European countries have changed repeatedly since late Roman times. Consider, only recently, Germany and Yugoslavia. We must understand that there are individual historical circumstances that defy handy generalizations.

Iberia presents an interesting case that, all by itself, reveals several significant themes in European development. As noted in an earlier lecture, an Islamic state based on Cordoba followed the creation of the Abbasid caliphate in the East. The Cordoban regime failed to attain central control, and a series of *taifas*—small, autonomous regions—emerged, especially after 1000.

Late in the 8th century, the realm of Asturias, in the northwest, launched the Reconquista. But the war began in earnest under Sancho I of Navarre (1000–1035). This long war of reconquest by the Christian realms of Spain—it ended in 1492—was one of the great dynamics in medieval Spanish history. The second great dynamic was the extraordinarily rich blend of cultural traditions in Spain: Christian, Islamic, and Jewish. Sancho divided his realm between his two sons, laying the foundation for two kingdoms: Castile and Aragon. Castile led the Reconquista and took Toledo in 1085, a great moral victory. Military success was advanced by Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar, known in myth and fact as “El Cid.” Christian successes led to a Muslim call for reinforcements from North Africa. The Reconquista was halted for a time, but a crusading army landed near what became Lisbon in 1139 and opened a new reconquest front and laid the foundations for Portugal.

In the early 13th century, Pope Innocent III stirred the Spanish to renewed efforts, and at Las Navas de Tolosa (1212), the Castilian forces won a great victory. From this point, the outcome of the Reconquista was never again in doubt. Portugal grew more slowly than Aragon and Castile. Aragon became a major Mediterranean power with wide-ranging commercial interests. Castile developed into a significant territorial monarchy. The open question in Iberia was what shape any final settlement might take. This would not begin to be clarified until the end of the 15th century.

Ireland represents a different case. The Viking attacks in Ireland were initially disruptive, but gradually, the Irish began to unite in the face of a common foe. Brian Boru (976–1014) began to exert some real influence over the island and, after 1100, church reformers began to create a national church organized on a strict territorial basis. In the 12th century, Rory O'Connor turned to England for mercenaries to help him expand his authority. This move awakened the interest of Henry II, who invaded Ireland in 1171. The English are still there! Irish political development was retarded.

In Eastern Europe, promising beginnings always seemed to encounter crushing difficulties. The Polish kingdom waxed on Germany's eastern frontier. It was well governed and firmly anchored in the Western orbit by its decision to embrace Roman Catholicism. But King Boleslav III divided the realm among his three sons in 1138, and for more than two centuries, Poland was disunited and weaker than its neighbors.

As another example, we look at Rus, the remote ancestor of Russia. Vikings established a combination trading base and military camp at Kiev in 862. Gradually, this state expanded and entered into commercial and cultural relations with Byzantium, from which it accepted Orthodox Christianity. Yet weak leaders, aristocratic factionalism, repeated attacks by Steppe peoples, and finally, the Mongol invasions destroyed this state.

Italy offers yet another set of examples. First of all, we need to recognize that Italy per se did not exist. There were three main zones. The south was a land of constant external intervention: Byzantines first, then Muslims from North Africa, followed by Normans, followed in turn by the Germans and

French, who were succeeded by the Aragonese. In spite of this turmoil, the region was prosperous and culturally precocious.

The center of the peninsula was, for long periods, dominated by the popes, but the papal state expanded and contracted many times. The north was dominated by the Carolingians, then, after 962, by the Germans. This domination was resisted, sometimes effectively, but the region never approached a coherent, unitary political growth. The dominant development in Italy was the emergence of the communes, one of the most creative of all medieval political experiments. Roots of the communes were in the rising agricultural prosperity of the Italian countryside and the burgeoning wealth of the towns. Townsfolk sought ways to avoid the domination of the popes, or local bishops, or German-introduced counts.

Groups of prominent townsmen formed sworn associations called *communes*; the goal was to act in common and to represent their interests effectively. The leaders called themselves the *popolo*—the people—but the communes were not democratic. In fact, they were intensely volatile. Repeated and sometimes violent civil disturbances led to a sharing of power among merchant elites, leading manufacturers and artisans, and the upper echelons of the workers. Ironically, Italian towns began as communities dominated by German or ecclesiastical lords, shifted power to local economic elites, and shared power more widely among townspeople, only to wind up in most cases as despotisms. In Italy, remember, one can talk about Florence, or Milan, or Venice, but not of “Italy.”

Germany is yet another case with its own variations. The German lands were outside the Roman Empire. They had no heritage of towns, roads, or institutions. The area was overwhelmingly rural, even by medieval standards. The Carolingians had had only a brief time to introduce some semblance of authority.

When the Carolingians died out in 911, the various German dukes turned to the most powerful of their number, the duke of Saxony. The Saxons (or “Ottonians” after Otto I, II, III) built the strongest state in the 10th century. They fought successful wars against their Viking, Slavic, and Magyar neighbors. They tightly controlled the church, believing, in the

best Carolingian tradition, that the king was the special agent of God. They gained immense prestige by becoming emperors in 962. They used marriage alliances, diplomacy, and intimidation to attempt to control the dukes elsewhere in Germany.

Yet the promising Ottonian system failed. Military expansion ended. The dynasty died out in 1002. This would happen again in 1024, 1125, and 1250. England shows that dynastic continuity is not critical all by itself, but Germany lacked England's other stabilizing resources. The rulers never found a formula that let them exert control over more than one or two of Germany's five main duchies. The Italian entanglements brought some financial resources and prestige but were also costly.

The gravest problem was the struggle with the popes, sometimes called the "investiture controversy." In the middle of the 11th century, the German kings and emperors ran into a reformed papacy that believed that lay control of church affairs was the chief impediment to moral reform in Europe. German rulers believed themselves, not the popes, to be the heads of the earthly hierarchy and a reflection of the heavenly realm. Finally, in a society that defined its ends and purposes in religious terms, the ecclesiastical authorities were bound to win an ideological battle over authority.

Speaking of the Roman Church, one of the most remarkable state-like entities of the High Middle Ages was the Roman Catholic Church. As we will see in more detail in the next lecture, it developed the most sophisticated legal system in Europe. The *curia*, the central court of the church, expanded significantly.

The College of Cardinals emerged as a kind of "senate" of the church. Lateran Councils became church-wide parliaments; the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 exerted more influence on the lives of ordinary people than any council since antiquity or before Trent in the 16th century. Legal and financial machinery was elaborated to collect fees and revenues and

Rather than looking for a single ordering principle, we ought to stand gape-jawed in respect at the immense creativity of these peoples.

to adjudicate controversies from the church. The system of legates put the popes into regular touch with peoples and governments.

Disciplinary mechanisms were more widely applied by the popes. Excommunication, exclusion of an individual from the sacraments, was a form of social death and highly persuasive as a corrective measure. Interdict was the denial of most sacramental services in a specified region for the purpose of inducing local authorities to behave in a particular way. Inquisition was a formal judicial procedure developed to identify and correct heresy. Scholars speak of the “papal monarchy.” Certainly, the popes led the church more fully and effectively than ever before. Even so, their leadership in European society was on the verge of severe challenges.

The great lesson of high medieval political development is that an astonishing array of entities all drawing on Roman, Christian, and ethnic traditions created a bewildering spectrum of political possibilities. In this world, one must not look for winners and losers. Rather, one must stand gape-jawed before their creativity. ■

Suggested Reading

Fletcher, *The Quest for El Cid*.

Haverkamp, *Medieval Germany*.

Hyde, *Society and Politics in Medieval Italy*.

Martin, *Medieval Russia*.

Morris, *The Papal Monarchy*.

The Poem of the Cid.

Reilly, *The Medieval Spains*.

Questions to Consider

1. What are the greatest similarities and differences you see in the political development of European states?
2. What are some of the roles, both positive and negative, played by religion in the formation of medieval states?

Scholastic Culture

Lecture 38

Scholasticism can mean “schoolism,” and therefore, it can refer to the masters, to the books, to the curriculums and to the attitudes of the medieval schools. It could attach, in other words, simply to what went on in the medieval schools.

Scholasticism is a convenient catchall term for the dominant Latin intellectual culture of high medieval Europe. A few preliminary considerations will help to place scholastic culture in perspective. Some Latin literature was not “scholastic.”

The commonest form of Latin writing was letters. Some of these were elegant literary compositions—the correspondence of Abelard and Heloise, for example, but most correspondence was bureaucratic and governmental, such as thousands of papal letters, or letters written by scholars, such as Hildegard of Bingen or John of Salisbury, keeping up with their friends. Mystical writers, such as Bernard of Clairvaux or the members of the school of St. Victor in Paris, wrote learned but deeply affective treatises that were, in important respects, conceived in opposition to scholasticism.

Satire was revived as a literary form for the first time since late antiquity. *The Gospel According to the Silver Marks* was a devastating 12th-century critique of clerical wealth and excess. There was a vast corpus of poetry, too. Most of it was religious but not all. Here is a sample of one of the “Goliard” poems—medieval student ditties:

In the public house to die
Is my resolution:
Let wine to my lips be nigh
At life’s dissolution:
That will make the angels cry,
With glad elocution
“Grant this drunkard God on high,
Grace and Absolution.”

A figure such as Peter Abelard can reveal the cross-currents of the age in his poems, for example, “David’s Lament for Jonathan.” Anyone who read this poem knew of Abelard’s ill-fated love affair with Heloise:

Low in thy grave with thee
 Happy to lie,
 Since there’s no greater thing left Love to do;
 And to live after thee
 Is but to die,
 For with but half a soul what can life do?
 So share thy victory,
 Or else thy grave,
 Either to rescue thee, or with thee lie:
 Ending that life for thee,
 That thou didst save
 So Death that sundereth might bring more nigh.
 Peace, O my stricken lute!
 Thy strings are sleeping
 Would that my heart could still
 Its bitter weeping!

The culture of high medieval Europe would be inconceivable without the economic and geographic expansion of the age. People went farther and encountered more than ever before. In such places as Sicily, the Crusader states in the eastern Mediterranean (we’ll talk of them in the next lecture), and Spain, there were rich encounters of Latins with the learning of the Arab and Jewish worlds, and scholars from those traditions brought renewed acquaintance with ancient Greek works.

Between 750 and 900, Christians in Persia translated much of Aristotle and many commentaries on him into Arabic. This led brilliant thinkers, such as Ibn Sina (980–1037, called Avicenna in the West), to explore the old questions about the relationships between things that actually exist in the world and things that exist in the mind. At the same time, Ibn Rushd (1126–1198, called Averroes in the West) tried to understand the kinds of truths that could be acquired by human reason and those that depended on divine

revelation. He wrote at least 38 commentaries on Aristotle. In Spain, some of these were translated into Latin, then circulated widely.

Jewish scholars were also asking fundamental questions. Solomon ibn Gebirol (1021–1070, called Avicbron) tried to reconcile Aristotle with the Jewish faith while Moses ben Maimon (1135–1204, called Maimonides), rather like Averroes, tried to reconcile the competing claims of faith and reason. Solomon ben Isaac (1040–1105, called Rashi) was one of the greatest Talmudic scholars of all time (the Talmud was a commentary on the scriptural studies of the ancient rabbis; two versions circulated, one prepared in Palestine and one in Babylon). He and his sons and successors taught in Troyes in France and were sometimes consulted by Christians.

The first great change in Western intellectual life has to do with the elevation of logic to paramount status among the disciplines. Why did this happen? Certain writers began to use logic to attack controverted issues. Lanfranc (1010–1089) used both patristic authorities and dialectical reasoning to rebut the teachings of Berengar (1010–1088) on the subject of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109), probably the most gifted logician since antiquity, devised an ingenious logical proof for the existence of God. Peter Abelard (1079–1142) used dialectical reasoning in his *Sic et Non* to show in more than 100 cases that seeming contradictions in the Bible or the church fathers could be reconciled.

Logical reasoning came to be seen as equal or even superior to authorities when settling a controverted issue. The respective spheres of faith and reason began to be a subject of serious debate. Logic had an impact on teaching methods and scholarship.

The enhanced status of logic gave rise to what has been called *scholasticism*. This word can have several distinct, although related, meanings. It can be a name for a period of time, especially the 12th and 13th centuries, when the competing claims of faith and reason were explored. We have already seen this in connection with Arab, Jewish, and Latin thinkers. We will return to this question in connection with Thomas Aquinas. The great logicians were not rationalists in the modern sense: Anselm's motto was "Faith seeking

understanding.” Some thinkers, such as St. Bernard and the Paris mystics, objected to the wide application of logic.

In a sense, scholasticism can mean “schoolism,” referring to the masters, books, curricula, and attitudes of the medieval schools. The 12th century saw a progression from the great monastic schools, to the great cathedral schools, to the dawning universities. Certain teachers, such as Peter Abelard, attracted followers no matter where they were. The scholastic method involved the close reading of set texts coupled with commentaries on those texts. This turned the *gloss*, the standard way of commenting on texts in monasteries, into a regular means of instruction.

Scholasticism can also refer to a particular method of formal reasoning based on dialectical analysis. Several scholars began to tackle whole fields of knowledge in a systematic way. They either arranged their material according to systematic principles or asked a series of questions and argued out possible answers. The Bolognese monk Gratian, for example, around 1140, produced his *Concordance of Discordant Canons*, usually called the *Decretum*. This was a rational, topical presentation of the law of the church that sought to reconcile contradictions and other issues that were unclear. It founded the science of canon law.

Peter Lombard (1100–1160) taught in Paris and wrote the *Four Books of Sentences*. A “sentence” (*sententia*) is a conclusion reached at the end of a process of logical reasoning. One first poses a problem (*quaestio*); then argues through the problem, making cases for and against various propositions (*disputatio*); and finally, one reaches a conclusion (*sententia*). This conclusion can then serve as a new *quaestio*. Lombard’s four books treated (1) the Trinity, (2) creation and sin, (3) the incarnation and the virtues, and (4) the “*Last Things*.” This was the first systematic treatment of the theology of the Catholic faith.

In the 13th century, the large-scale treatments of whole realms of knowledge came to be called *summas*. The greatest of these were prepared by Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274). His *Summa Contra Gentiles* was an assessment of all the knowledge of the pagans, of all the things that had been learned by the

use of human reason. His *Summa Theologiae* was a presentation of the major doctrines of the Catholic Church.

Scholasticism, urbanization, and the increasing sophistication of life in general gave rise to a new and distinctive institution: the university. The medieval name for this institution was *studium generale*, that is, a place where all studies could be pursued. The name *universitas* applies more particularly to the legal status of the “whole,” the “totality” of the scholars who made up the university.

In northern and southern Europe, certain common forces combined to create the university, but with different outcomes. In the north, first at Paris in the late 12th century, the teaching masters in the schools banded together into a guild to regulate admission to their ranks; to set courses, examinations, and fees for students; and to make common representation to the bishop’s chancellor, who was the nominal head of all the schools. In the south, law and medicine were the key subjects, and the students tended to be older. In these circumstances, the students banded together to make certain claims on the masters in the areas of fees and teaching.

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In the normal pattern, a university would have four faculties: arts, theology, law, and medicine. The arts faculty—that of Paris was the most famous—prepared students to teach in schools, to take positions in the church, and to advance to one of the higher faculties. Theology was the “queen of the sciences” and considered the highest faculty, the highest area of study. Paris was the greatest of the theology faculties, but Cologne and Oxford were important, as well.

The study of law involved both civil (Roman) and canon (ecclesiastical) law. Bologna was the greatest of the law schools. Medicine, based on the close study of the ancient medical writers more than on experimental science or clinical practice, was taught in many places, most famously at Montpellier in the south of France and Salerno in Italy.

Student life was difficult in many respects. Students were always technically foreigners and were preyed upon by unscrupulous landlords, innkeepers, prostitutes, and sometimes, even masters. The period of study was very long—the precise length, at least in arts, depended somewhat on a student’s preparation. Degrees were awarded by public examination, not by the accumulation of credits, as today. The university has proved to be one of the most flexible and durable of all Western institutions.

To get a sharper sense of Latin learning in the age of scholasticism, let’s take a closer look at Thomas Aquinas. Thomas (1225–1274) was born in a small town south of Rome and sent, at age five, to Monte Cassino, where his noble father expected him one day to become abbot.

In 1240, Thomas was sent to Naples to study arts. While there, he was attracted by the intellectual apostolate of the Dominicans, but his parents strongly opposed this pursuit. Nevertheless, he joined the order in 1244. In 1245, he went to Paris, where he studied for three years. He came under the influence of Albert the Great and the newly emerging texts of Aristotle. He then followed Albert to the new *Studium generale* in Cologne. In 1252, Thomas returned to Paris, where he taught until 1259, when he departed for a decade of teaching in Italy. In 1269, he returned to Paris and taught there until his untimely death in 1274.

Thomas was a prolific writer who made contributions to many of the great philosophical and theological questions of his day. His ideas were formed by his travels and experience in several schools; by the burgeoning contemporary interest in Aristotle, as well as in his Arab and Jewish commentators; and by the practical needs of teaching.

Central to Thomas’s thought was the problem of the relation between faith and reason. On the one hand, Thomas explored the respective roles of the will and the intellect. Faith, for example, is a matter of the will: In consciously granting assent to something, I do not commit an act that is contrary to reason; nevertheless, I agree to something that is not demonstrable by reason.

On the other hand, Thomas spoke of natural and revealed truths. Many things can be known by the unaided use of human reason. Some “religious” things can be known by reason, too: the existence of God, for example. But other things can be known only by faith: the Trinity, the incarnation, creation out of nothing. Thomas’s systematic exposition of Catholic teaching was always influential to a degree, but in the 19th century, it was made the basis of official Catholic theology (called “Thomism”), a position it held until Vatican II (1962–1965).

The intellectual culture of scholastic Europe laid the groundwork for subsequent intellectual revivals by vastly increasing the number and locations of schools, expanding the curriculum, and opening whole new areas of inquiry. Not surprisingly, scholars have spoken of a “renaissance of the 12th century.” ■

Suggested Reading

Colish, *Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual Tradition*.

Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen*.

Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*.

The Letters of Abelard and Heloise.

Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe*.

Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas d’Aquino*.

Questions to Consider

1. The competing claims of reason and faith were at the heart of medieval intellectual life. To what degree is this still true today?
2. How would you compare a medieval university with a modern one?

Vernacular Culture

Lecture 39

The novelty in the heretical movement and in the crusading movement ... represents the first instances in European history of the mobilization of vast numbers of lay people.

A medieval motto ran “*Clericus, id est, litteratus.*” This means, “a member of the clergy, that is, a literate person.” In this reckoning, the person who wrote *Beowulf* or *The Song of Roland* was illiterate. In this lecture, we’ll explore this paradox, even as we look at the explosion of vernacular culture in high medieval Europe.

Vernacular is a slightly difficult term to define. Normally, when one uses it of the Middle Ages, it means non-Latin, hence, English, French, German, and so on. It can also mean popular as opposed to elite and, sometimes, it connotes lay as opposed to ecclesiastical or secular as opposed to religious. Apart from the Latin/non-Latin divide, all these possible meanings can be argued.

It is important to note that *vernacular* applies to poetry, both brief and epic; letters; legal materials; historical works; and devotional texts. Why did some people begin to use the vernacular instead of Latin? This is a matter of perspective: We could turn the question around and ask why people were so devoted to Latin, a foreign language. The answer is that government and the church preserved Latin.

The vast majority of people spoke their own native languages, and elite members of society were bilingual, at least. Latin was old and rich and had long developed the vocabulary and forms necessary to the production of great literature. It took a long time for the vernaculars to achieve that level of development. We must also acknowledge the complex issue of the undoubtedly long period when what we know as texts were circulating orally.

The oldest bodies of vernacular writings emerged in areas that were outside the historical frontiers of the Roman world: the British Isles, the German-

speaking lands, Slavic realms, and Scandinavia. The British Isles present us with two distinct bodies of material, one in Celtic and one in English.

Among the British (we might say Welsh), we find poets, such as Aneirin (fl. c. 600), who wrote the *Gododdin*, an epic account of the slaughter of the British by the Anglo-Saxons at the Battle of Catterick. It has a wonderful freshness and vigor, as this extract shows:

Wearing a brooch, in the front rank, bearing weapons in battle, a mighty man in the fight before his death-day, a champion in the charge of the van of the armies; there fell five times 50 before his blades, of the men of Deira and of Bernicia a hundred score fell and were destroyed in a single hour. He would sooner the wolves had his flesh than go to his own wedding, and he would rather be prey for ravens than go to the altar; he would sooner his blood flowed to the ground than get due burial, making return for his mead with the hosts in the hall. Hyfeidd the Tall should be honored as long as there is a minstrel ...

Of Irish material, there is an abundance. It comes in the forms of long and short poems, saints' lives, law codes, and fantasies, to mention just a few examples. This brief 9th-century poem gives a good feel for the Irish sense of nature:

I have news for you; the stag bell, winter snows, summer
Has gone.
Wind high and cold, the sun low, short its course, the sea
Running high.
Deep red the bracken, its shape is lost; the wild goose has
Raised its accustomed cry.
Cold has seized the birds' wings; season of ice.
This is my news.

Anglo-Saxon England produced a substantial corpus of poetry, sermons, histories, laws, and documents. The most famous work is the epic *Beowulf*, probably composed around 900. Yet our feel for the immediacy, simplicity, and vigor of the Saxon world is well conveyed by this 7th-century poem, "Caedmon's Hymn":

Now we must praise the guardian of heaven
The might of the Lord and his purpose of mind,
The work of the glorious father; for He
God Eternal, established each wonder,
He Holy Creator, first fashioned
Heaven as a roof for the sons of men.
Then the Guardian of Mankind adorned
This middle-earth below, the world for men,
Everlasting Lord, Almighty King.

The German-speaking lands produced, once again, a large amount of poetry but also chronicles and laws. By the 13th century, German could produce a masterwork, such as the *Nibelungenlied*, a romantic telling of myths about the origins of the Germanic peoples. In this poem, we actually encounter real people, such as Attila the Hun and the Ostrogothic King Theodoric.

The *minnesänger* were German-style troubadours of the 12th century who wrote love poems influenced by the current fashions in French poetry (see below). But we can go back to the 9th century to glimpse the origins. In Saxony, someone created a powerful German retelling of the life of Christ called the *Heliand* (the “Savior”). In this story, Jerusalem becomes a hill-fort, Christ turns into the leader of a war band made up of his apostles, and the details are Nordic, not Mediterranean.

The earliest Slavic materials date from the 9th and 10th centuries and are connected with the 9th-century missions of Saints Cyril and Methodius to the region of Bohemia. Initially, Christian texts were translated, then original works were composed. Scandinavia produced its vernacular literature in two waves and kinds. First, there were narratives of the settlement of Iceland and law books. Then came epics, called *sagas* (= “things said”), which treated, in blends of fact and fantasy, the early history of the settlements and the families responsible for them.

The largest outpouring of vernacular material came from France, beginning in the 12th century. The oldest single work is the anonymous *Song of Roland*, assembled in its present form in about 1100. This form of poem is called a *chanson des gestes*—a tale of great deeds. The poem recounts a single event

in the life of Charlemagne but revises it to fit the context of its own time: Crusades, expansion, the peace of God, and so on. The poem takes up great themes of honor and betrayal—just the themes that would have interested men of that age. It shows us chivalry as an affair of men; women are all but invisible in the poem.

As the 12th century wore on, French writers began to produce *lais* and romances. *Lais* were short stories about encounters between a woman and her lover. The greatest writer of *lais* was Marie de France in the 1170s. Romances were longer works that, often from a woman's point of view, narrated a whole story about the relationships between a man and a woman. These stories are rich in human emotions and conflicting loyalties. The greatest writer of romances was Chretien de Troyes (1135–1183).

The most influential vernacular poetry of the 12th century was that of the troubadours. Taking their rise in southern France, the troubadours were influenced by social currents in the age of chivalry; the love poetry of the ancients, especially Ovid; and the love lyrics of Muslim Spain.

They produced poems of unusual feeling and frankness. Late in the 12th century, Bernart de Ventadorn was among the finest troubadours:

Alas! How much I knew of love,
I thought, but so little know of it!
For now I cannot check my love
For her, who'll give me little profit.
She has my heart and all of me,
Herself and all the world; and nothing
Leaves to me, when thus she takes me,
Except desire and heartfelt longing.

Not all troubadours were men. Here are a few lines from Castellozza (b. c. 1200):

Friend, if you had shown consideration,
meekness, candor and humanity,
I'd have loved you without hesitation,
but you were mean, and sly, and villainous.

The troubadours, and to a degree the romancers, gave rise to a set of writings and feelings that scholars have labeled “courtly love.” On one level, this means only literature of the medieval court, literature by writers who were patronized. On another level, it means literature that takes a certain view of love: It cannot truly happen in a marriage; it is usually unrequited; it is normally from afar; it is an ideal—*fin amour*—as opposed to the lust of the masses. Some scholars say that the idea of courtly love is a modern invention imposed on the Middle Ages, while others agree that it is medieval but argue over its content and significance.

The greatest vernacular writer of the Middle Ages, and one of the greatest of all Western writers, was Dante Alighieri (1265–1321). Dante is best known for the *Commedia*, but this was his last work and he wrote many others. His *Vita Nuova* (1290–1294) is a series of 31 love poems woven together by a prose narrative that, taken together, treats love allegorically as the force that brought Dante spiritual salvation. *De vulgari elioquentia* is a learned work in Latin that explores the suitability of the vernacular as a vehicle for poetic composition. It is a very early and masterful essay in literary theory. *De monarchia* is a Latin treatise on the struggles between the popes and the emperors that upholds the independence and legitimacy of the empire.

The *Commedia* (usually called *The Divine Comedy* in English) is an unqualified masterpiece. Nevertheless, its greatness cannot be taken for granted. It is some 14,000 lines long arranged into 140 *canti* (we say “cantos” in English; a *canto* is a song). Its structure is *terza rima* (ababcddc), a form difficult to achieve in such a long poem and hard to render in translation. The poem deals with numerous of Dante’s contemporaries with whom we are not familiar today and—rather like Milton’s *Paradise Lost* later on—is full of literary allusions than can elude almost any reader (or listener!).

The poem is a tale of a journey. The travelers are Dante himself, the reader (or listener), all the figures mentioned in the poem, all the cultural artifacts and phenomena alluded to in the poem, and finally, the whole human race. The poem is an exploration of morality and religion, of their roles in forming human character, and of the failure of the individual human to rise to the challenge of humanity’s possible greatness.

Finally, the poem returns to themes introduced in *Vita Nuova*. Love becomes the central metaphor in the poem. The referents of the metaphor are the love that humans have, or fail to have, for one another; the spiritually uplifting power of the love one man and one woman can feel for each other; and above all else, the glorious but mysterious love of God.

To the degree that *vernacular* implies the activities of lay people, we can also refer to the great social movements of the high Middle Ages. The first of these lay movements was, paradoxically, religious. Sometimes, it resulted in perfectly acceptable new forms of religious expression, but sometimes, it resulted in heresy.

Many people were caught up in the currents of religious reform that we discussed in an earlier lecture. To some, the ideal of the *vita apostolica* was a clear call to live a life of poverty and preaching. We have seen that the mendicants were one response to this call.

There were others, the Waldensians, for example, who formed lay movements that took on church roles, such as preaching and communal living, and who fell afoul of ecclesiastical authorities. There were other movements, such as the Cathars, who were especially prominent in southern France. These were people who embraced ancient dualist forms of religion. The commonest name for them is Albigensians, and they were ruthlessly suppressed.

The second great movement was the Crusades. Again, it is paradoxical that the popes called the Crusades, such great figures as St. Bernard stirred up enthusiasm for them, and their underlying justification was religious, but it was lay people who, for reasons of their own, fueled the movement. There were important background issues in the Byzantine and Islamic worlds.

Europe had already seen Muslim-Christian violence in Spain. Commerce had brought renewed contacts across the Mediterranean. Chivalry fired an

It's important to see, too, that vernacular applies to poetry, both brief and epic; it applies to letters, legal materials, historical works and devotional texts. In other words, there is not a single category of material that is vernacular, as if then everything else was somehow Latin.

ideal of the “Christian knight” who struggled against God’s enemies. Still, for some two centuries, ordinary soldiers and great nobles, the vast majority of them French, set off on these armed pilgrimages. The novelty in the heretical and crusading movements was the mobilization of vast numbers of lay people.

The various manifestations of lay culture in high medieval Europe reveal the growing complexity and sophistication of society in this age of expansion. ■

Suggested Reading

Bemrose, *A New Life of Dante*.

Beowulf.

Dante, *The Divine Comedy*.

Jackson, *The Literature of the Middle Ages*.

Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*.

Riley-Smith, *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades*.

The Song of Roland.

Zink, *Medieval French Literature*.

Questions to Consider

1. Compare and contrast the Latin and vernacular cultures of high medieval Europe.
2. Today, we sometimes speak of pop culture. Does such a term bear any relationship to the vernacular culture of medieval Europe? Do troubadours remind you at all of folk singers?

The Crisis of Renaissance Europe

Lecture 40

It was a time when trade and finance were disrupted, when prices and wages fluctuated wildly and unpredictably all over Europe. It was a time of social insurrections. There were insurrections in England, in France and in many Italian towns, particularly in Florence.

The period after about 1300 may be viewed in several quite different ways. Is this the “waning of the Middle Ages”? Should our interpretive categories emphasize decline, disruption, and despair? Is this the “dawn of a new era”? Should we see initiative, originality, and creativity? In fact, both views have long been prevalent. In this lecture, we must try to understand the basic contours of the 14th and 15th centuries so that, in the next two lectures, we will have context and perspective for understanding the Renaissance (a phenomenon that we will try to define in the next lecture).

Certain broad trends are clearly visible in this era. In political and institutional history, the basic trends evident in 1300 persisted through the period. Where centralization or fragmentation were present, they did not change much. The single great fact of the age was the Hundred Years War between France and England.

This was, on the whole, a period of disastrous problems for the church. The great facts of the period were the “Babylonian captivity” of the papacy and the Great Schism. There was also anticlericalism and limited efforts at reform. At the same time, ordinary people showed signs of deep religious faith. The most dramatic developments of the period were the demographic and economic problems associated with the Black Death.

Let us first look at the overall political shape of Europe. The Hundred Years War was the all-but-inevitable outcome of the longstanding enmity between France and England occasioned by the Continental interests of the English kings. In 1340, Edward III of England claimed the throne of France (through his wife) and opened a war that lasted until 1453.

It was an odd war: There were only three major campaigns; bands of freebooters rampaged in France; and Jeanne d'Arc rallied the French in 1429–1431 after the Treaty of Troyes nearly gave France to England. The English won all the great battles and, at times, held much of France but finally lost the war and retained only a little area near Calais. The war had importance consequences for both France and England.

For the French, the war heightened the sense of national consciousness, professionalized the military, generalized several forms of taxation, and restored royal prestige.

For England, the war enhanced the role of Parliament through the principle of “redress before supply,” diverted royal attention from pressing problems at home, and created deep factional divides in the aristocracy that culminated in a civil war, the War of the Roses (1455–1489). Much of Europe was drawn into war in one way or another, and trade was seriously disrupted.

In Iberia, we may take 1492 as a vantage point on developments in the late Middle Ages. In January, a crusading army entered Granada, and the last Muslim stronghold fell to the centuries-long Reconquista. In March, Ferdinand and Isabella issued a decree requiring the Jews of Castile and Aragon to convert or depart. This ended centuries of rich Jewish-Muslim-Christian interaction in Spain.

In April, Isabella commissioned Cristoforo Colombo “to discover and acquire islands and mainlands in the Ocean Sea,” a development that initiated the globalization of Western civilization. The marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile in 1469 laid the foundation for a unification of Iberia, a realm where crown and nobility, abetted by the church, had been building effective government for three centuries.

In Italy, the basic tripartite scheme remained in place. German control in the north grew progressively weaker, and in 1494, the French invaded, albeit without lasting consequences. The great development in the north was the rise of Milan, Florence, and Venice as key, and competing, powers. The papacy's control of the center was severely compromised by the papal

absence in Avignon. The south was hotly contested by France and Spain but not effectively controlled by either.

German development is riddled with paradoxes. The Golden Bull of 1356 might have created a stable federal regime. Instead, it built a framework for continuing fragmentation. Individual territories in Germany were often prosperous, peaceful, and well governed. There simply was no effective central government.

Along Europe's eastern frontier, there were three major developments. Lithuania and Poland coalesced into a powerful, stable kingdom. Russians, centered on the Grand Duchy of Moscow, threw off the Mongols and began to unite a huge swathe of lands. In 1453, the Ottoman Turks captured Constantinople. This consolidated their position as the dominant power in the eastern Mediterranean.

Ecclesiastical affairs may be more briefly summarized. In 1305, a Frenchman, Clement V, was elected pope in the hope that he might settle the long-running dispute with the king of France. He settled on papal property in Avignon, and his successors remained there until 1378. Europe was divided in allegiance. The absence of the popes from Rome scandalized many—writers spoke of the “Babylonian captivity.”

Attempts to restore the papacy to Rome resulted in the Great Schism: a period from 1378 to 1417 when two, and sometimes three, men claimed to be the legitimate pope. Scholars began to define *conciliarism*, a doctrine that claimed that ultimate authority in the church resided in councils, not in the papacy. Some churchmen called for frequent councils while popes tried to subvert them.

Challenges for the official church did not bespeak a decline of religious sentiment. Such writers as Chaucer were humorously anticlerical but still conventionally pious. The Modern Devotion, which arose in the Netherlands,

The moral of the story is that Renaissance Europe was a pretty tough place.

was a powerful movement of spiritual renewal for lay people that produced “bestsellers,” such as Thomas à Kempis’s *Imitation of Christ*.

There were large-scale heretical movements, too, that challenged both the authority and the teachings of the church. The most powerful were the Lollards in England, who took their rise from John Wyclif and the Hussites in Bohemia, the followers of Jan Hus (we will talk more of these figures in a later lecture). Records indicate huge numbers of pilgrims and many examples of lay piety, such as the rosary.

The most devastating crisis of the age was caused by plague. A series of seasons of bad weather, poor harvests, and famine between 1315 and 1322 weakened Europe severely and put an end to the expansion of the preceding centuries. The Black Death was a savage outbreak of bubonic plague—the first in 600 years—brought to Europe from the Black Sea region by Genoese merchants. The 1348–1349 outbreak was serious, but the plague kept coming back, beginning in 1363 and lasting until the 18th century.

The consequences of the plague were many and complex. Mortality rates were tremendous—25 percent to 35 percent overall—with young and productive urbanites most vulnerable. There was widespread anxiety, hysteria, and depression. These conditions manifested themselves in appalling attacks on Jews. Trade and finance were disrupted; prices and wages fluctuated wildly. Social insurrections occurred in England, France, and Florence. Recovery did not come until the age of European imperial expansion.

“Renaissance” Europe was a difficult place and time. What, then, was this Renaissance? ■

Suggested Reading

Allmand, *The Hundred Years War*.

Guenée, *States and Rulers in Later Medieval Europe*.

Herlihy, *The Black Death and the Transformation of the West*.

Oakley, *The Western Church in the Later Middle Ages*.

Questions to Consider

1. Considering Europe's political, ecclesiastical, and economic history in the period from 1300 to 1500, do you see any positive signs?
2. In recent decades, scholars have been interested in the high levels of mortality caused by the plague because they seem to offer hints about what would happen in the event of nuclear war. What do you think would happen if a third of the population vanished abruptly?

The Renaissance Problem

Lecture 41

The Renaissance began as an urban phenomenon, as a communal phenomenon. Then, very quickly, it became princely and courtly. In other words, it moved from the city to the court. It moved from an urban setting to a royal and princely setting.

What is the “Renaissance problem”? Doesn’t everyone know that after a millennium of darkness and despair, Europe awakened in a blaze of glory? As always, the answer is not quite so simple. Our three-part division of Western civilization—ancient, medieval, and modern—is itself a product of a particular time and place, not an eternal verity.

As we saw in discussing the transformation of the Roman world, people were unaware of any abrupt change. Charlemagne’s friend Alcuin spoke of a new Rome rising in Francia that was finer than the Rome of old because the old one had absorbed Athens, but the new one had added Jerusalem. This interpretation, first of all, does not yield pride of place to the ancients and, second, evinces continuity. In the 12th century, Bernard of Chartres said, “We are as dwarfs seated on the shoulders of giants that we might see more further than they. Yet not in virtue of the keenness of our eyesight, nor the breadth of our vision, but alone because we are raised aloft on that giant mass.” Note, again, the sense of superiority to the ancients and the sense of continuity.

The idea was that there had been a serious change somewhere in what we might call the late Middle Ages (that label goes back to a 17th-century figure, Christoph Kelder). Consider these words of Matteo Palmieri (c. 1430):

Where was the painter’s art until Giotto restored it? A caricature of the art of human delineation! Sculpture and architecture, for long years sunk to the mere travesty of art, are only today in the process of the rescue from obscurity; only now are they being brought to a new pitch of perfection by men of genius and erudition. Of letters and liberal studies it would be better to be silent altogether. For these, the real guides to distinction in all the arts, the solid foundation of

all civilization, have been lost to mankind for 800 years and more. It is but in our own day that men dare to boast that they see the dawn of better things. For example, we owe it to our Leonardo Bruni that Latin, so long a byword for its uncouthness, has begun to shine forth in its ancient purity, its beauty, its majestic rhythm. Now indeed may every thoughtful spirit thank God that it has been permitted to him to be born in this new age so full of hope and promise, which already rejoices in a greater array of nobly gifted souls than the world has seen in the thousand years that have preceded it.

Far to the north, in France, François Rabelais agreed: “Out of the thick gothic night our eyes were awakened to the glorious light of the sun.” Such views tell us a lot about the men who held them but not necessarily much at all about history. Erwin Panofsky, the great art historian, said that in the 14th century, people “looked back as from a fixed point in time.”

The word *rinascità* was first used by Giorgio Vasari in the middle of the 16th century in his history of painters. The very word *Renaissance* has had somewhat varied fortunes. Protestant reformers applauded Renaissance attacks on the Catholic Church but disliked what they saw as hedonism and rationalism.

In the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment, there was a tendency to draw lines too sharply between “medieval” superstition and “Renaissance” rationalism. For the Romantics, there was an aesthetic appreciation of Renaissance art but also a certain regret at the perceived rationalism that supposedly suppressed the natural man. The first great modern attempt to capture a sense of the era came with Jacob Burckhardt’s *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860).

It has not been much easier to say just what issues come under the heading “Renaissance.” Usually, Renaissance is associated with humanism, but this term can mean several things: Love and concern for human beings, as in Giovanni Pico della Mirandola’s *Oration on the Dignity of Man*. A preoccupation with this world and its concerns, as in Niccolò Machiavelli’s *The Prince*. A devotion to the humane disciplines—the liberal arts but not, presumably, theology. A particular fascination with the literary

culture of classical antiquity. Civic humanism, either as “boosterism” or as republicanism.

Why did the Renaissance begin in Italy? Italy had been economically precocious in the Middle Ages, but otherwise, major developments occurred in the north. One might have expected France to take the lead because it had been culturally dominant since the 12th century. There was a higher level of literacy and lay education in Italy. Italians felt themselves more directly the heirs of the Romans than anyone else could or did. There was greater wealth in Italy that provided for patronage and leisure to enjoy the arts. Italian society was less bound to feudal and chivalric values than the north. One might compare Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* with Boccaccio’s *Decameron*.

Beginning perhaps even as early as the 1440s or 1450s, we can begin to speak of the “reception” of the Renaissance—the Renaissance move to Rome, Milan, and Venice.

Given that it began in Italy, how and why did the Renaissance spread? Italians traveled in the north: They searched for manuscripts and sometimes hired out as teachers and courtiers. Northerners traveled in Italy. By the late 15th century, scholars commonly made tours of Italy and, with the 16th century, painters began to follow. The development of printing made it possible for ideas to circulate much more quickly, cheaply, and efficiently than ever before. The Renaissance began as an urban, a communal, phenomenon but quickly became princely and courtly. Renaissance culture became fashionable. *Civilité*, defined in largely Italian terms, became prestigious.

Allowing for some correction at the edges, we can apply a rough chronology to the Renaissance. Down to about 1370, we see individual geniuses but little that ties them together, little that looks like a movement. Down to 1470s, we have a Florentine period: Great things were done by Florentines and by outsiders resident in Florence. Beginning in about the 1450s, we can speak of the “reception” of the Renaissance in Rome, Milan, and Venice; after 1500, the Renaissance crossed the Alps and the movement became more decidedly courtly. ■

Suggested Reading

Castiglione, *The Courtier*.

Cellini, *Autobiography*.

Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance*.

Hartt, *History of Italian Renaissance Art*.

King, *Women of the Renaissance*.

Machiavelli, *The Prince*.

Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*.

Questions to Consider

1. Before you heard this lecture, what did the word *Renaissance* mean to you? What images did it conjure up in your mind?
2. Were Renaissance figures distinctive in defining themselves against, or in distinction to, the period that preceded them? Can you think of other examples of this phenomenon?

Renaissance Portraits

Lecture 42

There's an irony here. We have these young men and women who have gone out into the countryside to escape the plague, and they're going to tell each other stories to keep themselves out of trouble, and they wind up telling a large number of the bawdiest stories in the Western literary tradition.

In the previous lecture, we made some broad historical observations on the period of the Renaissance. This time, moving more or less chronologically, we will look at some of the people who made this movement. From the earliest period, we can study two remarkable figures. Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375) was a Florentine merchant's son who spent his formative years in Naples, where he enjoyed the patronage of the Angevin (French) court. He resisted his father's desire that he study law. He finally settled in Florence in 1340.

Boccaccio made his reputation in Italian with the *Decameron*: A group of young men and women meet in a church in Florence and decide to go into the countryside to avoid the plague. To busy themselves, they told stories—10 a day for 10 days (the title means “10 days” in Greek). Boccaccio also wrote important scholarly treatises, including *On the Genealogy of the Gentile Gods*, which was a handbook to facilitate the reading of classical texts. He was a great friend of Petrarch and wrote a life of Dante; indeed, in Florence, he delivered public lectures on the *Commedia*, the first person known to have done so.

Francesco Petrarco, whom we know as Petrarch (1304–1374), was the giant of the early Renaissance. He was born at Arezzo because his father was in exile from Florence (a victim of the same troubles that had gotten Dante exiled). He grew up in the south of France, where his father got a job at the papal court in Avignon. Petrarch studied law for seven years but considered this time wasted because “I could not face making a merchandise of my mind.”

In 1327, he caught sight of “Laura,” the mysterious woman who inspired 366 poems in exquisite Italian. These poems first won him wide acclaim. In 1341, he was named poet laureate in Rome. On the death of his brother, he wrote, in Latin, his *Secret Book*, the most profound work of introspection since Augustine’s *Confessions*. The work is cast as a dialogue between Petrarch himself and Augustine, in the course of which Augustine exposes all the flaws in Petrarch’s character.

After the plague, Petrarch returned to Florence in about 1353, but he did some work for the Sforza family in Milan. He found works of Cicero, got Homer translated into Latin, and died with an unfinished life of Julius Caesar on his desk. He was friends with many of the great intellectual figures of the day. They admired him for his interest in classical literature.

His attitude toward books is indicative of his character:

Books are welcome, assiduous companions, always ready to appear in public or to go back in their box at your command, always disposed to speak or to be silent, to stay at home or to make a visit to the woods, to travel or to abide in the country; to gossip, joke, encourage you, comfort you, advise you, reprove you, and take care of you; to teach you the world’s secrets, the records of great deeds, the rules of life and the scorn of death, moderation in good fortune, fortitude in ill, calmness and constancy in behavior. These are learned, happy, useful, and ready spoken companions who will never bring you tedium, expense, lamentations, jealous murmurs, or deception.

He once said of himself:

What am I? A scholar? No hardly that; a lover of woodlands, a solitary, in the habit of uttering disjointed words in the shadow of a beech tree and used to scribbling presumptuously under an immature laurel tree; fervent in toil but not happy with the results; a lover of letters but not fully versed in them; an adherent of no sect but very eager for truth; and because I am a clumsy searcher, often, out of self-distrust, I flee error and fall into doubt, which I hold in

lieu of truth. Thus I have finally joined that humble band that knows nothing, holds nothing certain, doubts everything—outside of the things that it is sacrilege to doubt.

Yet Petrarch was by no means irreligious. He once said, “Theology is a poem that has God for its subject.” Petrarch gives us a good feel for the many currents of the early Renaissance.

In the generation after Petrarch, we see the foundations for the period of Florentine greatness and the consolidation of certain intellectual traditions that begin to look like a movement. The Florentine chancellor Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406) founded and endowed many schools in Florence because the city had no university. He was a prolific correspondent and maintained connections with scholars all over Italy and beyond. He attracted many significant cultural figures to Florence and secured them the means to lead lives of scholarly and artistic leisure.



Petrarch.

The Teaching Company Collection.

Coluccio wrote letters, orations, and histories praising the past of the city. He took Cicero as his ideal, arguing that family life and public service, not penance and retreat from the world, should be held up as exemplary. He argued that the liberty of free citizens, basically republican government, created an environment in which people could flourish. Thus, we see in Coluccio two distinct faces of “civic humanism.”

With Guarino of Verona (1374–1460), we begin to discern a significant shift in educational theory. He stressed Latin and Greek in their classical purity as the keys to education, in distinction to the more practical uses of language conveyed by the notarial arts that had thrived in the cities.

Guarino had certain concrete goals in mind. The first was to have people learn classical literature so well that they would, almost as if by habit, emulate the values found there. Second, he sought to put rhetoric in the preeminent place long occupied by logic (and, before that, by grammar). In his view, a republic of virtue could more easily be created in an environment of graceful language.

**We've seen
certain common
themes, haven't
we? Versatility,
originality,
classical influences.**

The great Florentine leader Lorenzo de' Medici "the Magnificent" (1449–1492) opens up further perspectives on the evolving Renaissance phenomenon. His family had risen from plebeian origins, through trade, to the banking industry. They were among the richest people in Europe and dominated Florentine politics.

Lorenzo became head of state at 21. He was young, lusty, and artistically astute. He retained close associations with the lower classes and posed as a popular leader. He profited from the Peace of Lodi in 1454, which brought peace to Italy, and he himself was a hard-headed diplomat and politician who maintained the peace. He diligently pursued the goal of making Florence the cultural capital of Italy—which meant of Europe. He spent half the state budget on books for the Medicean academy. Lorenzo sustained the Florentine achievements of preceding decades, promoting civic humanism in all its respects and, through his princely patronage, inaugurating the courtly phase of the Renaissance.

We may illustrate the courtly phase of the Renaissance by means of three examples that, together, point in the directions that Lorenzo had signaled. Enea Silvio Piccolomini (1405–1464) Latinized his name to Aeneas Silvius, a common phenomenon in Renaissance times. He was a Tuscan, the son of an impoverished country nobleman.

Silvius went to Siena to study law but was soon attracted to classical studies in Florence. He went to the Council of Basel in the entourage of a cardinal—a typical path for ambitious, but not wealthy, young men. He spent 20 years wandering all over Europe and writing poetry, scurrilous tales, satires, treatises on education, and histories.

Again, it is typical that he was both a popular writer and a scholar. He returned to Rome in 1445 and, in 1447, took holy orders. In 1448, he was consecrated a bishop. He became a cardinal in 1456 and, in 1458, was elected pope: “*Aeneam reiicite; pium suscipite.*” Silvius now took on a life of sober living, industry, and scholarship. “My spirit is an enquiring one,” he once said. He spent much of his papal career trying to launch a Crusade and wrote a comprehensive refutation of the Quran.

Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) was the illegitimate son of a lawyer and a servant. He was apprenticed at 14 to an accomplished artist, Verocchio, and stayed with him six years before going on to nine or 10 years in Florence. He was handsome, versatile, graceful, a fine singer, and interested in almost everything, but he did not have the humanist education that many of his contemporaries did. His Latin was imperfect and he had no Greek at all.

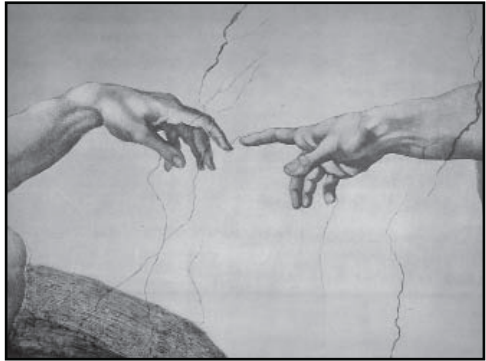
In 1482, da Vinci went to Milan to work as a military engineer for the Sforza. While there, he painted portraits, designed stage sets and costumes, drew maps, proposed irrigation plans, created a central heating system in the Sforza palace, and drew some of the sketches, more than 5,000 of which survive in his notebooks.

In 1499, the Sforza fell from power and da Vinci spent the rest of his life wandering. He ended up in France. His artistic remains are intriguing: not one finished statue, some dozen finished paintings, but thousands of drawings and sketches. His restlessness and lack of focus are evident. This may also explain the enigmatic nature of his work. Perhaps his greatest achievements were not artistic: He raised interest in the structure and function of nature. Consider his comments on a bird:

A bird is an instrument working according to mathematical law which it is entirely within the capacity of man to reproduce with

all its movements but not with a corresponding degree of strength, though it is deficient only in the power of maintaining equilibrium. We may therefore say that such an instrument constructed by man is lacking nothing except the life of the bird which must needs be supplied by that of man.

Michelangelo Buonoratti (1475–1564) was a Florentine of high birth whose family opposed his desire to be an artist. He was fantastically famous and wealthy in his own lifetime. He won the favor of Lorenzo de' Medici and was supported in the Medicean academy. At this time, Greek art was being recovered in great quantities and held up as *the* model. Michelangelo did much sculpture that studies the Greek models, but in the end, he surpassed them.



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Detail of Michelangelo's Creation of Adam on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

He lived in times of tremendous political and religious turmoil; to the composed aspect of Greek art, he added the power of human drama. In Michelangelo's time, medical advances were charting the human body more precisely than ever before, and Michelangelo was fascinated by the opportunity to study the body in various poses and under different tensions. There is, thus, an unprecedented realism in his work. But he never stopped there.

In 1496, he went to Rome and got a commission from a French cardinal to do a *Pietà*. His work is an astonishing synthesis of Gothic, Greek, and Christian art that surpasses anything previously accomplished. In 1501, he returned to Florence and, in this period, sculpted his David. This work was clearly a study, but it shows Michelangelo trying to capture the heroic.

In 1505, he returned to Rome to do a set of tomb sculptures for Pope Julius II. Only parts of this work were ever finished, but the Moses shows the lineage of David. Meanwhile, Julius had a new task for him: to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Michelangelo protested that he was not a painter, but he accepted because the work gave him the opportunity to combine form and philosophy. He was given the opportunity to work out the program for himself. On October 31, 1512, his ceiling was unveiled and the history of art changed forever. Michelangelo was only 37 and lived to be 89.

In all these figures, we can see certain common themes: versatility, originality, and classical influences. ■

Suggested Reading

Barolsky, *Why Mona Lisa Smiles*.

Mallet and Mann, *Lorenzo the Magnificent*.

Mann, *Petrarch*.

Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*.

Questions to Consider

1. What changes and continuities do you detect as you move from Boccaccio to Michelangelo?
2. In what ways are these Renaissance figures like, and in what ways are they unlike, the medieval figures you heard about in earlier lectures?

The Northern Renaissance

Lecture 43

There was a psychological parallel, I think it's fair to say, between north and south. Man was a flawed creature, but perfectible by effort; by struggling, by working, by studying, by learning, man could improve himself.

There are two fundamental reasons for exploring the “northern” Renaissance. It is a matter of considerable interest to see what happened to the Renaissance movement when it crossed the Alps. The northern Renaissance also stands, in crucial respects, as the intellectual background to the religious reformations of the 16th century.

The so-called “new learning” struck deep roots in the north of Europe but looked quite different from its Italian manifestations. It is important to see that lay culture was different in the north: less urban, literate, and affluent. It is also important to recognize that the church was more influential in intellectual life in the north and that the scholastic tradition was more deeply rooted and persistent.

In the north we speak of “Christian humanism,” a movement that had much in common with Italian humanism but also some important differences. As in Italy, the clarion cry was “*ad fontes*”—“to the sources”—but the sources were more likely to be the Bible and the church fathers than the Greek and Latin classics. Northern, or Christian, humanists shared the Italians’ conviction that reading and study were paths to improvement; that one could become like the persons one read or read about.

There was a psychological parallel between the north and south: Man was a flawed creature but perfectible by effort. Protestants and Catholics would eventually divide on this point. Both north and south laid great stress on free will: Humans were free to choose the path of improvement or to reject it. Here, again, Protestants and Catholics would eventually disagree on this issue.

Once again, let's use a series of portraits to sketch some of the main themes and issues in the northern Renaissance. Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (1455–1536) was the most important of the French Christian humanists (he sometimes used the Latin form of his name, *Jacobus Faber*). He took a doctorate in Paris in the traditional learning, then traveled widely, including a stint in Florence in 1491–1492.

On his return to Paris, he lectured on Plato and Aristotle and began devoting to philosophical texts the kind of scholarly scrutiny that he encountered in Italy but that had previously been applied to literary works. Soon, Lefèvre turned to the texts of the church fathers, especially the Greeks. In 1505, he published a translation of the works of John of Damascus. In 1512, he published commentaries on Paul's epistles and brought out, in stages, a French translation of the Bible. In 1521, some of his teachings were condemned by the Sorbonne, and he fled to Strasbourg. The Reformers claimed Lefèvre as one of their own, but he never accepted their central doctrines.



Desiderius Erasmus.

Corel Stock Photo Library.

John Colet (1466–1519), from a wealthy London family, received a fairly traditional education at Oxford but was unusual in his day for having spent a period in Florence studying with Pico della Mirandola and Marsilio Ficino, the great Platonists. From 1496 to 1504, Colet lectured on St. Paul's epistles in Oxford and began to apply to them the textual, critical, and philosophical tools of the humanists. In the process, he cultivated a deep dislike for scholasticism.

In 1505, he founded St. Paul's school in London, which quickly became influential (it remains a very good school to this day). Colet was not only a devoté of the new learning, but he was also critical of the abuses and corruption of the church in his times and spoke out on a variety of issues. Colet was friends with great figures, such as Thomas More and Desiderius Erasmus, and his teaching and writing had a significant impact on the English reformers under Henry VIII.

Thomas More (1478–1535) has been so much romanticized that it is difficult to get at the historical figure. He came from a solid middle-class London family. He entered the household of Cardinal Morton at 13 and began a lifelong study of the classics. His father desired him to study law and he did so, brilliantly. He was called to the bar in 1501 and even taught law for a time.

In 1504, More entered Parliament, but his political career began in earnest when Henry VIII became king in 1509. More held a series of increasingly distinguished positions until, in 1529, he was appointed Lord Chancellor of England. He was in touch with, indeed, friends with, most of the great intellectual figures of the day.

In 1516, he published his most famous work, *Utopia*, a semi-satirical account of an imaginary place run according to natural law and simple logic. The book parodied many contemporary situations. When Henry VIII initially opposed Luther, More prepared the theological treatises that issued in the king's name. He was current with the best Christian humanist scholarship and defended it against both scholasticism and obscurantism. For example, he wrote to the Oxford authorities who wished to prevent the teaching of Hebrew to say that all learning was useful and important and that only the small-minded could claim that teaching Hebrew was "Judaizing." Finally, More broke with the king over the matter of the royal divorce and was executed for refusing to compromise.

The northern Renaissance not only brought the new learning of Italy to northern Europe, but helped to pave the way for the religious upheaval of the 16th century that we call the Reformation.

Desiderius Erasmus (1469–1536) of Rotterdam was the “Prince of Humanists.” He was of obscure origins and educated in modest schools, then by the Brethren of the Common Life, among whom he became acquainted with humanism. Erasmus became an Augustinian canon and was ordained a priest but got permission to leave his monastery to study. For many years, he was an itinerant scholar, studying in Paris, Louvain, Oxford, and Italy. He was taught by Colet, influenced by the Italians, and befriended by More.

His early serious work was on the Greek text of the New Testament, of which he prepared a Latin translation and eventually a new Greek edition. Like Lefèvre, Erasmus wished to make the church fathers more widely known and prepared editions of Jerome, Ambrose, and John Chrysostom, among others. His humanist leanings are clear in his *Aadges* (1503), a collection of Greek and Latin proverbs and pithy sayings designed to serve as guides to right conduct.

In 1503, Erasmus published his *Enchiridion*, a handbook (literally) to instruct those in power in how to reconcile Christian ethics and the exigencies of office. Erasmus became a master of satire; his two greatest works were the *Praise of Folly* and *Julius Excluded*. In the former, Lady Folly naively speaks on behalf of many contemporary ecclesiastical abuses. In the latter, Pope Julius II arrives at the Pearly Gates, where St. Peter does not recognize him and will not let him in.

In his later years, Erasmus had a battle with Martin Luther on the human will. Erasmus held to the freedom of the will and the Christian humanist ideal of improvement. Although he contributed to the Protestant movement, Erasmus would not join it. Even so, the Catholic Church for a long time suspected some of his teachings and rejected others.

Bearing in mind that such men as John Wyclif and Jon Hus had already challenged church teachings, that the Babylonian captivity and the Great Schism had damaged the papacy’s reputation, and that conciliarism had emerged as a new way of thinking about church organization, one can see how the northern Renaissance paved the way for a potential religious upheaval. But the people we met here would not cross the line into rebellion. Others would do that. ■

Suggested Reading

Bainton, *Erasmus of Christendom*.

Burke, *The European Renaissance*.

Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*.

Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*.

Marius, *Thomas More*.

More, *Utopia*.

Questions to Consider

1. Where can you see influences of the Italian Renaissance on the key figures of the northern Renaissance?
2. What evidence do you find for calling the Renaissance a movement, rather than a phenomenon marked by a few isolated geniuses?

The Protestant Reformation—Martin Luther

Lecture 44

Europe was still now Christian, but at least two forms of Christianity would exist.

The Protestant Reformation constitutes one of the watershed moments in Western civilization. But how are we to understand it? What are the central issues that we need to explain? How do we seek to assess its significance? We must acknowledge that there were many religious movements in the 16th century that can all legitimately be called “reformations.” Is it possible to choose, or to differentiate, among these?

One polemical tradition sees only the opposition of Protestants and Catholics, but this view fails to do justice to anybody. Orthodox Christians—or Muslims!—have never understood what the fuss was about. Protestants disagreed as sharply with one another as they did with Catholics. The Protestant “reformers” did not see themselves as anti-Catholic. They advanced positive teachings of their own. The very word *reformation* is ambiguous: It can mean “make better” or “make over.” We will see it used in both senses.

The first of the “magisterial” reformers was Martin Luther (1483–1546). Born of modest family—his father was a miner—in a small town, Luther had a local education,



Martin Luther.

then attended the new University of Erfurt. He joined the Augustinians, was ordained a priest, rose in the administration of his order, visited Rome, and began teaching in the University of Wittenberg.

Luther's path to "reform" had at least two branches. He was influenced by Christian humanism, shared the humanist dislike for scholasticism, and accepted much of the specific, objective criticism of the church then circulating. He also had a highly sensitive personality that was prone to deep doubts and pessimism. Try though he might, he could not convince himself of his own worthiness in the eyes of God, nor could he accept that any actions on his part might be of great benefit to him.

In 1516, Johan Tetzel was successfully preaching an indulgence in Germany designed to raise money to rebuild St. Peter's. The indulgence was a fairly typical aspect of medieval Catholicism that had become bloated in late medieval usage. For Luther, the indulgence rankled in two ways. First, it smacked of the "good works" that he did not believe efficacious and, second, it transferred lots of German money to Vienna bankers and to Rome.

In October 1517, Luther posted Ninety-five Theses against indulgences on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg. This was a fairly regular academic practice for a professor, not yet a decisively defiant act. Many humanists greeted the Theses warmly, and when the church authorities tried to discipline Luther, they did so at first through his religious order. In a disputation—an academic debate—in 1519, Luther was drawn to reject the authority of popes and general councils. Now he was on a path to separation from Rome.

In 1520, Luther published three great treatises. His *Address to the German Nobility* called on noblemen to reform the church in their territories by abolishing payments to Rome and banning clerical celibacy, masses for the dead, pilgrimages, and religious orders. His *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church* argued that the "captivity" of the church consisted of the denial

The Protestant Reformation constitutes one of the watershed moments in Western civilization; of that, there can be no doubt.

of communion in both kinds (bread and wine) to the laity and in imposing the doctrine of transubstantiation.

Luther maintained that only baptism and the Eucharist were valid sacraments. His *On the Freedom of a Christian Man* argued that salvation depended on faith and grace and that the ordinary person was, therefore, completely free of any need to do good works. In June of 1520, Rome condemned 41 of Luther's theses, and in January of 1521, Pope Leo X excommunicated Luther.

At the imperial Diet of Worms in 1521, Luther refused to recant. His safe conduct was honored and he was permitted to go to Saxony, where the Elector Frederick III protected him. Before looking more closely at Luther's teachings, we may note just a few more significant dates in his life.

In 1522, Luther intervened in Wittenberg to control what he saw as the damage of persons more radical than himself. By 1529 in the Colloquy of Marburg, Luther and his supporters made what overtures they could to Rome while holding the line against other reformers, particularly the Swiss. In 1524, Luther married a former Cistercian nun, Catherine von Bora, and in the same year, he provided support for the destruction of the German peasants' rebellion by the nobility. Most of rural Germany, especially in the south, remained Catholic.

These years also saw his magnificent translation of the Bible into German, his Greater and Lesser Catechisms, his writings on the human will, numerous theological treatises and biblical commentaries, and a wealth of hymns. Some of his work was in Latin and some in German, depending on the audience he had in mind.

Luther laid down some of the basic doctrines of what came to be called Protestantism. The word *Protestant* is a simple Latin verb meaning "they protest," and it was the first word of a remonstrance issued in 1529. The core of Luther's teaching turns around the three "alones" or "onlys."

Salvation is "by faith alone" (*sola fide*). Faith is a free, mysterious, and unmerited (unearned) gift of God. Humanists, such as Erasmus, said that

humans could exercise their will, could choose to believe. Luther believed that man was too corrupted by sin to make this choice. Therefore, the presence of faith is attributable to God alone and people cannot take credit for it.

Salvation depends on “grace alone” (*sola gratia*). The grace of God that makes man just in the eyes of God is a free gift wholly independent of human actions. Grace was made available once and for all in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross. The “Bible alone” (*sola scriptura*) teaches what many need to know and is the single source of authority in matters of religion; popes, councils, traditions—all these things were sinful human inventions.

Luther’s teachings eventually took hold in most of northern Germany and spread directly to Scandinavia and indirectly to England through some of the key reformers there. It then spread to North America with German immigrants. The question naturally arises: Why was Luther successful? One reason is that some of what he taught had been anticipated by Wyclif and Hus and even by high medieval “heretics.”

Luther was also very much in step with his times on scholarly grounds and on the need for reform of the church. But Erasmus, Lefèvre, and others stayed with Rome. Luther had a more comprehensive alternative to Roman Catholicism than anyone before him. He also prepared crucial texts and did so in German. The new printing technology helped his ideas to circulate. He was a forceful and gifted writer. In many ways, he was seen as a German patriot. Luther was protected politically by the Elector of Saxony, and the Holy Roman Emperor simply could not risk trying to suppress him. This situation was very different than the past.

For the first time in a millennium, “Christendom,” always more of an ideal than a reality, was riven. Europe was still Christian, but now, more than one form of Christianity would exist. How many forms, and where they would exist, was not clear even at Luther’s death in 1546. ■

Suggested Reading

Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*.

Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400–1700*.

Cameron, *The European Reformation*.

Oberman, *Luther*.

Questions to Consider

1. Where can you see Luther's debts to Christian humanism?
2. What precisely did the Catholic Church object to in Luther's three "alones"?

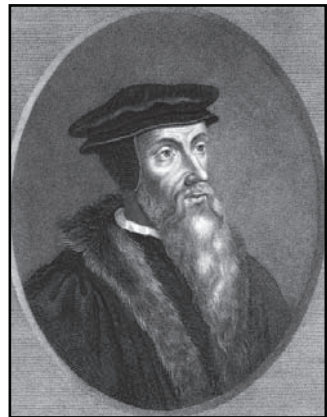
The Protestant Reformation—John Calvin

Lecture 45

Calvin, himself, was born in the town of Noyon in northern France, in very modest circumstances. The parish priest noted that he was a boy of unusual intelligence, and provided for his education, first locally and then in Paris, where he went off and studied for a number of years.

In this lecture, we will explore the reformation within the Reformation or, perhaps, the reasons why it is best to speak of reformations. We will turn to the so-called “Reformed tradition,” which means the form of Protestantism that derives from John Calvin. We will look at forms of the Protestant experience and how they differed from one another. We will also consider two more “masters” of the “Magisterial Reformation.”

Even though the reformation in Switzerland owes most to John Calvin, it got its start with Huldreich Zwingli (1484–1531). Zwingli came from German Switzerland, got a traditional education, and became a priest in 1506, serving as a parish pastor until 1516. He pursued humanistic studies, secured a copy of Erasmus’s Greek New Testament, and began studying, in particular, Paul’s epistles (which he memorized!). His concerns about contemporary practices—he was particularly struck by what he regarded as the superstitious folly of pilgrims—and his close reading of Paul began to lead Zwingli in a “reformed” direction.



John Calvin.

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He began calling publicly for reform and was elected “People’s Preacher” in Zurich in 1518. He began lecturing on Paul and calling for reform, winning a great deal of support. He soon attacked purgatory, saints, monasticism, clerical celibacy, the mass, the authority of the pope, and fasting. In 1524, he married. Zwingli seems to have owed little to Luther; at Marburg in 1529, he

refused to compromise. The eastern cantons of Switzerland split badly over matters of religion, and in the ensuing turmoil, Zwingli was killed in battle.

Swiss reform now fell somewhat by accident to the Frenchman John Calvin (1509–1564). Calvin was born in Noyon in modest circumstances, but the parish priest noted his unusual intelligence and provided for his education. He then went to study theology at Paris in 1523. Within a few years, Calvin had grave doubts about his priestly vocation and left Paris and began to study law in Orléans. There, he encountered Protestants for the first time. Not until 1533, however, did he declare his break from the Roman Church. In 1532, Calvin published a Latin commentary on one of Seneca’s works; we see again the influence of humanism.

Fearing that he would be captured in King Francis I’s roundup of Protestants, Calvin fled to Basle. There, in 1536, he published the first edition of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Guillaume Farel (1489–1565) was in the process of reforming Geneva and invited Calvin to join him. Calvin was reluctant at first, preferring a life of retreat and scholarship. With the *Articles of Church Government*, Calvin and Farel (note the difference in their ages!) imposed a strict regime on the city. All citizens were required to make a profession of the reformed faith before the public authorities. Calvin and Farel were chased out, and Calvin went to Strasbourg, where he was much influenced by Martin Bucer (1491–1551), a former Dominican who became the leader of the Swiss reformed communities in the years right after Zwingli’s death.

In 1541, Farel and Calvin were called back to Geneva and instituted their “Holy Commonwealth.” Four groups—pastors, doctors, elders, and deacons—had power. Supervision of public morality was effected by the Consistory, made up of ministers and laymen. A severe regime was instituted over a period of some 10 years, during which time Calvin became a virtual dictator. Harsh penalties were imposed for skipping church services or talking in church. One could

[Luther and Calvin] agreed on the primacy of scripture, though as we’ve seen, Calvin placed the sovereignty of God ahead of scripture.

be executed for saying that the pope was a good man. All pleasures, such as singing and dancing, were forbidden.

What, then, was the Calvinist faith? Calvin began with the absolute sovereignty of God and the radical depravity of man. He treated the former even before the primacy of Scripture in his *Institutes*. Calvin's mature formulation of his reformed faith may be found in the 1539 and later editions of his *Institutes*, a book that gave at least one Protestant tradition something like Peter Lombard's *Four Books of Sentences* had long given Catholicism. The *Institutes* was built up systematically as a series of biblically grounded reflections on the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostles' Creed. Teachers have long depended on a mnemonic device to present Calvin's teaching: TULIP.

T—Total depravity: Man is utterly sinful and incapable of taking steps to merit his own redemption.

U—Unconditional election: Those whom God elects to salvation are elected unconditionally, that is, their election is not conditional on their mode of life, on their works.

L—Limited atonement: Christ died for the elect, not for all humankind.

I—Irresistible grace: God's grace is irresistible for the elect, who have, therefore, no claim to merit grace as a reward for their conduct.

P—Persistence in grace: Grace cannot be lost or rejected by the elect.

Calvin's system depended fundamentally on his doctrine of absolute predestination: From before time, all people were predestined to salvation or damnation. Nothing that a human being did in his or her lifetime mattered in this scheme. To fight off the possibility of hedonism, Calvin taught about the "signs of election."

Calvin said that salvation was absolutely assured for the elect, but there was the problem that no one could know for sure who was elect. The “signs” *might* be an indication: public profession of faith; regular attendance at services; a godly life. Interestingly, the signs forced a kind of uniformity: No one wanted to appear *not* to be among the elect.

Let’s conclude by comparing Luther and Calvin. They agreed on three fundamental points. The primacy of Scripture (*sola scriptura*). Justification by faith and faith as a free, undeserved gift of God. Free will did not truly exist for humans because of the bondage of sin. They disagreed on five basic points. That grace was persistent and irresistible. The certitude of salvation. Absolute predestination. The presence of Christ in the Eucharist. A theocratic polity (for Calvin, the church was supreme; for Luther, the state was).

The Reformation shows a deep break with the old Western tradition of the essential goodness of humans and their capacity for improvement. We also see that Christendom was riven, but Catholicism did not have a single alternative. In addition, there were more alternatives than just Lutheranism and Calvinism. In the next lecture, we’ll speak of the Catholic reforms and sketch the religious situation at the end of the 16th century. ■

Suggested Reading

Bouwsma, *John Calvin*.

McGrath, *John Calvin*.

Questions to Consider

1. Calvinism seems a cold and austere faith, yet it was immensely popular. Why do you think that was the case? To whom might Calvinism have especially appealed?
2. Can you think of other people, or traditions, we have encountered in these lectures who share Calvin’s gloomy view of human potentiality?

Catholic Reforms and “Confessionalization”

Lecture 46

We might notice that the Catholic Church began a very wide-ranging program of reform before the magisterial reformers had begun their work, or even as the magisterial reformers were setting to work.

In the older polemical tradition, it was common to divide the religious history of the 16th century into the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. This way of viewing things warps our perspectives badly. The Catholic Church began a wide-ranging program of reform before the magisterial reformers began their work. Catholic and Protestant reforms both drew on humanist scholarship and widely expressed critiques of the late medieval church. There was a Counter-Reformation, but it was a limited project and had its heyday in the period of about 1550 to 1650.

We have already encountered the humanist element in the Catholic reforms in Erasmus and More. Another example is Spain’s Francisco Cardinal Ximénes de Cisneros (1436–1517). Ximénes had an interesting career with several turns. He studied in Rome, then returned to Spain to serve in a series of ecclesiastical posts. He then entered a strict monastery and won a reputation for great sanctity. In 1492, he reluctantly agreed to become personal confessor to Queen Isabella.

Isabella soon charged him to reform monastic orders in Spain, particularly the Franciscans, then appointed him Archbishop of Toledo and chancellor of Castile, which gave him a platform for wider reforms. In 1500, largely out of his own funds, Ximénes founded the University of Alcalá to promote the new learning in Spain as a basis for reforms of the clergy and the church. He invited important scholars from all over Europe to join the new university. Its greatest scholarly project was the Complutensian (*Complutum* = Alcalá) Polyglot (multi-language) Bible: an edition in six volumes with Hebrew, Greek, and Latin in parallel columns, plus an elaborate scholarly apparatus at the foot of the page. The work of Ximénes shows the characteristic Catholic confidence that personal sanctity, along with great learning, could produce genuine improvement.

The Catholic Church’s fundamental belief that reform in the institutional church would lead inevitably to reforms in the wider society produced a number of new religious orders in the 16th century. St. Filippo Neri (1515–1595) is a good example of a reformer who worked from the church to the wider world. He was a Florentine who moved to Rome, studied, then adopted a deeply austere religious life. He was ordained a priest in 1551 and served at San Girolamo in Rome, where he began to gather a community of young men around himself.

In 1564, the men who had been praying and studying together became the Congregation of the Oratory (usually called “Oratorians”), who were dedicated to good preaching; inspiring worship, including music (we owe to them the “Oratorio”); and service to ordinary laypeople. The ideal, then, was blameless life for the clergy and authentic service to the people. The order spread all over Europe and even into the Spanish overseas empire.

The most famous of all the new orders was the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) founded by St. Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556). Ignatius was a Spanish nobleman who was wounded in battle and, while recovering, read the Bible repeatedly, along with the lives of the saints. He resolved to take on a new life. For a time after his recuperation, he lived the life of a virtual hermit and began to write his *Spiritual Exercises*, a series of daily meditations and exercises patterned on the life of Christ, designed to make the person following them more Christ-like.

He studied for a while in Alcalá and later, for seven years, in Paris. In some respects, then, Ignatius was like his Spanish predecessor, St. Dominic, in believing that a holy life and deep learning would serve the church. In 1534, he and a few companions, including Francis Xavier (1506–1552), formed the Society of Jesus, dedicating themselves to poverty, chastity, and pilgrimage to Jerusalem (the last vow later changed into obedience to the pope).

Ignatius and his followers went to Rome, where their devotion and loyalty to the church overcame papal suspicions of new religious ideas. Pope Paul III approved the new order in 1540. Ignatius spent the rest of his life developing and improving the constitutions of the order. The Jesuits became renowned

for austere lives, great learning, and missionary work far beyond the confines of Europe. Francis Xavier, for example, worked in India and Japan.

Catholic women also participated in the movement. Angela Merici (1474–1540) created the Ursulines, an order of teaching women dedicated to St. Ursula (a legendary British Christian said to have been slaughtered by the Huns along with 11,000 virgins). Angela was a Franciscan “tertiary,” a laywoman who adopted some aspects of the life of the Franciscans. She spent some years teaching girls and attending to sick older women, then formed a plan to create a school for girls. In 1535, she created a school in Brescia and staffed it with women who led a life that was common but not cloistered. Thus, the Ursuline order was founded. Paul III approved this order in 1544, but church authorities gradually cloistered the women, even though their convents remained important schools until recent times.

The most famous Catholic woman reformer of the 16th century did not found a new order. Teresa of Avila (1515–1582) revitalized the Carmelites. Teresa led a reform in the Carmelite order that led to an upsurge in the number of houses following the strict, primitive rules of the order. She had to overcome considerable opposition from those who enjoyed a somewhat relaxed lifestyle. Teresa was also a prolific author of spiritual treatises, including an autobiography. She has come to be recognized as one of the greatest theologians of prayer. Pope Paul VI named her a doctor of the church in 1970.

As a central institution, why did the Catholic Church not respond earlier to the age’s calls for reform or to the specific challenge of the Protestants? There was a natural hesitation to discern among all the calls for reform those that seemed most salutary. Popes had been stung by the challenges to their authority in the conciliar epoch and were leery of new calls to curtail papal power. Yet Paul III did sanction the Jesuits and the Ursulines, and there were some attempts at dialogue with the Protestants. The political situation in Europe was severely contentious.

When a program of reform emerged, it took the traditional form of a great church council. The Council of Trent met in three major sessions between 1545 and 1563. The council was always complicated by political situations in

Europe and by rivalries among various Catholic groups. Still, it accomplished a great deal, responded to the Protestant Reformation, and set the agenda for the Catholic Church until Vatican II (1962–1965).

Although older teachings were sometimes refined, Trent mainly affirmed customary positions: the Nicene Creed; equality of Scripture and tradition; the church’s authority to interpret the Bible; sacraments; traditional Catholic practices in the areas of pilgrimages, relics, and saints; and so on. The council also laid the foundations for better training of priests, created a catechism for teaching and reference, and reformed the liturgy. From Trent onward, one can legitimately speak of a “Counter-Reformation.” The greatest gains came in southern Germany and Poland, where whole regions were won back from Protestantism, especially through the work of the Jesuits.

In surveying the religious situation at the end of the 16th century, historians speak of “confessionalization.” The century had opened with a dominant Catholic Church that was almost everywhere under sharp criticism. Throughout the century, a variety of religious positions emerged. By the end of the century, the religious situation had hardened sufficiently that the future could be perceived. Roman Catholicism took definitive shape with Trent, and that shape was largely an affirmation of historic Catholicism.

Lutheranism, in the form of the Augsburg Confession (1540), became dominant in many parts of Germany. The Peace of Augsburg (1555) set the notion of “*cuius regio, eius religio*” (“whose rule, his religion”), meaning that princes would choose whether their areas would be Protestant or Catholic. This solution ignored the “Reformed” and “Radical” movements. Still, Augsburg represented the first official toleration of religious diversity among Christians in Europe since Roman times. Lutheranism spread to Scandinavia and was theologically influential elsewhere, particularly in England.

At the end of the 16th century, Europe was still Christendom, a Christian civilization, but now there were a variety of forms of Christian experience.

The Reformed tradition arose around Calvin's *Institutes*. Calvinism became the major form of Protestantism in the parts of Switzerland that did not remain Catholic. Calvinism also dominated the Christian experience in the northern Netherlands (what we think of as Holland, as opposed to the southern Netherlands, or Belgium, that remained Catholic). The French Protestants, or Huguenots, were Calvinist in orientation. So were those in Scotland.

The Reformation in England was, in the first place, a royal project occasioned by Henry VIII's need for a divorce in order to secure an heir. Initially, Henry wanted essentially a Catholic Church without the pope. After his death (1547), more committed Protestants moved the English church decidedly away from Roman Catholic positions. Queen Mary (1553–1558) tried but failed to re-Catholicize England.

When Elizabeth (1558–1603) came to the throne, she was sure she did not want Roman Catholicism, but she faced Protestants of both the Lutheran and Calvinist variety. With the Book of Common Prayer of 1569, Elizabeth promoted an "Anglican" compromise.

There were, finally, the "radicals." This was not necessarily a term of abuse. It meant that these people really got to the "root" (= *radix*) of things. The dominant stream in the radical Reformation came to be called Anabaptists, or "re-baptizers." They felt that all the other reformers were still tainted with papism, that they had not gone far enough. Among their distinctive teachings were a rejection of infant baptism, a congregational concept of church polity, and often, the idea of complete separation from the world (hence, the Mennonites, for example). The Anabaptists at first tended to collect on the frontiers and in remote rural districts, where they were less likely to be harried by their opponents.

We can see at least five broad patterns of Christian experience, each of which would go on evolving until our own days. ■

Suggested Reading

Chatellier, *The Europe of the Devout*.

Lindberg, *The European Reformations*.

Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People*.

Questions to Consider

1. What common threads do you see in the work of the Catholic reformers?
2. Why do you suppose that, in the age of “confessionalization,” there did not emerge a single coherent alternative to Roman Catholicism?

Exploration and Empire

Lecture 47

With the age of exploration and discovery, Western civilization and world history merge in a way that they never had done before.

Voyages of exploration, commerce, and conquest, initially by the Portuguese and Spanish, globalized Western civilization in ways that no one can have foreseen. But why did this happen? Europe was not more powerful, populous, or better situated. Bear in mind that Europe had, largely through Muslim traders, maintained indirect commercial relations with Africa and Asia for centuries.

Several new factors emerged in the late medieval and Renaissance period. Ancient geographical writings were recovered and contributed to a clearer understanding of the shape of the world. Genuine or fantastic accounts of travels by Marco Polo (1254/1255–1324) and John Mandeville (1356/1357) were widely read and stirred up much interest. Legends about Prester John circulated and heightened awareness of alleged Christian communities living in either India or Africa. There was an Italian merchant community in China from about 1300. Over the course of the 14th and 15th centuries, much better maps were created. There were technological innovations, including the needle compass, better astrolabes (for determining latitude), and new ships (the caravel).

The diplomatic/political scene changed, as well. The Mongol Empire at first offered unprecedented opportunities for overland travel and trade between the Mediterranean world and China. Then, the Mongols chose Islam (despite tremendous efforts to convert them to Christianity), their empire disintegrated, and the Ottoman Turks rose to power and shut off the trade routes. Because Italians, particularly Venetians, had a near-monopoly on Mediterranean trade, there were powerful incentives to find new routes to the Orient.

Europeans may still have felt some vestiges of the old crusading ideology, as Pius II and Ignatius Loyola show. Still, the question remains: Why was

this globalization begun by Portugal and Spain (and not, let us say, France or England)?

Portugal led the way in the great era of European overseas expansion. Rulers and adventurers wished to bring succor to Christians and to find access to the gold of the Niger River basin, long cut off from direct access by Berber tribesmen of North Africa. Already in the 14th century, some sailors had been going down the west coast of Africa and exploring the islands, such as the Azores and Canaries.

In the early 15th century, Ceuta on the Moroccan coast was captured, providing a secure base for voyages down the African coast. The Portuguese crown began to colonize the islands. The introduction of sugar into Madeira in the 1440s led to the introduction of slavery. By the mid-15th century, the Portuguese had secured their control of the west African coastal regions. Now the crown began to dream of reaching Asia by going east.

In 1487, Bartolommeo Dias (c. 1450–1500) pushed farther along the western coast and used his knowledge of prevailing winds to catch favorable breezes and round the cape of Africa. In a voyage lasting from 1497 to 1499, Vasco da Gama (c. 1460–1524) sailed to Calicut in India. He had four ships and some 170 men. He returned with only some of his seamen and one ship but with a cargo of spices worth 50 to 60 times the cost of the venture.

Alfonso da Albuquerque (1453–1515) armed his ships, captured bases, and developed the Portuguese strategy of a string of armed trading posts in the Indian Ocean basin. Because only a few Portuguese settled in the region, they were not resented too much, and trade was eagerly promoted by many rulers. The Portuguese government built elaborate institutions to manage and control trade with the “Indies.”

The Spanish had many of the same incentives as the Portuguese but were, for decades, distracted from overseas ventures by the completion of the Reconquista. Granada fell in 1492, and by then, there was some concern in Spain, occasioned by Portugal’s successes along the African coast. Ferdinand and, especially, Isabella financed the Genoese Cristoforo Colombo (1451–1506) but did so somewhat reluctantly and stingily. Columbus was a brilliant

sailor, a successful self-promoter, and a keen, but we might say selective, student of geography. We need to avoid romanticizing his voyages. He got three small vessels and some 90 men.

Columbus's first voyage was promising enough that he made three more in 1493, 1498, and 1502. He died wealthy and famous but far short of his own dreams. The difference in scale of his later voyages is striking. On the second, he had 17 ships and 1,700 men. He always believed that he had discovered islands lying just off the coast of Japan. In 1501, Amerigo Vespucci, sailing along the coast of Brazil, realized that Columbus had discovered a "New World." In 1507, Martin Waldseemüller published a map on which he labeled two new continents "America."

In other words, at least some people in Europe were aware that there were wider worlds out there, so it isn't as if there was complete ignorance on the part of people in Europe around them.

Exploration did not stop with Columbus. In 1513, Vasco Nuñez de Balboa crossed Central America at the isthmus of Panama and viewed the Pacific Ocean. In 1519, Ferdinand Magellan set out to circumnavigate the globe. He died in 1521 in the Philippines, but one of his ships returned in 1522. Spurred on by the Iberian example, north

Europeans began to make voyages, too. With the southern routes to Asia cut off, the French and English went north.

John Cabot (1450–1499) sighted Newfoundland in 1497, but serious English exploration and colonization did not begin for another century, largely because the country was distracted by the religious and political convulsions of the Reformation. In 1534, the French explorer Jacques Cartier (1491–1557) sailed up the St. Lawrence River. France, too, was distracted and did not begin its overseas adventures for almost another century. In Columbus's wake, Hernán Cortés (1485–1546) initiated the conquest of Mexico, and Francisco Pizarro (1470–1541), the conquest of Peru.

Between 1492 and 1600, perhaps 200,000 Spaniards settled in the New World. Gradually, a sophisticated imperial administration—the most

complex since Roman times—was created to govern and exploit the Spanish Empire in the Americas. The Spanish experience was different from the Portuguese in that the latter created trade stations (except in Brazil), whereas the former conquered land, introduced settlers, dominated natives, promoted agriculture, and extracted raw materials, not least bullion.

In an attempt to understand the dynamics and consequences of this era, historians have come to talk of the “Columbian exchange.” Diseases were moved in both directions across the Atlantic. Syphilis, most notably from the Americas to Europe, while smallpox, diphtheria, measles, whooping cough, chicken pox, malaria, typhoid, yellow and scarlet fever, flu, tuberculosis, and even bubonic plague were carried by Europeans to the New World. Perhaps 90 percent of the native population of the Indies died as a result.

Large numbers of animals were imported to the New World, including cattle, sheep, pigs, goats, chickens, donkeys, and even dogs and cats. Numerous Old World plants came to the new: oats, barley, and wheat, most notably, but also dandelions! Maize, potatoes, and sweet potatoes were the primary plants that traveled eastward.

That it was Europeans who reached out to explore, conquer, and colonize the rest of the world is a fact with consequences that reach right to our own days. Much of what we call the Third World, or developing world, is made up of former European colonies. With the age of exploration and discovery, Western civilization and world history merge. ■

Suggested Reading

Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*.

Fernández-Armesto, *Columbus*.

Scammell, *The First Imperial Age*.

Questions to Consider

1. Given the background factors that we discussed in this lecture, why was it the Iberian, rather than northern European, powers that commenced the age of exploration?
2. Where and with what consequences do you see the role of technology in the process of exploration and colonization?

What Challenges Remain?

Lecture 48

One great scholar once said that history is a process of challenge and response. One very interesting way of thinking back through the history of Western civilization is to list the challenges and list the responses.

Across the 16th century, we can see the emergence of the kind of “great power” politics and diplomacy that would dominate the West until the end of the 20th century. This “system” (it was not a system in the sense that someone sat down and thought it up) consisted of shifting patterns of alliances among the greatest European powers, with the smaller powers aligning themselves, or being forced to align themselves, with their more powerful neighbors.

The first fundamental aspect of this system was the Hapsburg-Valois rivalry, that is, the struggle between the Valois rulers of France and the Hapsburg rulers of the Spanish Empire and the Holy Roman Empire. A series of dynastic marriages effected two great unions that then culminated in one stupendous dynastic arrangement. Maximilian of Austria, the Holy Roman Emperor, married Mary of Burgundy, who was the heiress to both Burgundy and the Netherlands. They had a son, Philip. Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile married, unifying the Spanish crowns, and had a daughter, Johanna. Johanna and Philip married, creating a Hapsburg sphere of influence that reached all over Europe and extended to the Americas. Under Philip I of Spain, a huge imperial realm existed, but he divided his holdings in 1556 such that his son Ferdinand took the Austrian lands, while Charles V took Spain, its overseas possessions, and its Italian interests.*

These Hapsburg lands surrounded France, and much French policy was addressed to eluding domination. In the 17th century, French policy is most evident in support given to Protestant Sweden and north German states against the Austrian Hapsburgs, despite France’s Catholic faith. Likewise, when the Netherlands rebelled against Spain (the southern Netherlands were Catholic and generally loyal, but the northern Netherlands were Calvinist and chafed under Spanish Catholic authority), the French lent aid of



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The Spanish Armada.

various kinds to the Dutch. The Spanish saw themselves as, in some way, the protectors and saviors of Catholic Europe, even though Catholic France opposed them mightily. For this reason, the Spanish led the naval forces that fought and defeated the Turks at Lepanto in 1571. In 1588, the Spanish launched the “invincible armada” against England. It was defeated, and for the next several decades, the English and Spanish navies were in combat all over the world.

This period also saw an escalation of colonial rivalries. France and England both began to build overseas empires in North America. Partly they were looking for the Northwest Passage to Asia; partly they were entering lands left free by the Spanish; partly they were combating each other as religious rivals. The Dutch, once freed of Spanish dominance, began to build a colonial regime, too. This regime was more like the Portuguese than the Spanish in that the Dutch created trading stations in the Indian Ocean basin and the

South China Sea, but also in the Americas. The Dutch and English, although Protestant states with “natural” foes in France and Spain, actually fought a bloody series of wars.

At the very end of the 17th century, the Russia of Peter the Great entered the picture as another key player. Thus, by let us say 1700, two great patterns were evident. Shifting combinations of England, Holland, France, Spain, German states, Austria, Russia, and Turkey would dominate the European scene. As these states consolidated and even expanded their overseas holdings, Europe’s struggles were globalized. Simultaneously, problems on the world frontier became at once problems in Europe. Likewise, the European economy became dependent on raw materials from, and commerce with, overseas realms. The dawning modern world also manifested itself in a second important way: the Scientific Revolution. The word *revolution* is appropriate because there was a dramatic change in worldview between the middle of the 16th and the middle of the 17th centuries.

Usually, the process is associated with a series of discoveries in astronomy. In 1543, Nicholas Copernicus (1473–1543) published his *On the Revolutions of Heavenly Bodies*. In this book, which was dedicated to the pope, he carefully advanced the heliocentric theory—the idea that the earth and all the planets revolve around the sun. He was not the first to argue this, and his views did not yet win immediate assent.

In 1576, the king of Denmark financed the construction of an observatory for Tycho Brahe (1546–1601). Brahe’s contribution was the collection of an immense amount of data on the movements of the stars and the planets. Before him, virtually everyone had relied on the imprecise data of the ancients. Brahe’s greatest pupil was the German Johannes Kepler (1571–1630), who discovered that neither Copernicus nor anyone else had ever adequately accounted for the peculiarities in planetary motion. He realized that only by means of sophisticated mathematical models would it be possible to explain the movement of the

**This is why ...
we can think
of Western
civilization not as
something fixed,
done, and final
but as a great
experiment, as a
great experiment
that goes on.**

planets through their elliptical orbits. Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) built on the work of his predecessors and proved—mathematically—that the earth moves.

It is easy to misunderstand what was at stake here. People have probably heard about Galileo’s struggles with the church; natural instinct leads us to see wisdom and truth being crushed by superstition and coercion. In fact, Galileo’s views were not yet dominant and the whole Western tradition was against him. At issue was whether precise observation and mathematical demonstration were to be permitted to trump centuries of accumulated wisdom. Was it the role of science to confirm both revealed truths and common sense, or was science itself superior?

It is fascinating to reflect on the fact that the earliest manifestations of what we might think of as science occurred as Mesopotamians stared inquisitively at the heavens arrayed above themselves and that, nearly five millennia later, a tradition already thousands of years old was overturned when new people gazed at those same stars. We noted that in Hellenistic times, there was already some hint of the eventual split between the “two cultures”: the cultures of art and science. Yet the medieval, and to a degree even the Renaissance, curriculum of the arts urged an integrated view of knowledge.

A biblical worldview held that the world was created by God and that science was God’s gift to those humans who wished to explore God’s purposes. This, too, was an integrative view. From the 17th century, science came to be seen as a distinct and highly specialized way of knowing. Aristotle thought poets capable of apprehending and telling the highest truths. This is harder to believe after the Scientific Revolution. Science also became professionalized, in addition to specialized. Think of the vast array of learned societies today that carefully guard the information in their fields and the credentialing of those who wish to practice one or another scientific craft. No Mesopotamian, no Greek, carried a membership card!

We began with tiny cities in Sumer, and cities have been a constant concern throughout these lectures. Yet the world was profoundly rural: The first British census that showed more people living in cities than in small towns or rural communities was collected in 1850. That point was not reached in the United States until 1920. In the period from about 1500 to 1750, cities

anchored themselves as the decisive elements in the demographic and, thus, in the economic and political landscape. Initially, the greatest growth was in medium-sized cities: in the British midlands, the Low Countries, and the Rhineland. The faint beginnings of urban industrialization were apparent, with all the social and political problems that process has entailed.

The psalmist had asked, “What is man that Thou art mindful of him?” By the 17th century, a wide array of answers had been given to that question, and the great political upheavals of the 18th century would test almost every one of them. A skeptic might have said, “There is no God; that is a foolish way of putting the question.” But there are more skeptics now than there were then.

Thomas Hobbes, following in the tracks St. Augustine and John Calvin, said that man was a wretched creature, sinful, monstrous, criminal, and always to be restrained as much as possible for fear of what he might do to himself or others. The last defenders of monarchy said that man was a creature most happy when he submitted willingly to those in authority and recognized the God-given order of the state and the universe.

“Liberal” thinkers said that man was endowed with rights and that he needed to use those rights to their fullest in free and open societies in order to be fully human. This line of thought reached back over the Renaissance to Cicero and to Aristotle. Lofty in theory, this view has been hard to implement in practice.

Western civilization has been one long test of human ingenuity in the face of the natural world. Mesopotamians and Egyptians learned to harness the power of rivers to tame the challenges of the desert. For millennia, the Mediterranean provided food, linked peoples, and transmitted ideas. “Our Sea,” as the Romans called it, was the center of the earth as far as people were concerned. Continental Europeans and their island neighbors spread in every direction and applied ever-new technologies to the problems involved in eking out a living.

Europeans finally crossed the oceans and made the world a smaller, more interesting, and more interdependent place. One great scholar said that

history was a process of challenge and response. Surely we must ask what challenges remain. What responses will they evoke? ■

Suggested Reading

Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence*.

Fernández-Armesto, *Millennium*.

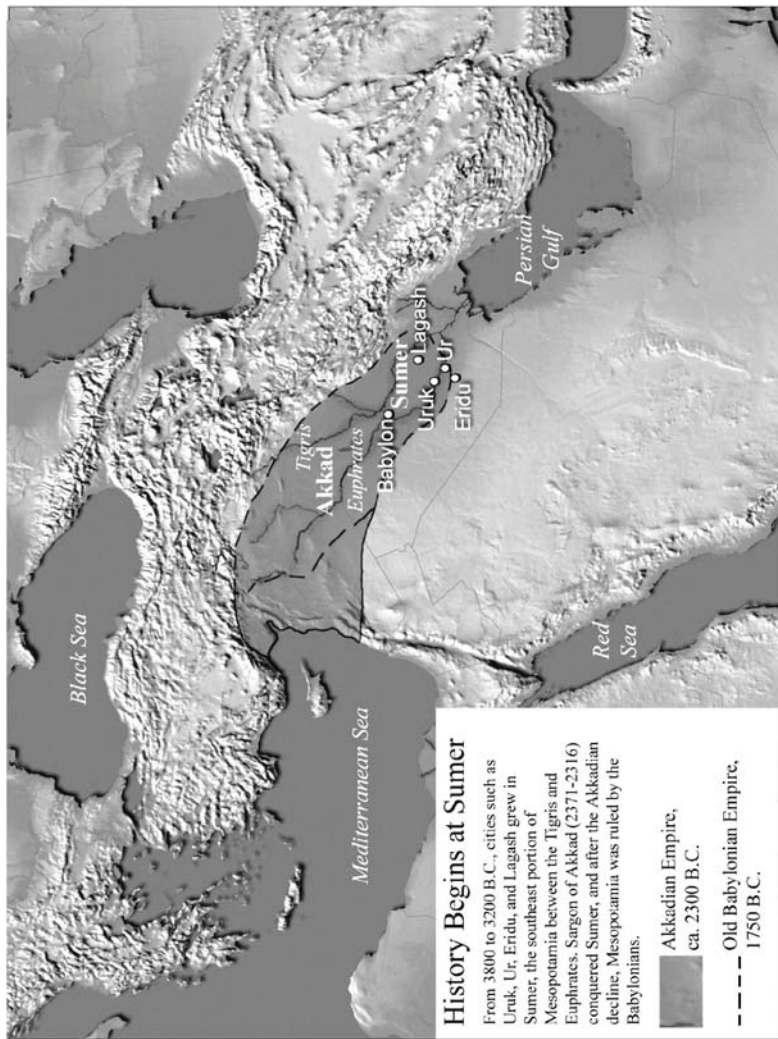
Question to Consider

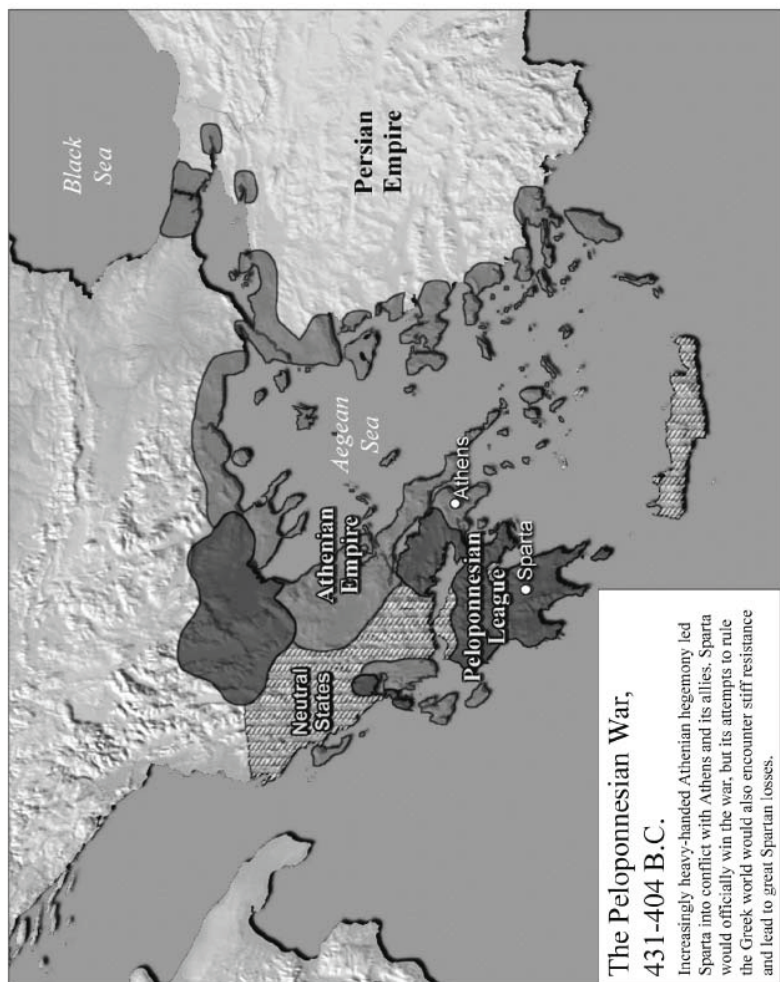
1. Imagine yourself in a strange sort of time-travel theme park. You observe various groups of people sitting on benches. Unnoticed, you walk up behind various benches and eavesdrop on conversations. You saw Aristotle and Galileo talking on one bench. On another, you observed Constantine, Charlemagne, and Charles V. On still another, you found Plato, Jesus, and Thomas More. Yet again, you noticed Augustine, Erasmus, and Calvin. Tell us what you overheard in each conversation.

*Erratum

Professor Noble inadvertently says in the lecture that Philip II divided his holdings in 1556, when it was actually Philip I who did so.

Maps

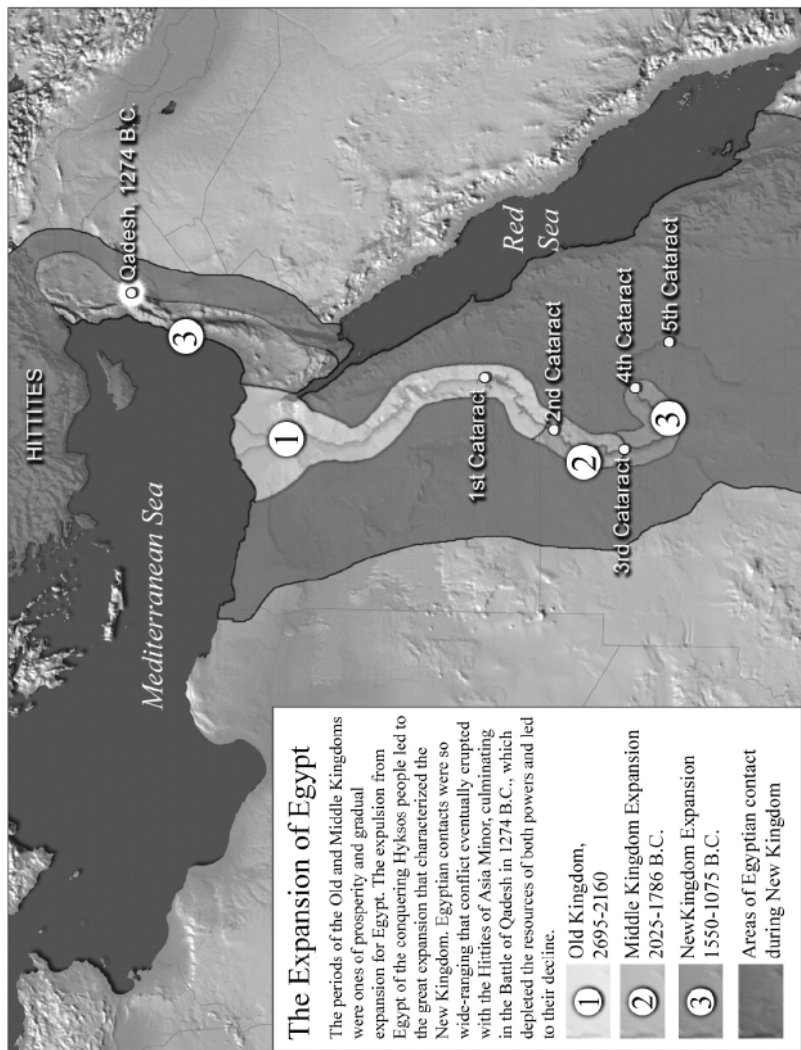


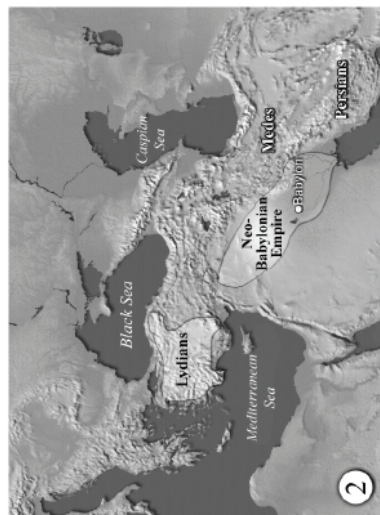
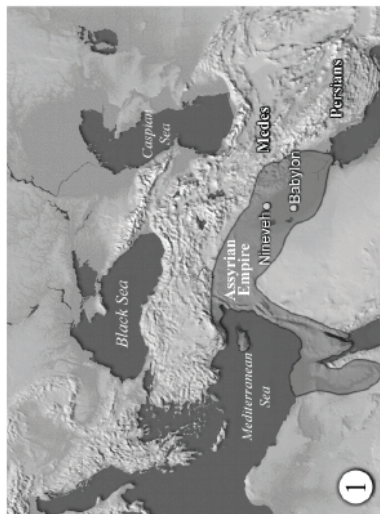


The Peloponnesian War,

431-404 B.C.

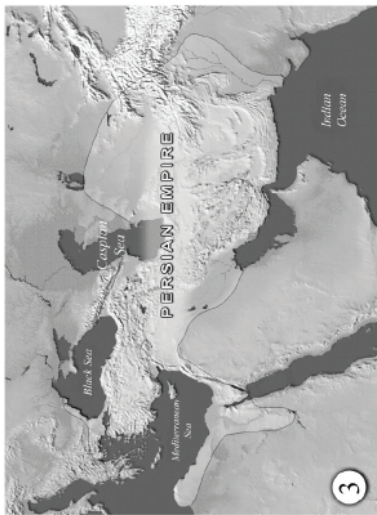
Increasingly heavy-handed Athenian hegemony led Sparta into conflict with Athens and its allies. Sparta would officially win the war, but its attempts to rule the Greek world would also encounter stiff resistance and lead to great Spartan losses.





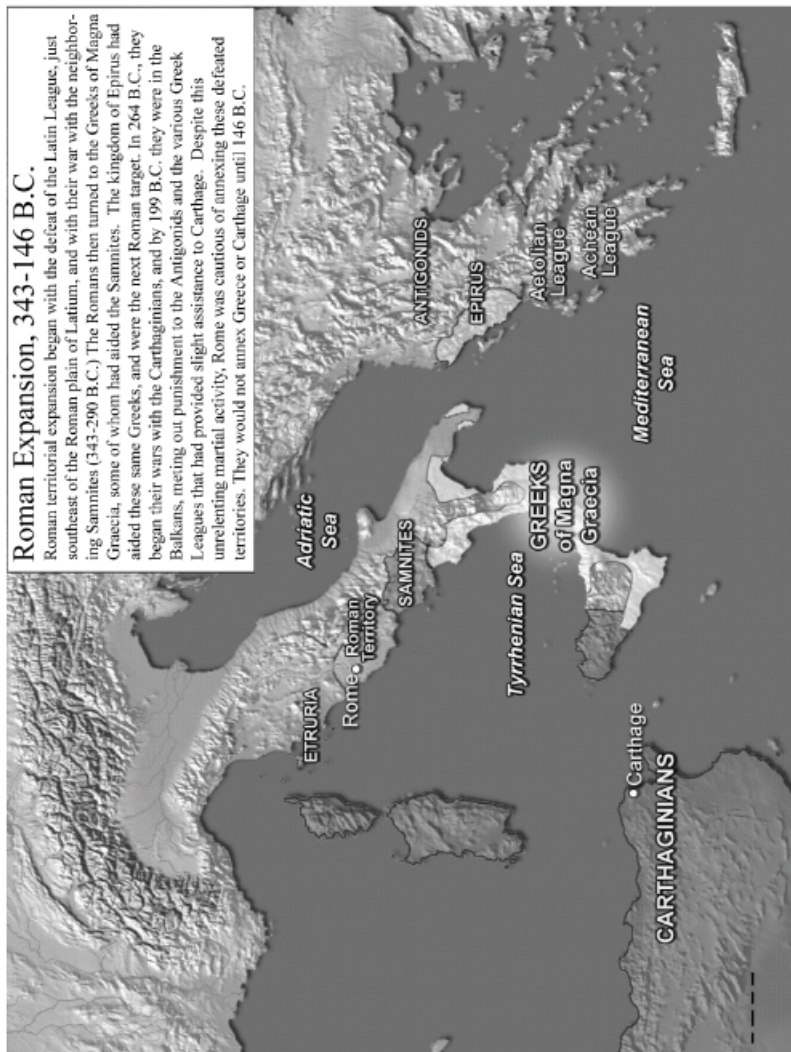
A Succession of Empires

1. The tyrannical and cruel Assyrian Empire, ruling from their capital at Nineveh, eventually evoked a challenge from a coalition of peoples: The Medes, the Persians, and the Babylonians.
2. From their own capital at Babylon, the Neo-Babylonians built their own empire in Mesopotamia. Their most famous king was Nebuchadnezzar (r. 605-562 B.C.). The Lydians of Anatolia were a minor player, most famous for their invention of coinage. They were defeated by the Persians, who had united with the Medes.
3. The Persian empire began expanding under Cyrus (r. 559-530) and continued to expand under successors Cambyses and Darius. They built the largest empire the world had yet seen.



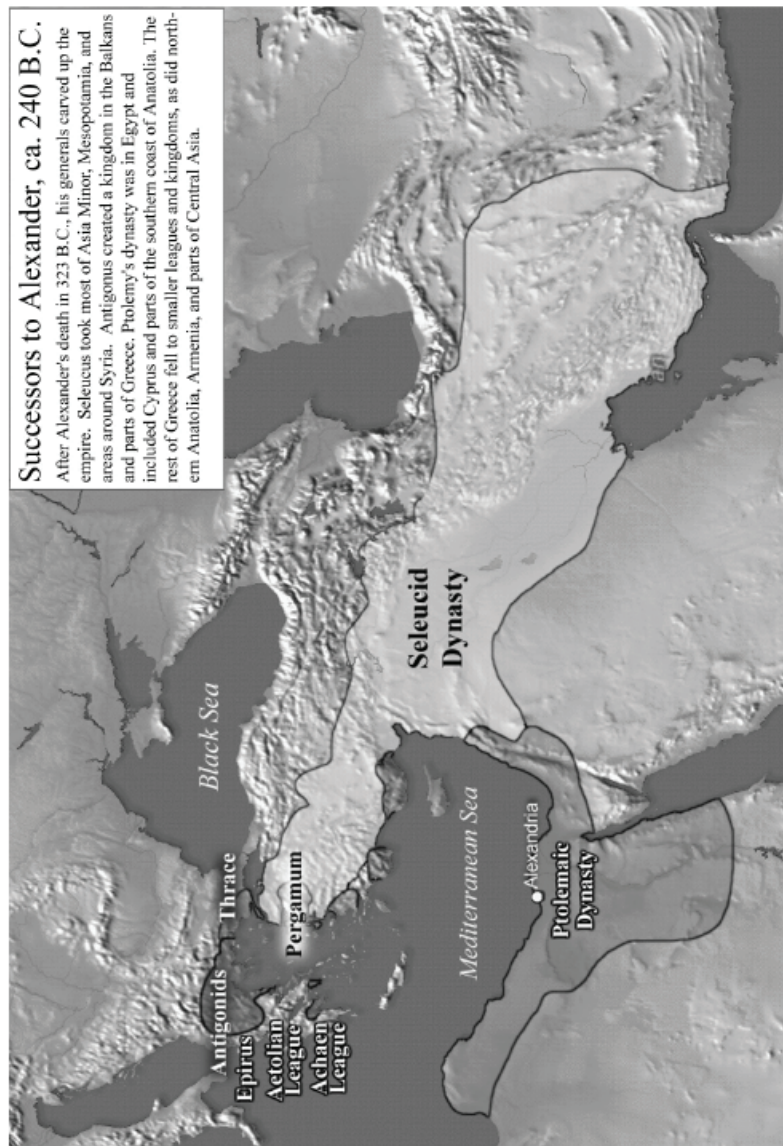
Roman Expansion, 343-146 B.C.

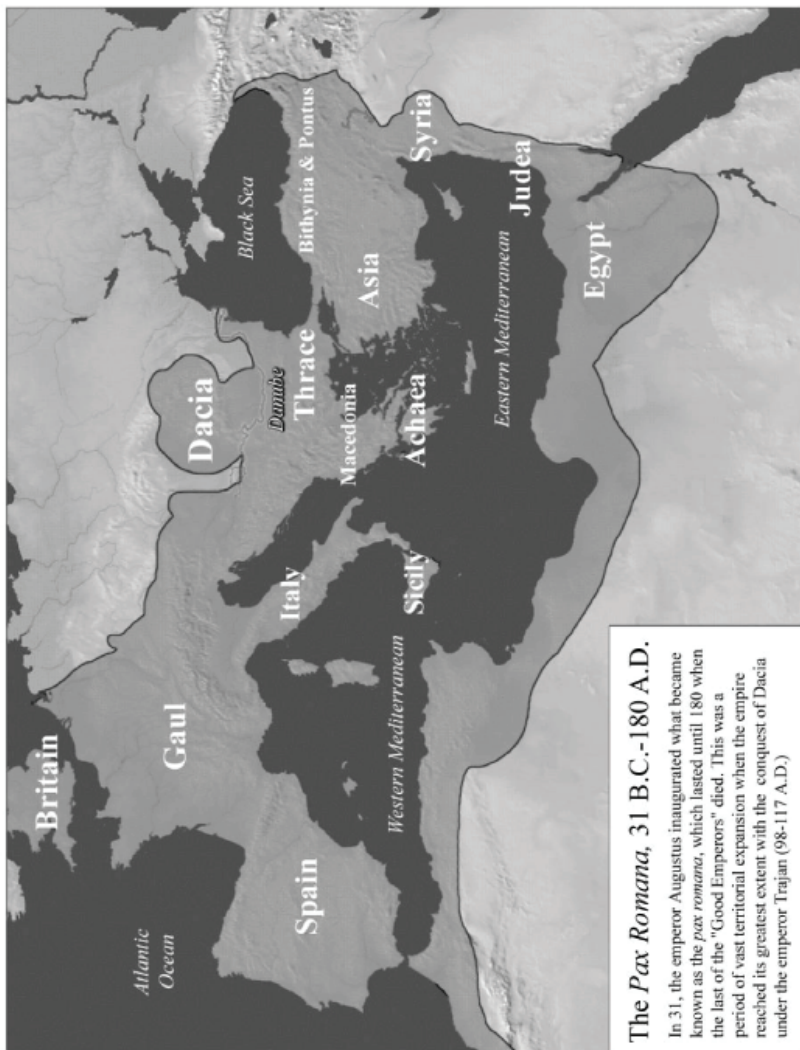
Roman territorial expansion began with the defeat of the Latin League, just southeast of the Roman plain of Latium, and with their war with the neighboring Samnites (343-290 B.C.) The Romans then turned to the Greeks of Magna Graecia, some of whom had aided the Samnites. The kingdom of Epirus had aided these same Greeks, and were the next Roman target. In 264 B.C., they began their wars with the Carthaginians, and by 199 B.C. they were in the Balkans, meeting out punishment to the Antigonids and the various Greek Leagues that had provided slight assistance to Carthage. Despite this unrelenting martial activity, Rome was cautious of annexing these defeated territories. They would not annex Greece or Carthage until 146 B.C.



Successors to Alexander, ca. 240 B.C.

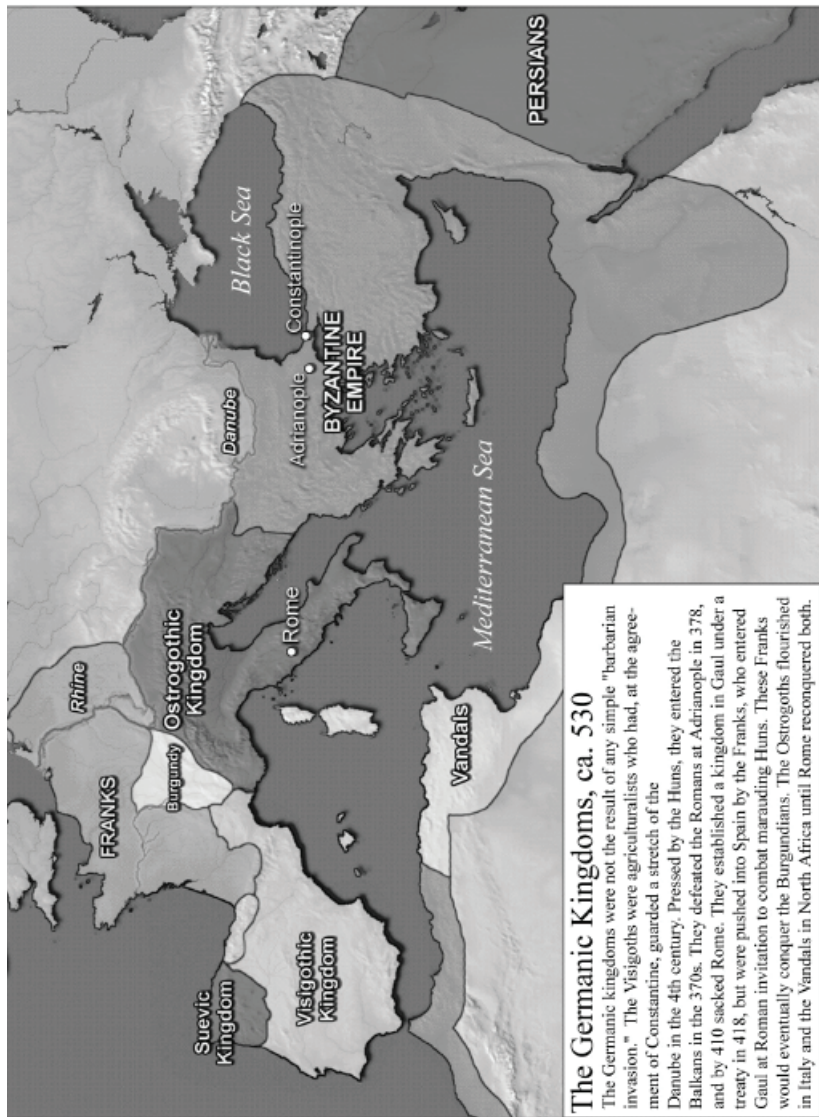
After Alexander's death in 323 B.C., his generals carved up the empire. Seleucus took most of Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, and areas around Syria. Antigonus created a kingdom in the Balkans and parts of Greece. Ptolemy's dynasty was in Egypt and included Cyprus and parts of the southern coast of Anatolia. The rest of Greece fell to smaller leagues and kingdoms, as did northern Anatolia, Armenia, and parts of Central Asia.





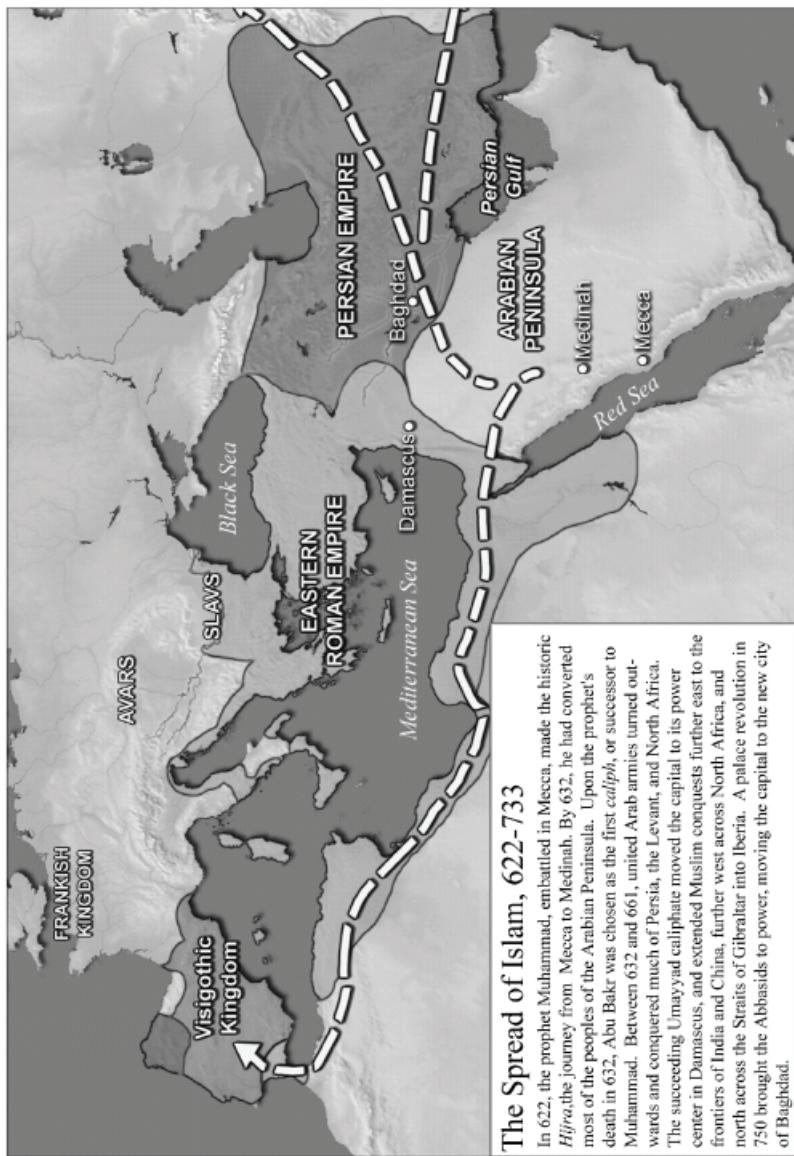
The Pax Romana, 31 B.C.-180 A.D.

In 31, the emperor Augustus inaugurated what became known as the *pax romana*, which lasted until 180 when the last of the "Good Emperors" died. This was a period of vast territorial expansion when the empire reached its greatest extent with the conquest of Dacia under the emperor Trajan (98-117 A.D.)



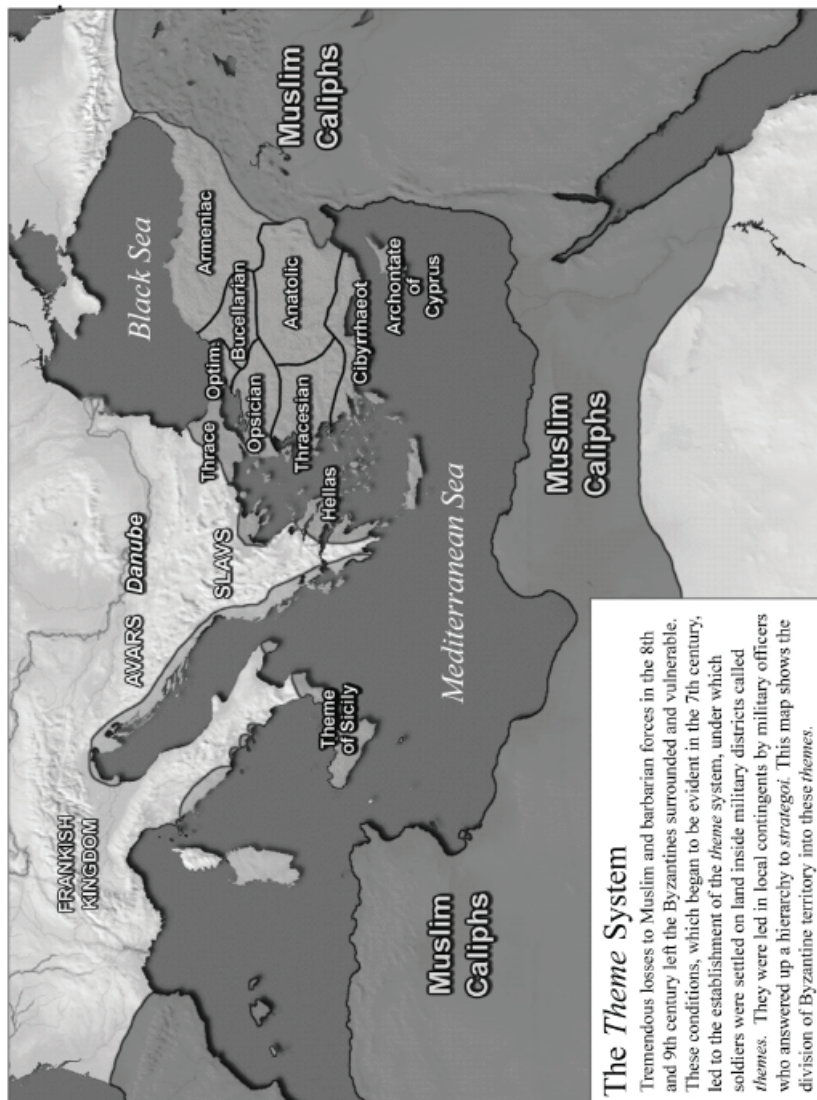
The Germanic Kingdoms, ca. 530

The Germanic kingdoms were not the result of any simple "barbarian invasion." The Visigoths were agriculturalists who had, at the agreement of Constantine, guarded a stretch of the Danube in the 4th century. Pressed by the Huns, they entered the Balkans in the 370s. They defeated the Romans at Adrianople in 378, and by 410 sacked Rome. They established a kingdom in Gaul under a treaty in 418, but were pushed into Spain by the Franks, who entered Gaul at Roman invitation to combat marauding Huns. These Franks would eventually conquer the Burgundians. The Ostrogoths flourished in Italy and the Vandals in North Africa until Rome reconquered both.



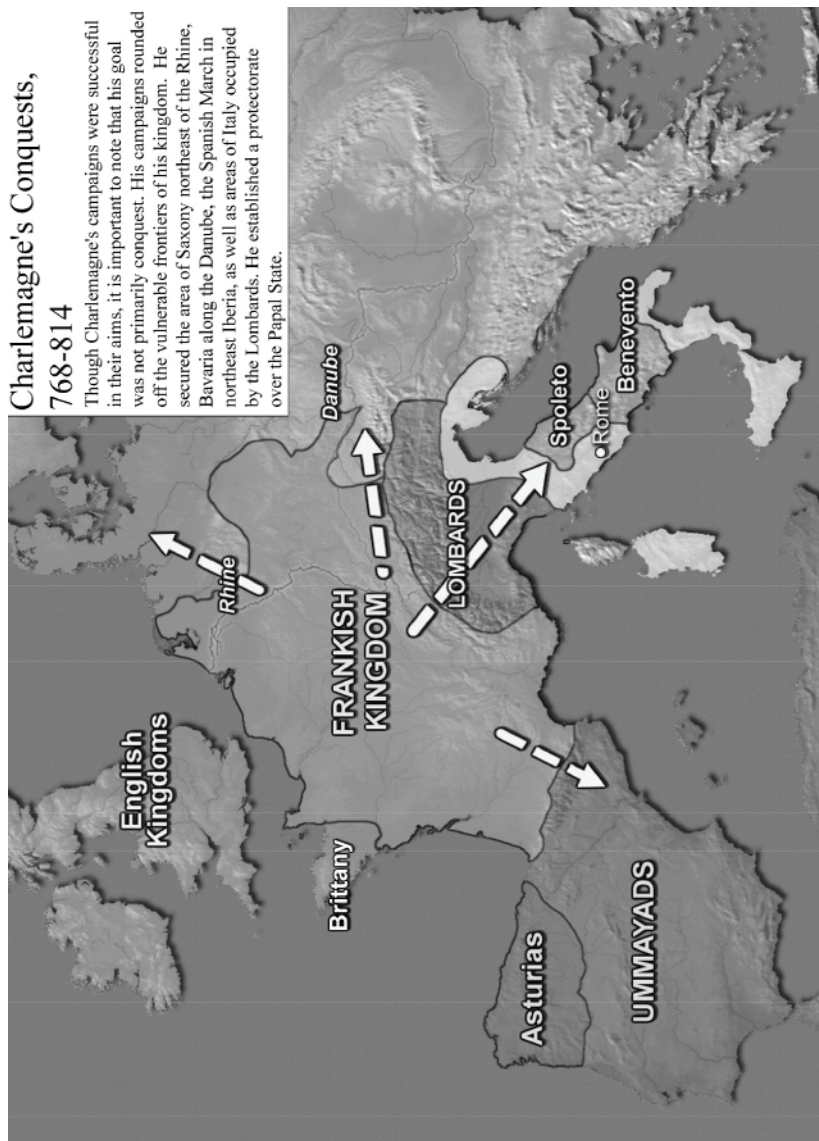
The Spread of Islam, 622-733

In 622, the prophet Muhammad, embattled in Mecca, made the historic *Hijra*, the journey from Mecca to Medinah. By 632, he had converted most of the peoples of the Arabian Peninsula. Upon the prophet's death in 632, Abu Bakr was chosen as the first *caliph*, or successor to Muhammad. Between 632 and 661, united Arab armies turned outward and conquered much of Persia, the Levant, and North Africa. The succeeding Umayyad caliphate moved the capital to its power center in Damascus, and extended Muslim conquests further east to the frontiers of India and China, further west across North Africa, and north across the Straits of Gibraltar into Iberia. A palace revolution in 750 brought the Abbasids to power, moving the capital to the new city of Baghdad.



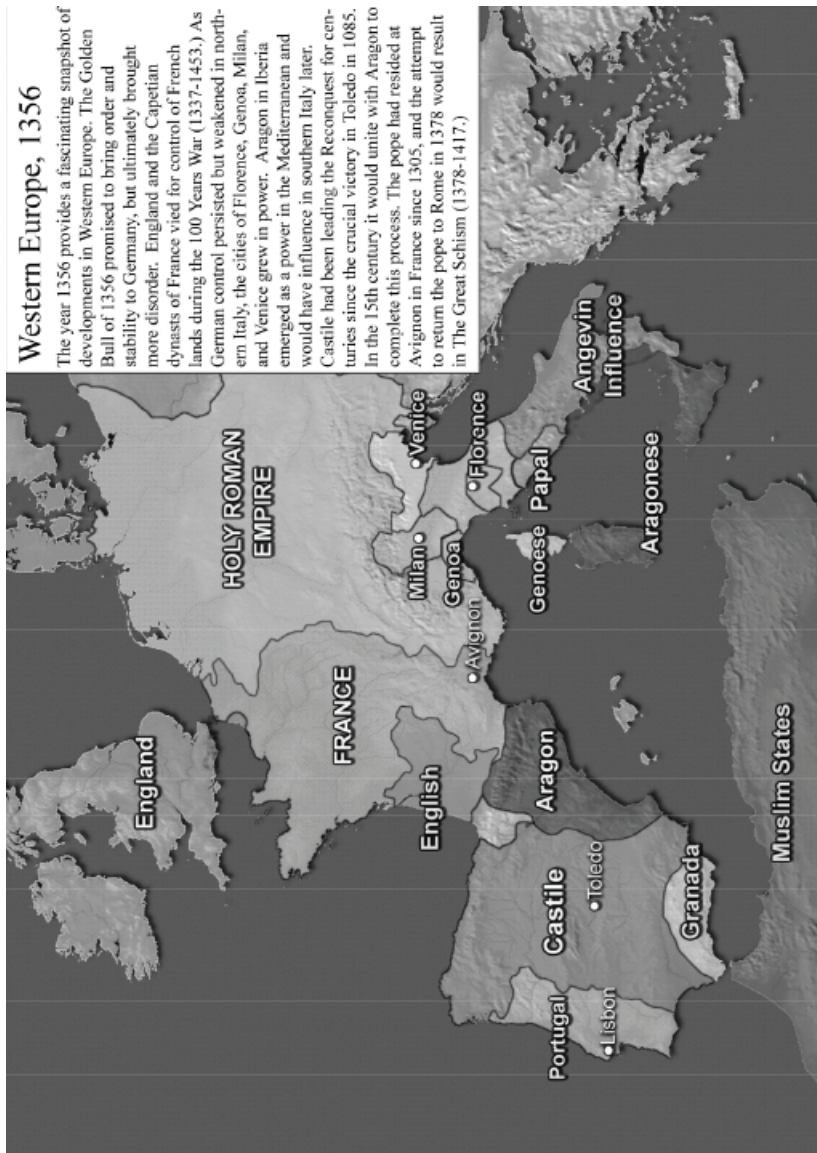
Charlemagne's Conquests, 768-814

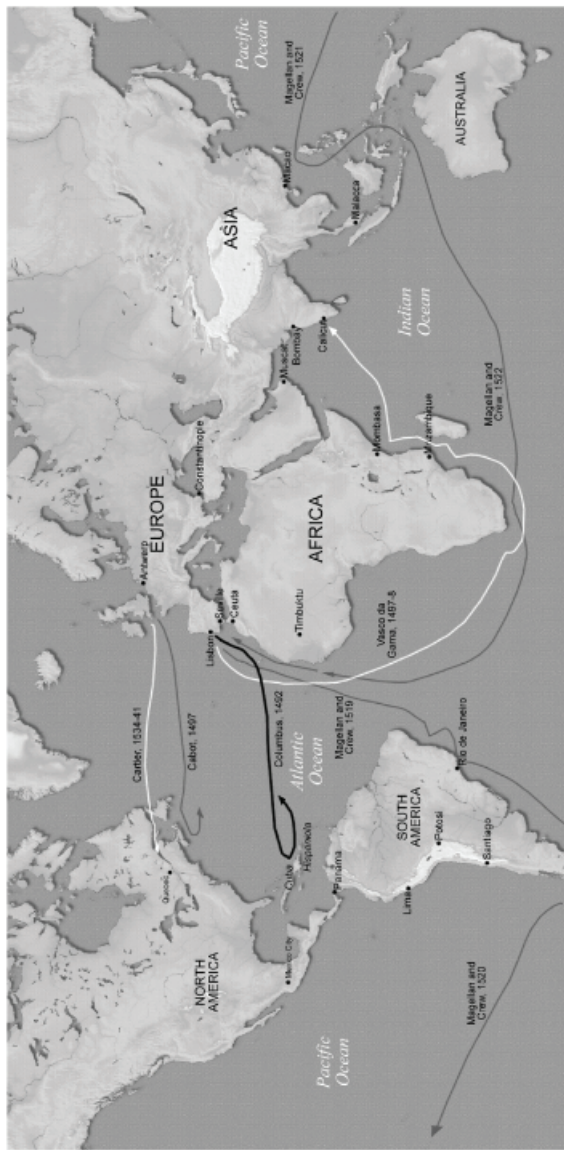
Though Charlemagne's campaigns were successful in their aims, it is important to note that his goal was not primarily conquest. His campaigns rounded off the vulnerable frontiers of his kingdom. He secured the area of Saxony northeast of the Rhine, Bavaria along the Danube, the Spanish March in northeast Iberia, as well as areas of Italy occupied by the Lombards. He established a protectorate over the Papal State.



Western Europe, 1356

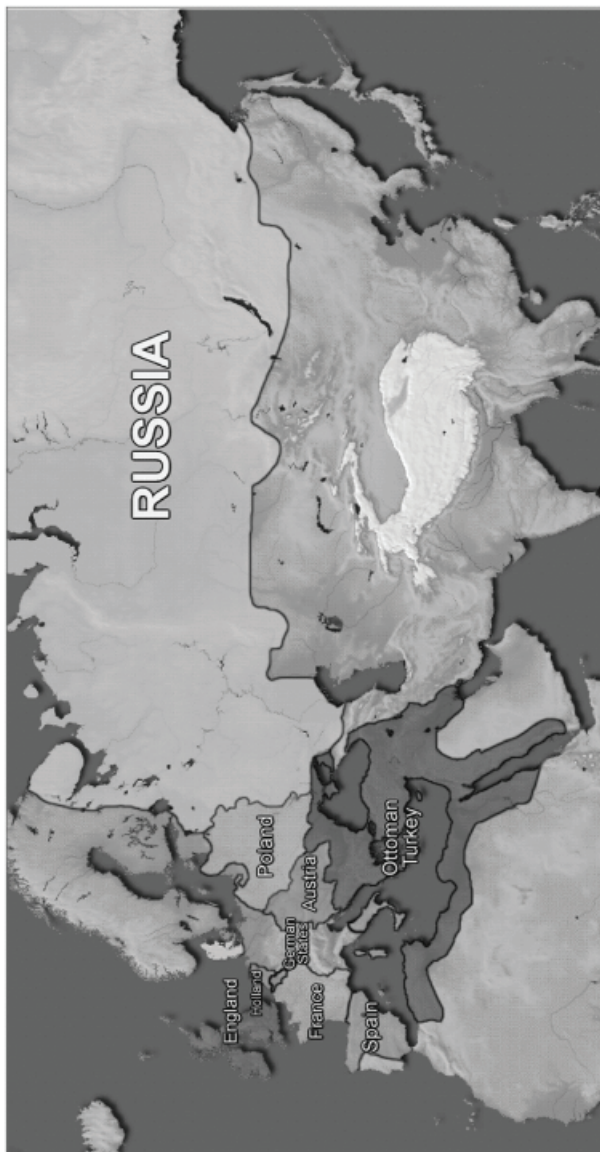
The year 1356 provides a fascinating snapshot of developments in Western Europe. The Golden Bull of 1356 promised to bring order and stability to Germany, but ultimately brought more disorder. England and the Capetian dynasts of France vied for control of French lands during the 100 Years War (1337-1453.) As German control persisted but weakened in northern Italy, the cities of Florence, Genoa, Milan, and Venice grew in power. Aragon in Iberia emerged as a power in the Mediterranean and would have influence in southern Italy later. Castile had been leading the Reconquest for centuries since the crucial victory in Toledo in 1085. In the 15th century it would unite with Aragon to complete this process. The pope had resided at Avignon in France since 1305, and the attempt to return the pope to Rome in 1378 would result in The Great Schism (1378-1417.)





The Age of Exploration, 1492-1535

The Portuguese led the way in overseas exploration, particularly in the realm of trade. Already in the 14th century, they had been sailing up and down the west coast of Africa and had explored islands such as the Azores and the Canaries. Their trading empire was born when Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope and sailed to Calicut. From there, they established armed trading posts throughout the Indian Ocean basin. The Spanish were the first to establish extensive possessions in the New World stretching from Mexico and the southern part of the North American continent all the way south past Peru into present day Argentina. Christopher Columbus' famous voyage of 1492 was the seminal event that initiated this process. The English explorer John Cabot sighted Newfoundland in 1497, but this did not lead immediately to serious English exploration or colonization. Like Cabot, French explorer Jacques Cartier was looking for the Northwest passage when he discovered and sailed up the St. Lawrence River. This would lead to the establishment of Quebec and New France.



Dominant European States, ca. 1700

By 1700, the states that would dominate modern European history until the 20th century were in place. As these states consolidated and expanded their overseas holdings, Europe's struggles became globalized.

Timeline

10,000–2500 B.C.	Neolithic Era
3500–3000	Emergence of civilization in Mesopotamia and Egypt Development of cities and writing
3000–2000	Consolidation of political power in Sumer; Old Kingdom in Egypt Conquest of Sumer by Akkadians
2000–1500	Egyptian Middle Kingdom Rise of the Hittites Highpoint of Minoan civilization on Crete
1500–1000	Egyptian New Kingdom Egypt’s wars with Hittites Mycenean conquest of Minoans Trojan Wars Exodus of Hebrews from Egypt Invasions of Palestine by “sea peoples”
1000–500	Highpoint, division, destruction of Hebrew kingdoms Creation of Phoenician trading networks and colonies Rise and fall of Assyria Rise and fall of Neo-Babylonian kingdom Emergence of Persia Greek Dark Ages, Archaic period Homer, <i>Iliad</i> and <i>Odyssey</i> Greek colonization Emergence of the polis Founding of Rome

- 500–350.....Classical age of Greece
 Persian and Peloponnesian Wars
 Highpoint of Athenian drama and comedy
 with Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides,
 and Aristophanes
 Sophists, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle
 Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon
 Parthenon
 Spread of Roman influence in central Italy
- 350–31.....Hellenistic Era
 Campaigns of Alexander the Great, 336–323
 Antigonid, Seleucid, and Ptolemaic
 successor kingdoms to Alexander
 Cultural achievements of Alexandrian
 science: Archimedes, Eratosthenes
 Stoicism and Epicureanism
 Rome’s rise to prominence
 Creation of republican institutions
 Conquest of western Mediterranean, 264–146
 Conquest of eastern Mediterranean, 197–31
 Early Roman writers: Cato, Catullus, Cicero
- 31 B.C.–A.D. 180Pax Romana and the Augustan principate
 End of Rome’s civil wars and creation of the
 imperial regime
 Empire reached greatest extent
 “Golden” and “Silver” ages of
 Latin literature
 Virgil, *The Aeneid*; Livy and Tacitus in
 history; Ovid and Horace in verse
 Life and ministry of Jesus Christ
 Missionary work of original apostles and
 St. Paul
 Emergence of a Christian church
 First persecutions of Christians by the
 Roman state

- 180–284..... The crisis of the 3rd century
Civil wars and succession crises
Barbarian incursions along frontiers
Rampant inflation
Systematic persecution of Christianity
- 284–600..... The world of late antiquity
Reigns of Diocletian and Constantine, 284–337
Creation of “tetrarchy,” division of empire
Fiscal and administrative reforms
Imperial regime embraces Christianity
Constantine grants toleration, 314
Theodosius makes Roman Catholicism state religion, 378–380
Western provinces of empire turn into Germanic kingdoms
Roman Catholic Church elaborates its institutions
Popes emerge as key leaders under Leo (440–461) and Gelasius (492–496)
Bishops become key figures in towns
Rise of Christian monasticism in Egypt
Spread of monasticism east (St. Basil) and west (Honoratus and Benedict)
Church fathers, or Patristic Age
Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Gregory, and others define essential teachings
Christian culture becomes dominant
- 600–900..... The early Middle Ages
The career of Muhammad and the rise of Islam
Muhammad (570–632) teaches a new faith
Followers build vast “caliphate” in less than a century
Center moves from Mecca to Damascus to Baghdad

Brilliant work of assimilating Greek philosophical and scientific heritage
Admixture of Arabic, Indic, and Persian cultural elements

The rise of the Byzantine Empire and Orthodox Christianity

Imperial regime focused more and more on the east—Anatolia and Balkans

New administrative arrangements—*theme* system marked a departure from Roman traditions

Greek culture emphasized; Latin slowly abandoned

Distinctive religious practices mark

Orthodoxy as a distinct Christian tradition

Efforts to assimilate ancient Greek philosophical and literary culture

Germanic kingdoms in the West culminated in empire of Charlemagne

Early kingdoms failed: Vandals,

Ostrogoths, Visigoths

Franks conquered Burgundians and Lombards

Fate of Europe left to Anglo-Saxons and Franks

Broad area of Christian culture and common institutional characteristics led to idea of “Christendom”

900–1300.....Europe’s medieval highpoint

Tremendous expansion

Demographic growth, expansion of agriculture and trade

New kingdoms in Celtic world, Scandinavia, and Slavic world

Spanish Reconquista

Aggressive expansion in Crusades

Political consolidation in England, France, Spain, and Italian towns
Disunity in Germany
Highpoint of power and influence of papacy and Roman Church
Age of cathedral schools, followed by universities
Time of scholasticism and Thomas Aquinas
Brilliant vernacular culture in *Beowulf*, *Song of Roland*, *Romances*, *Divine Comedy*

1300–1500.....The late Middle Ages

Political crises
The Hundred Years War between France and England, 1336–1453
The Golden Bull in Germany
Consolidation of Milan, Florence, and Venice in Italy
Peasants' revolts in France and England; urban revolts in Flanders and Italy
Ecclesiastical crises
The “Babylonian captivity” of the papacy
The challenge of “conciliarism”
The Great Schism
Demographic crises
Bad weather and poor harvests, 1311–1322
The Black Death, 1347–1349
Recurring Plague

1300–1550.....The Renaissance

Individual figures, such as Boccaccio and Petrarch
The Florentine hegemony with Coluccio Salutati and the Medici
The rise of humanism and courtly culture
New attitudes toward classical Greek and Roman literature and life

The spread of printing and more rapid dissemination of ideas
Tendency for scholars to travel more
Beginnings of European exploration and expansion

1400–1600.....Religious Reformations
Shifts in late medieval piety; rise of anti-clericalism; sharp criticism of abuses in Catholic Church
Christian humanists, such as Erasmus and Thomas More proposed broad program of reforms
John Wyclif and John Hus challenged theology of Catholic Church
“Magisterial” reformers—Martin Luther and John Calvin—created new Christian traditions that were durable
 Based on “faith alone, grace alone, scripture alone,” not on the “works” of medieval Catholicism
 There were sharp differences among the reformers
Catholic Church also began reforming in late 15th century
 New schools and universities, along with new religious orders, deepened sense of religious responsibilities
 Council of Trent (1545–1563) a watershed for the Catholic Church
By the 1560s, Europe was “confessionalized”
 Large areas embraced different forms of Christianity
 A fragile tolerance was achieved

1600..... The Prospect
Europe was still Christian but badly divided
The “great power” politics and diplomacy that
have dominated the modern world emerged for
the first time
Growth of overseas empires was globalizing
Western civilization
The dawn of modern science was challenging
traditional information and ways of knowing

Glossary

Abbasids: Dynasty of caliphs (q.v.) from 750 to 1258. Moved capital to Baghdad and fostered brilliant culture. Gradually declined in power as regions broke away and Turkish mercenaries acquired real power.

acropolis: The elevated region of a polis used for civic celebrations and defense.

aediles: Roman republican officers, two elected annually, who had responsibility for food supply, public buildings, games.

Aeneid: Twelve-book epic poem on Roman origins by Virgil, characterized by praise of traditional Roman virtues.

agoge: Name for the “training,” the traditional way of bringing up Spartan males.

agora: The market; a key component of any Greek polis.

Anabaptists: Literally “rebaptizers,” this is a catchall name for adherents of the “radical reformation,” those who felt that Lutherans and Calvinists had not gone far enough in rooting out “papism.” Prominent on Europe’s frontiers.

Angevin Empire: Name for the lands in France held by the kings of England of the Angevin dynasty beginning with Henry II (r. 1154–1189).

Anglo-Saxons: Catchall name for various peoples from northern Germany and southern Denmark who settled in England from 450 to 600 and built small kingdoms.

Antigonids: Dynasty of rulers who succeeded to one of Alexander’s generals. They ruled the Balkans until the Romans conquered them in a series of 2nd-century wars.

Arianism: See **Arius** in Biographical Notes.

Armada: Great fleet sent by Catholic Spain against Protestant England in 1588 that ended in failure.

Assyrians: A Semitic-speaking people who arose in Mesopotamia in the second millennium B.C. and, after about 900 B.C., built a large and cruel empire centered on Nineveh. Defeated by a coalition led by Neo-Babylonians and Medes.

Augsburg, Peace of: A settlement made in 1555 between Lutherans and Catholics in Germany, which included the principle “*cuius regio, eius religio*.” Princes could dictate the religion of their lands and people were free to stay and practice that religion or migrate elsewhere. The settlement ignored Calvinists, yet was the first example of religious toleration in Europe.

Augsburg Confession: A statement made in 1530 of the essential doctrines of Lutheranism. Prepared by Luther’s associate Philip Melancthon (1497–1560).

Avesta: Holy books of Zoroastrianism (q.v.).

Babylonian captivity: Derisive name for the period when the popes were in Avignon (1305–1378).

barbarians: To Greeks, babblers, people who did not speak Greek; to Romans, people outside the empire. The word gradually acquired more acutely negative connotations.

Beowulf: Finest Anglo-Saxon poem. Epic account of the struggles of Beowulf, his kin, and companions with legendary monsters. Variouslly dated from 750 to 900 or even later.

bishops: “Overseers” in Greek, the chief religious and administrative officers of the Christian church.

Black Death: Devastating outbreak of bubonic plague in 1348; killed one-fourth to one-third of the population.

Book of Common Prayer: Issued under the aegis of Queen Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603) in 1569 as a service book for, and theological statement of, what came to be called Anglicanism, that is, the English *via media* between Catholicism and Protestantism.

bretwalda: Contemporary name for early Anglo-Saxon kings who claimed some wide-ranging authority: “broad-wielders” or “Britain-wielders.”

caliph: Successor to the prophet in Islam. Originally held only Muhammad’s secular authority but, over time, acquired some responsibility for custody of the faith.

Capetians: Name for the ruling dynasty of France from 987 to 1328.

capitularies: Legislation in chapters (*capitula*) issued by Frankish kings.

Cappadocian fathers: Basil the Great (c. 330–379), his brother Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330–395), and Gregory Nazianzus (329–389) were among the greatest Greek church fathers. They wrote especially on Trinitarian and Christological issues.

cardinals: Key officers of the Catholic Church. Emerged in late antiquity and achieved real institutional prominence in the 12th century. Served as papal electors.

Carolingians: Dynasty of Frankish rulers whose most famous member was Charlemagne (*Carolus Magnus*). Became kings in 751 and ruled until 911 in Germany and 987 in France.

Cathars: Dualist heretics, in the ancient Zoroastrian-Manichaean tradition, who were prominent in southern France from the mid-12th century to the early 13th. Especially common around Albi, whence the name Albigensians.

censors: Roman republican officers, two in number, elected every five years to serve for 18 months. They determined the economic status of citizens for voting purposes and legislated on public morality.

Centuriate Assembly: Roman republican voting assembly consisting of all Roman citizens organized by “centuries,” or wealth groups. Used “block” voting, that is, there were always 192 votes, one for each century.

Chaeronea, Battle of: Macedonians, led by King Philip II and his son Alexander, defeated the Greeks in 338 B.C.

chivalry: The social ethos of the medieval warrior-aristocracy that emphasized prowess, courage, loyalty, and generosity. The conduct proper for a knight, a man who rode and fought on a horse (*cheval*).

Christian humanism: Term applied to scholarship of Renaissance figures in northern Europe who tended to study the Bible and church fathers rather than the Greco-Roman classics.

christology: The branch of Christian theology that explores how Jesus Christ can be true God and true man.

church fathers: Greek and Latin Christian writers (from the time 300–750 but, especially, 350–450) who set norms for biblical interpretation and explained key Christian doctrines.

Cisalpine Gaul: Roman name for the Italian area between the Alps and the Rubicon River, literally “Gaul on this side of the Alps.”

Cistercians: Monks of Citeaux, in Burgundy, or their allies; a community of reformed Benedictine monks who sought primitive purity. Spread rapidly in the 12th century.

Cluny: Great monastery founded in Burgundy in 910 to be free of all lay control. Tremendously influential well into the 12th century, not least because of its famous abbots.

Columbian exchange: Name for the process whereby Europeans and peoples in the New World exchanged crops, livestock, and germs.

comedy: A dramatic work that may be fantastic or ridiculous, whose humor may be riotous or mordant, and which may have powerful contemporary resonance.

communes: Urban institutions in Italy involving fairly wide political participation by the elites.

Complutensian Polyglot Bible: Produced around 1500 at the University of Alcalá in Spain, a scholarly edition of the Bible with parallel columns in different languages and elaborate notes.

conciliarism: Doctrine spawned during the Great Schism (q.v.) maintaining that church councils and not the popes are supreme in the church.

consul: Highest officer in the Roman Republic. There were two, elected annually, who led armies, proposed legislation, and convened assemblies.

Corinthian: Name for one of the three Greek orders; pertains particularly to the columns characterized by fluting, more-or-less elaborate pedestals, and Acanthus-leaf capitals. This style was especially favored by the Romans.

Corpus Iuris Civilis: Massive codification of Roman law carried out (529–532) by a commission headed by Tribonian under the aegis of Justinian (see Biographical Notes).

Council of Trent (1545–1563): Most important Catholic Church council of the Reformation era. Affirmed traditional Catholic teachings and instituted many reforms.

Counter-Reformation: From the 1560s, an effort by the Catholic Church to win back areas lost to Protestants. Most effective in Poland and southern Germany.

covenant: Central idea in religious faith of the Hebrews. Calls for a mutual, reciprocal pact between God and his chosen people.

Crusades: Long series of “armed pilgrimages” between 1095 and 1291 designed to liberate the Holy Land from the “Infidel,” that is, Muslims. The French were most prominent in the Crusades. Papal leadership was sometimes effective, but the overall results were limited.

cuneiform: Literally “wedge shaped”; customary name for the writing used in Mesopotamia.

Dominicans: Mendicant order founded by Dominic de Guzman (1170–1221) in southern France. Their ideal was to combat heresy by acquiring great learning and living exemplary lives. The order produced many great scholars.

Dorians: Greek speakers who migrated from Thessaly to Peloponnesus after about 1200 B.C. and settled around Sparta. Greek legend remembered them as invaders.

Doric: Name for one of the three Greek orders; pertains particularly to the columns characterized by convex shape, fluting, lack of pedestals, and simple capitals.

Edict of Milan: Decree in 313 whereby Constantine granted legal toleration to Christianity.

ephors: Overseers who, in the Spartan system, judged the validity of laws.

Epicureanism: Philosophy that stressed happiness or pleasure, defined as absence of pain or strife (not hedonism, as it later came to be understood).

equals: See *homoioi*.

Etruscans: Mysterious people, probably of eastern Mediterranean origin, who lived north of Latium and dominated the emerging Romans until about 500 B.C.

excommunication: Ecclesiastical punishment by which a person is denied the sacraments of the church and forbidden most kind of ordinary human interactions.

federates: People who had a *foedus*, a treaty, with Rome; usually along frontiers.

feudalism: Social and political regime in which public services and private bonds alike were arranged by vassals (q.v.), men who have sworn mutual pledges to one another, and fiefs (q.v.; from *feudum*), something of value, usually land, (a manor q.v.), which was exchanged between the lord and the vassal. There never was a uniform “feudal system” in medieval Europe in any one place or time.

fief: From Latin *feudum*, this was something of value that was assigned by a lord to a vassal in exchange for loyalty and some particular service, normally military.

Five Good Emperors: Extremely competent and successful Roman emperors from 96 to 180: Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius.

Franciscans: Mendicant order founded by Francis of Assisi (1181/1182–1226) based on poverty and service to outcasts. Tremendously popular but riven by factional strife over the question of individual versus corporate property.

Franks: Germanic peoples who gradually moved south from the Rhine mouth toward Paris, and built powerful kingdoms under the Merovingian and Carolingian families of kings.

frieze: A continuous, usually narrative, sculptural program incised into or attached to the surface of a building.

Great Schism: Period between 1378 and 1417 when two or even three rivals claimed to be the legitimate pope.

hadith: The sayings of the prophet Muhammad. Collected and written down, they are studied in the Islamic world as a source of religious guidance, although not on a par with the Quran.

Hagia Sophia: The church of “Holy Wisdom” built in Constantinople on Justinian’s orders. Owed much to traditional Roman architecture but also innovated. Isidore of Miletus and Anthemius of Tralles were the principal architects.

Hellenistic world: Period from the death of Alexander the Great in 322 B.C. to the Roman triumph in the Mediterranean in 31. A time of large kingdoms and empires in which Greek cultural influences were dominant.

helots: State-owned slaves in ancient Sparta, mainly Messenian people who lived to the west of Sparta and whom the Spartans conquered after 750 B.C.

henotheism: Belief by some group or people in one god without denying the existence of other gods. (Sometimes called *monolatry*.)

hieroglyphics: A pictographic form of writing in which representational symbols stand for words or ideas. Prominently used in ancient Egypt.

Hijra: The “flight,” or pilgrimage, of the prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina in 622. Taken in the Islamic world to inaugurate a new era.

Hittites: Indo-European-speaking and institutionally precocious people who rose in Anatolia in the third millennium B.C., expanded south into Syria and Palestine, and fought debilitating wars with the Egyptians after about 1400 B.C.

homoioi: Adult male Spartans. Full citizens at Sparta.

hoplites: Heavily armed Greek infantrymen who fought in phalanx formation.

Huguenots: Name for French Protestants of the Calvinist variety; derives from a medieval romance about a King Hugo.

humanism: Term with varied meanings: love for literary culture of antiquity; concern for human beings; interest in secular rather than theological issues. Often coupled with Renaissance figures.

Hundred Years War: Conflict between France and England (1337–1453) rooted in the longstanding controversy over English royal holdings in France. The English won most battles, but the French won the war.

Huns: Fierce nomadic warriors from the frontiers of China who appeared on the Roman scene around 370 and pressured the western empire until their defeat in 451.

Hyksos: Semitic-speaking peoples from Palestine who conquered Egypt about 1700 B.C. and ruled at least the Nile delta region for approximately 150 years.

Iliad: Poem about Ilion (that is, Troy) by the mysterious poet Homer, who may have come from Asia Minor. The Greeks believed that Homer composed the poem, but he may have done no more than give familiar form to one telling of a tale that circulated orally in many versions. Probably dates from about 750 B.C.

indulgences: In Catholic theology, the remission of some portion of the temporal punishment for sin. Subject to massive abuses in the late Middle Ages.

inquisition: Ecclesiastical judicial process for the identification and reconciliation of heretics. Followed basic principles of Roman law.

Institutes of the Christian Religion: Text by John Calvin (see the Biographical Notes), originally written in 1536, that became the standard exposition of Reformed Christianity. Based on the Ten Commandments, Lord's Prayer, and Apostles Creed.

interdict: Ecclesiastical censure whereby most sacramental services are forbidden in a defined area to pressure the rulers of that region.

investiture controversy: Institutional and ideological battle between popes and German emperors in the 11th and 12th centuries; finally won by the popes at great cost to the Germans.

Ionic: Name for one of the three Greek orders; pertains particularly to the columns characterized by graceful thinness, fluting, complex pedestals, and scroll-like capitals.

Isaurians: Ruling dynasty in Byzantium (717–802). Defended frontiers, issued new laws, carried on with development of the *theme* system, and promoted iconoclasm (the removal or destruction of devotional images).

Islam: From *al-Islam*, “the surrender,” the customary name for the faith taught by the prophet Muhammad and involving a complete surrender of the self to Allah.

Israel: Collective name for the Hebrew people or the name of the northernmost of the two kingdoms that emerged after the death of Solomon with a capital at Samaria. Conquered by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.

Jesuits: Common name for the religious order called the Society of Jesus, founded in 1534 by Ignatius Loyola (see Biographical Notes). The order is dedicated to poverty, chastity, and obedience to the pope. Its members are famous as teachers, scholars, and missionaries.

Judah: Southernmost of the two kingdoms that emerged after the death of Solomon with a capital at Jerusalem. Conquered by the Neo-Babylonians in 586 B.C.

Julio-Claudians: Direct or indirect heirs of Julius Caesar: Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero.

Knossos: Site of huge palace complex built by Minoan kings of Crete.

krypteia: The Spartan secret police who watched over the *helots* and the Spartans.

Lateran councils: Church councils called by the popes to facilitate the governance of the church. The most important was the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.

Latium: The semi-circular plain surrounding Rome. Called Lazio today, it gave its name to Latin.

Lepanto, Battle of: Great victory by Spanish naval forces over the Turkish fleet in 1571 as part of Spain's self-appointed role as protector of Christendom.

Licinian-Sextian law: In 287, this law granted the decisions of the plebeian assembly the full force of law and made the plebs equal in the Roman constitution.

Linear A: Name for writing found on Minoan Crete. Not yet deciphered.

Linear B: Name for writing found in Mycenaean Greece. Deciphered by Michael Ventris in the early 1950s as a primitive form of Greek.

Lombards: Germanic people who entered Italy in 568 and gradually built a strong kingdom with rich culture, especially in law, only to fall to the more powerful Franks in 773–774.

Macedonians: Byzantine dynasty (867–1034), which presided over military successes, economic prosperity, and brilliant cultural achievements.

Magna Carta: The “Great Charter” that English barons forced King John to sign in 1215. The charter forced John to cease abusing royal and feudal prerogatives and to accept the superiority of law to royal whim.

manor: Normal English name for medieval estate consisting of a lord, the person for whom the estate was exploited, and the dependent peasants, often but not always serfs. Manors were usually bipartite in that some portion was reserved to the support of the lord and some part reserved to the peasants themselves.

Medes: People who lived in the Zagros Mountains, aided in the fall of the Assyrians, and allied with the Persians.

Mediterranean triad: Name for the three traditional and widely disseminated crops: cereal grains, olives, and grapes.

mendicants: Begging orders that arose in the 13th century. Franciscans (q.v.) and Dominicans (q.v.) were the most prominent.

metics: Resident aliens in Athens; a substantial fraction of the population and unable to participate politically, although sometimes rich and influential.

Minoan: Name (from the legendary Minos) for the brilliant culture on the island of Crete between 2200 and 1500 B.C. Its main center was at Knossos.

missi dominici: Itinerant envoys of the Carolingian kings who inspected the work of local officials and implemented royal decisions.

monk: Christian ascetic who in principle lives alone but in practice lives in some form of community.

monolatry: *See* **henotheism**.

monophysitism: Christian heresy prominent in the eastern Mediterranean holding that Jesus Christ had only one true (divine) nature. Condemned by the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Still influential among west Asian Christians.

monotheism: The belief in the existence of only one God.

Mycenae: City (flourished 1400–1200 B.C.) ruled by Agamemnon, leader of the Greek forces at Troy. Also gives its name to the earliest phase of Greek history.

Neo-Babylonians: *See* **Nebuchadnezzar** in Biographical Notes.

Neolithic Revolution: A set of processes that began about 10,000 years ago leading to the rise of agriculture and the domestication of animals.

Ostrogoths: Germanic people who built a kingdom in Italy under their king, Theodoric (r. 493–526), only to fall to the armies of Justinian (see Biographical Notes).

papal state: Lands in central Italy ruled by the papacy beginning in the 8th century.

Parliament: An English institution that grew from the royal court and the consultative function of the king's leading men. Emerged in the 13th century but took hundreds of years to reach the full potential of its powers.

Parthenon: Magnificent Doric temple built on Athenian acropolis between 447/446 and 438, with sculptures completed in 432. Chief architects were Ictinus and Callicrates; the chief sculptor was Pheidias.

paterfamilias: Eldest male in a Roman household, who possessed life-or-death powers over all members of the family.

patricians: “Well-fathered ones,” the original social and political elite of Rome.

patristic era: The period of the church fathers (*patres*; q.v.).

Peloponnesian War: Contest between Athens and its empire and Sparta and the Peloponnesian League (431–404). At issue was Sparta's fear of Athenian dominance in the Greek world.

perioikoi: “Dwellers about”; resident aliens in ancient Sparta.

Persians: People from the Persian (now Iranian) plains who allied with the Medes, built a huge empire, and provided many examples in government and culture.

Persian Wars (490, 480–478 B.C.): Wars fought heroically on Greek soil and waters; took place when Persians invaded to avenge mainland Greek assistance given to Asia Minor Greeks who had rebelled against Persian rule.

Petrine theory: Idea advanced by Roman bishops that as Peter was leader of the Apostles, the successor to Peter is the leader of the church. Based on Matthew 16.16–19.

pharaoh: Customary name (from *per aa*, meaning “great house”) of the rulers of ancient Egypt.

Phoenicians: A Semitic-speaking Canaanite people who inhabited roughly what is now Lebanon and who began planting trading colonies in the western Mediterranean after about 900 B.C.

Pillars of Islam: Five practices that characterize the Islamic faith: profession of faith, fasting, daily prayer, generous almsgiving, pilgrimage to Mecca.

plebeians: Original lower classes—economically, socially, politically—at Rome, who struggled over some two centuries to gain full political participation.

Poetics: Title of a book by Aristotle that is the first work of literary criticism.

polis: City-state, the classic Greek political institution, consisting of an urban core and an agricultural hinterland.

polytheism: The belief in the simultaneous existence of many gods.

pope: The bishop of Rome who, on the basis of the Petrine theory (q.v.), the historical resonances of Rome, and various historical circumstances, achieved a leading position in the Catholic Church.

praetors: Chief judicial officers of the Roman Republic. Initially two, then as many as eight. Elected annually.

predestination: Doctrine particularly associated with John Calvin holding that all souls were absolutely predestined from before all time to either salvation or damnation.

primogeniture: From *primus genitus*, “first born,” a social and political system whereby lands, offices, and titles were transmitted to the oldest male.

principate: Name for the Roman regime inaugurated by Augustus Caesar as *princeps*, or “First Citizen.” Contrasted with “Dominate” of Diocletian (see Biographical Notes).

Protestant: Latin word meaning “they protest” that appeared in a document of 1529. Became a catchall designation for persons who left the Catholic Church and their descendants.

Ptolemies: Dynasty of rulers in Egypt descended from one of Alexander’s generals. The last one, Cleopatra, was defeated by Rome in 31 B.C.

Punic Wars: Three wars (264–241 B.C., 218–201, 149–146) between the Romans and the Carthaginians (the “Puni,” or “Poeni,” that is, “purple people,” meaning Phoenicians). Roman victory brought domination of the western Mediterranean.

Pyrrhic War: War between the Romans and King Pyrrhus of Epirus (280–276 B.C.) in which Pyrrhus won battles but so depleted his resources that he eventually lost (hence, “Pyrrhic victory”). The war was occasioned by Roman expansion into southern Italy and generated Roman involvement in the Balkans.

quaestors: Chief financial officers of the Roman Republic. Initially two in number, elected annually.

Quran: The sacred book of Islam. A series of recitations, gathered in chapters called *surahs*, given by the angel Gabriel to the prophet Muhammad.

Reconquista: The centuries-long (8th to 15th) and frequently interrupted war in which Christian powers beginning in the northwest of Iberia retook the peninsula from the Muslims who invaded in 711.

Renaissance: Generally means “rebirth,” specifically of the literary culture of Greco-Roman antiquity. The term was traditionally applied to Italy during the period 1300 to 1550 but is increasingly applied to all periods of significant cultural efflorescence.

romances: Works, usually in prose but sometimes in verse, in many languages, often set in Arthurian contexts, about entanglements of love, loyalty, honor, and duty. Often reveal the courtly side of chivalry, the aspect involving relations between men and women.

Samnite Wars: A series of three wars (343–290 B.C.) in which the Romans defeated the Samnites, peoples who lived to the south of Latium. This war brought the Romans directly into contact with the Greeks of southern Italy.

scholasticism: Catchall name for the intellectual culture of high medieval Europe; more technically, the intellectual methods of the schools and universities based on logic.

Seleucids: Dynasty of rulers in Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia who descended from one of Alexander’s generals. Conquered by the Romans in the 1st century B.C.

Senate: Originally the patrician-dominated assembly of Rome but later a body of former office holders. Made treaties and issued influential opinions but did not legislate.

Septuagint: Greek version of the Hebrew Bible, allegedly prepared by 70 translators in 70 days in Alexandria. Seven books longer than the Hebrew version. Authoritative still in Orthodox churches.

Song of Roland (c. 1100): First work of French literature. Heroic account of Charlemagne and his peers on a virtual crusade. Breathes the chivalric ethos.

Sophists: Popular but controversial wandering teachers in the second half of the 5th century who, for often exorbitant fees, would teach the arts of rhetoric, that is, the arts of persuasion.

Stoicism: Hellenistic philosophy that stressed calm, obedience to natural law, adherence to moral duty, essential equality of all. Founded by Zeno.

summa: A compendious, systematic work purporting to survey a whole field of knowledge. Best known are the *summam*s of Thomas Aquinas (see Biographical Notes).

sunna: The “good practice,” or the habits and customs of the prophet Muhammad, studied in the Islamic world as a guide to life but not on a par with the Quran.

syncretism: The tendency, often manifest in religion, to adopt and adapt ideas and practices from neighbors, conquerors, or even those whom one has conquered.

synoptic problem: Term that refers to the perceived literary relationships among the “synoptic” Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

tetrarchy: “Rule by four” instituted by Diocletian. Two *augustuses* and two *caesars* would jointly rule the empire and provide for orderly succession. Only partially successful in practice.

themes: Byzantine military districts having soldiers settled on the land who were mustered by local generals. *Themes* developed gradually after 600 and partially replaced the professional standing army paid by general tax revenues.

theocratic kingship: Form of royal rule that emerged in Mesopotamia, then appeared in many Western societies. Maintained that kings ruled as specially designated agents of the gods to whom they were answerable.

three-field system: Agricultural regime with one field in spring crops, one in fall crops, and one fallow. Increased productivity over the two-field system. Introduced, probably, in Carolingian period and disseminated later.

Torah: The first five books of the Hebrew scriptures, traditionally ascribed to Moses.

tragedy: A dramatic work meant to evoke fear and/or pity whose major character, perhaps owing to a fatal flaw, suffers deeply and may be brought to ruin. The character may also earn the audience's respect through a heroic struggle against fate.

Tribal Assembly: Roman republican assembly consisting of all Roman citizens organized into 33 voting districts. Used "block" voting, that is, there were 33 votes, one per "tribe."

tribunes: Plebeian officers in Roman Republic, 10 in number elected annually, charged with looking out for the interests of the plebs.

Trinity: The Christian doctrine according to which one God exists in three distinct persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

Triumvirate, First: Informal alliance of Caesar, Crassus, and Pompey in 60 B.C. designed to secure military commands for the first two and generous settlements for the military veterans who had served under the third.

Triumvirate, Second: Formal alliance among Octavian, Lepidus, and Antonius in 43 B.C. by which they were to share rule in the Roman Empire.

Trojan War: Traditional date 1194–1184 B.C. Contest between Greeks (i.e., Myceneans) and Trojans immortalized in Homer's *Iliad*. Allegedly, the Greeks were avenging the abduction of Helen, the wife of King Menelaus of Sparta. Probably a commercial conflict or one incident in a long economic rivalry.

troubadours: Wandering poets, both men and women, of love themes, they revealed the ethos of courtly love. Most well known are the French but comparable to the German *Minnesänger*.

Twelve Tables: First codification of Roman law, posted in the forum in 449 B.C.

tyranny: A form of one-man rule, usually with popular support after social struggles, that emerged in many Greek cities between 700 and 500 B.C.

Umma Muslima: The community of all those who have made “*al Islam*,” not confined to any political or ethnic boundaries.

Umayyads: Dynasty of caliphs (q.v.) from 661 to 750 who moved the capital of the caliphate to Damascus and did much of the work of building institutions.

university: Medieval institution made up of either a guild of masters or of students. Faculties included arts, theology, law, medicine. Oldest were Bologna in Italy and Paris in France.

Vandals: Germanic people who crossed the Rhine in 406, raided in Spain for a generation, crossed to North Africa, practiced piracy in the Mediterranean, and fell to Justinian (see Biographical Notes) in 532–534.

vassal: A free man who willingly pledged *auxilium et consilium*, aid and advice, to another man in return for protection and maintenance, the latter often a fief (q.v.).

vernacular: Languages, or other cultural manifestations, that are not in Latin.

Vikings: Catchall name for those Scandinavians who raided Western Europe, the north Atlantic islands, and Slavic realms between 793 and the mid-11th century.

Visigoths: Germanic federates who crossed the Danube into Roman territory in 376, defeated a Roman army in 378, sacked Rome in 410, settled in Gaul under Roman auspices in 418, lost to the Franks in 507, and migrated into Spain and created a kingdom that finally fell to the Muslims in 711.

Vulgate: Latin translation of the Bible prepared by Saint Jerome (see Biographical Notes) on the order of Pope Damasus.

ziggurat: Temples built in Mesopotamia of mud brick and timber and having the form of a trapezoid.

Zoroastrianism: Principal religion of the ancient Persians. Revealed in songs (*gathas*) in the Avesta, the holy books of the religion. Consisted of the teachings of Zarathustra (dates controversial), who stressed dualities.

Biographical Notes

Abelard, Peter (1079–1142): Philosopher, poet, theologian, lover of Heloise.

Abraham: Hebrew patriarch who, in the early second millennium B.C., moved from Ur to Palestine.

Aeneas: Central figure in Virgil's *Aeneid*.

Aeschylus (525–456 B.C.): First author of tragedies whose works survive. His *Oresteia* is the only surviving trilogy.

Alcuin (735–804): Anglo-Saxon scholar, product of Bede's (q.v.) intellectual revival in Northumbria, who came to Charlemagne's court circa 786 and promoted intellectual reforms. Abbot of Tours from 796 to 804.

Alexander the Great (356–322 B.C.): King of Macedon (336–322) after his father, Philip II, led military campaigns that defeated the Persian Empire and extended Greek influence into central Asia.

Alfonso da Albuquerque (1453–1515): Portuguese sea captain and soldier who created naval bases in the Indian Ocean region to facilitate Portuguese trade.

Alfred the Great (r. 871–899): Anglo-Saxon king who rallied the people of southern England after Viking attacks, laid the foundations for English recovery, and fostered an intellectual revival.

Ambrose (339–397): High-born citizen of Milan who became bishop of the city and wrote extensively, bringing to Latin theology the conceptual frameworks of Greek thought. church father.

Aneirin (fl. c. 600): British poet, author of *Gododdin*, an account of the Anglo-Saxon defeat of the Picts at Catterick.

Anselm (1033–1109): Monk, philosopher, greatest logician since antiquity, theologian, archbishop of Canterbury.

Anthony (251[?]-356): Egyptian solitary who established the ideals of *eremitic* (solitary) monasticism.

Apollonius of Rhodes (b. c. 295 B.C.): Alexandrian scholar and author best known for *Argonautica*, in which Jason and his argonauts go in search of the golden fleece.

Archimedes (287–212 B.C.): Hellenistic scientist and inventor.

Aristarchus: First formulated the “heliocentric” theory (that the earth revolves around the sun, which is at the center of the “universe”) circa 275 B.C.

Aristophanes (455–385 B.C.): Greatest writer of Athenian comedy; pilloried contemporary figures, including Socrates.

Aristotle (384–322 B.C.): Philosopher, pupil of Plato. Prolific writer on biology, politics, ethics, poetics.

Arius (c. 250–336): Priest of Alexandria who, in an attempt to preserve absolute monotheism, taught that Jesus Christ was slightly subordinate to God the Father. Condemned by Council of Nicaea in 325 but influential among Germanic peoples who were converted to *Arianism*.

Attalis III: King of Pergamum, a small but rich Hellenistic kingdom, who willed his kingdom to Rome in 133 B.C.

Augustine (354–430): Prolific Christian theologian and greatest of Latin church fathers. One of the most influential writers in Christian history.

Augustus Caesar (63 B.C.–A.D.14): Honorific title of Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus, the adopted heir of Julius Caesar who inaugurated the principate.

Balboa, Vasco Nuñez de (1475–1517): Spanish explorer who crossed Central America at the Isthmus of Panama in 1513 and became the first European to see the Pacific Ocean by going west.

Bede (673–735): Anglo-Saxon monk and scholar at Wearmouth-Jarrow who wrote biblical commentaries, a book on time reckoning, and history. Greatest scholar of his day.

Benedict of Nursia (c. 480–c. 550): Italian ascetic who founded a community at Monte Cassino where he wrote his Rule, eventually the most influential of all monastic rules.

Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153): Greatest of Cistercians (see Glossary), prolific author, adviser to kings and popes, the most influential religious figure in the middle decades of the 12th century.

Boccaccio (1313–1375): Florentine scholar and storyteller, author of *The Decameron*, a series of 100 stories told over 10 days.

Brahe, Tycho (1546–1601): Astronomer supported by the Danish court who collected a huge amount of direct observational data on the heavens, thus supplanting ancient texts, such as those of Ptolemy (q.v.).

Brian Boru (976–1014): First Irish king to exert real authority over much of Ireland.

Cabot, John (1450–1499): English explorer who sighted Newfoundland in 1497 in an early attempt to find a “northwest passage” to Asia.

Calvin, John (1509–1564): French scholar and theologian, author of *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, founder of “reformed” tradition of Christianity, led reform of the church in French Switzerland.

Cartier, Jacques (1491–1557): French explorer who, in an early effort to find a “northwest passage” to Asia, sailed up the St. Lawrence River in 1534.

Cato the Elder (234–149 B.C.): Conservative Roman author and statesman.

Catullus (84–54 B.C.): Roman lyric poet.

Charlemagne (747–814): Greatest member of the Carolingian (see Glossary) dynasty. King from 768 to 800; emperor from 800 to 814. Secured frontiers of the Frankish kingdom, promoted cultural and institutional reform, formulated ideology of Christendom.

Cicero (106–43 B.C.): Roman lawyer and statesman who struggled for peace and concord in the crumbling Roman Republic.

Cleisthenes: Aristocratic Athenian who made major constitutional reforms around 508 B.C., thereby speeding the emergence of democracy.

Clovis (r. 486–511): Greatest Frankish king of the Merovingian dynasty who consolidated Frankish rule in Gaul, defeated the Visigoths in 507, and accepted Roman Catholicism.

Colet, John (1466–1519): London Christian humanist, trained in Oxford and Italy, studied Pauline epistles, called for church reform, founded St. Paul's school.

Colombo, Cristoforo (1451–1506): Genoese sailor and entrepreneur who secured support from the Spanish crown to find a western route to Asia. Made four voyages (1492, 1493, 1498, 1502) and explored the Caribbean region.

Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406): Chancellor of Florence, founded many schools, attracted scholars to the city, took Cicero as his ideal and republicanism as his ideology.

Constantine (r. 306–337): Roman emperor who continued reforms of Diocletian, restructured the Roman army, granted toleration to Christianity, and became Christian himself.

Copernicus, Nicolaus (1473–1543): Astronomer and, in 1543, author of *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies*, which carefully advanced the “heliocentric” theory.

Crassus (d. 53 B.C.): Wealthiest man in Rome; joined in various political alliances in a quest to earn respectability.

Cyrus (r. 559–529): King (shah) of the Persians who began building the Persian Empire. He permitted the Jews to rebuild a temple in Jerusalem.

Dante Alighieri (1265–1321): Italian poet and scholar, author of *De monarchia*, *De vulgari eloquentia*, *La vita nuova*, and the *Comedy*.

Demosthenes (384–322 B.C.): Athenian orator and statesman who warned his fellow citizens against the dangers of the Macedonians.

Dias, Bartolommeo (c. 1450–1500): Portuguese navigator who explored the west coast of Africa and finally rounded the Cape of Good Hope, demonstrating that Africa could be circumnavigated.

Diocletian (r. 284–305): Roman emperor who instituted the tetrarchy (see Glossary), reformed the Roman administration, and persecuted Christians.

Dominic de Guzman (1170–1221): See **Dominicans** in Glossary.

Draco: Aristocratic Athenian charged by his fellow citizens with codifying the laws of Athens and publishing them in the *agora*.

Einhard (770–840): Author of many works but best known for a biography of Charlemagne modeled on Suetonius's (q.v.) *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*.

Epicurus (341–270 B.C.): Hellenistic philosopher who taught in Athens and gave his name to Epicureanism (see Glossary).

Erasmus, Desiderius (1469–1536): Dutchman, greatest of the Christian humanists, wrote widely, edited Greek New Testament, called for church reform, eventually broke with Protestants over free will.

Eratosthenes (c. 274–194 B.C.): Hellenistic polymath who wrote on many subjects, including comedy, but best known for calculating the circumference of the earth.

Euclid: Formulated the rules of geometry about 300 B.C.

Euripides (485–406 B.C.): Third author of tragedies whose works survive. His works are typified by complex plots and moral confusion. Deeply influenced by the Sophists.

Farel, Guillaume (1489–1565): Collaborator with John Calvin (q.v.) in reform of the church in French Switzerland, especially Geneva.

Francis of Assisi (1181/1182–1226): See **Franciscans** in Glossary.

Galilei, Galileo (1564–1642): Scientist and astronomer, demonstrated mathematically that the earth moves and was censured by the church.

Gelasius I (r. 492–496): Pope who spelled out respective spheres of authority of kings and priests.

Gilgamesh: The main character in the Mesopotamian epic poem first composed circa 2500 B.C. and surviving on clay tablets from about 800 B.C.

Gracchi brothers: Tiberius (d. 133 B.C.) and Gaius (d. 121 B.C.) who, as tribunes, were popular leaders. Both were murdered by political foes.

Gratian: Bolognese monk who, around 1140, produced the *Decretum*, the most sophisticated and tightly organized compilation of canon law to that time.

Gregory I (r. 590–604): Pope who wrote influential books and ruled Rome as temporal overlord in the absence of effective Roman rule.

Guarino of Verona (1374–1460): Stressed an education based on Latin and Greek in an effort to form people who were like the characters in classical literature.

Hammurabi. (1792–1750): Ruler over the Old Babylonians (or Amorites). Issued a famous and influential law code.

Heraclius (r. 610–641): East Roman emperor who defeated the Persians only to lose to the Arabs. Failed to achieve religious unity. Began to promote a more Greek culture. Initiated *theme* system as a new form of administration.

Herodotus (c. 485–425): Called the “father of history,” wrote a lengthy history of the Persian Wars.

Homer: See *Iliad* in Glossary.

Horace (65–8 B.C.): Elegant Roman poet and Epicurean philosopher.

Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35–107): Author of letters to Christian communities that show the emerging structure of the Christian church.

Isocrates (436–338 B.C.): Greek orator and statesman who argued for *Panhellenism*, a union of all Greeks.

Jerome (342–420): High-born Roman citizen who became a Christian ascetic, wrote many letters, and translated the Bible into Latin (See Vulgate in Glossary). Church father.

Julius Caesar (100–44 B.C.): Brilliant, ambitious, and enigmatic Roman politician who held high offices, won military glory in Gaul, became dictator in Rome, and was murdered.

Justin Martyr (c. 100–c. 165): Christian apologist who wrote *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* to differentiate between Christianity and Judaism.

Justinian (r. 527–565): East Roman emperor who reconquered some western provinces, overhauled the administration, issued the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* (see Glossary), failed to find religious unity, and built Hagia Sophia.

Juvenal (c. 60–c. 136): Author of 16 verse satires full of social commentary.

Kepler, Johannes (1571–1630): Greatest pupil of Tycho Brahe (q.v.) who developed elaborate mathematical models to explain planetary motion.

Lefèvre d'Étaples, Jacques (1455–1536): French Christian humanist, trained in Paris and Italy, translated Bible into French, studied Greek church fathers.

Leo I (r. 440–461): Pope, gifted writer, and great theoretician of the powers of the papal office.

Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519): Enigmatic painter, sculptor, inventor, engineer; famous for a small number of completed works, such as *Mona Lisa*.

Livy (59 B.C.–A.D. 17): Grand-scale historian of Rome's foundation and early history.

Lorenzo de' Medici (1449–1492): Financier and administrator, virtual dictator in Florence, but great promoter of cultural life and booster of his city.

Loyola, Ignatius (1491–1556): Spanish nobleman who studied in Paris, joined with fellows, and founded the Society of Jesus (*See Jesuits* in Glossary).

Lucan (39–65): Author of *Pharsalia*, a verse account of the civil wars between Caesar and Pompey.

Luther, Martin (1483–1536): German; educated in local universities; became Augustinian priest; became alienated from the Catholic Church over free will, good works, and indulgences (see Glossary). Initiated church reform in Germany. Prolific author.

Lycurgus: Semi-legendary figure to whom the Spartans attributed their constitution.

Magellan, Ferdinand (c. 1480–1521): Set out to circumnavigate the globe in 1519. He died in 1521 in the Philippines, but one of his ships returned in 1522.

Marcus Aurelius (121–180): Last of the Good Emperors and author of an important Stoic work, *Meditations*.

Marius (157–86 B.C.): “New Man” who gained prominence through military successes, held the consulship multiple times in succession, professionalized the Roman army.

Martial (c. 40–104): Spanish author of riotously funny Latin epigrams.

Menander (342/341–293/289 B.C.): Hellenistic author of “new comedies,” which were entertaining but not philosophically or socially significant. His only complete surviving play is *Curmudgeon*.

Merici, Angela (1474–1540): A Franciscan *tertiary* who founded the Ursulines in Brescia, Italy, in 1535 as a community of women to teach girls.

Michelangelo Buonoratti (1475–1564): Florentine artist who mastered the techniques, styles, and influences of his time to produce breathtakingly original works of art, such as the statue of David and the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

More, Thomas (1478–1535): English lawyer, politician, and Christian humanist; author of *Utopia*; fell afoul of, and was executed by, King Henry VIII for opposing his divorce.

Muhammad (570–632): Meccan merchant who became the prophet of Islam.

Nebuchadnezzar (r. 605–562 B.C.): Reigned as the greatest king of the Neo-Babylonians, one of the peoples who overthrew the Assyrians. Ruled from Babylon, which he built into a magnificent city.

Neri, Filippo (1515–1595): Florentine who settled in Rome, studied long, embraced the ascetic life, and founded the Congregation of the Oratory to enhance the quality of worship.

Offa of Mercia (r. 757–796): Anglo-Saxon *bretwalda* who was first to call himself “King of the English.”

Ovid (43 B.C.– A.D. 18): Roman poet who wrote on love and mythological themes. Exiled by Augustus.

Pachomius (290–346): Egyptian monk credited with preparing the first “Rule” and thus formulating *cenobitic* (common-life) monasticism.

Peisistratus: Instituted a mild tyranny in Athens in 560 that lasted a generation and fostered civic allegiance and economic development.

Pericles: Greatest democratic leader of Athens between 460 and 429 B.C.

Peter Lombard (1100–1160): Scholastic theologian whose *Four Books of Sentences* served as a basic theology compendium for centuries.

Petrarch (1304–1374): Florentine, greatest figure of the early Renaissance, scholar, poet, traveler.

Philip II (382–336 B.C.): King of Macedon who forged a unified monarchy and conquered Greece. Father of Alexander the Great.

Piccolomini, Enea Silvio (1405–1464): Tuscan of modest means who traveled widely, wrote scholarly and popular works in Latin and Italian, and was elected pope (Pius II).

Pippin III (r. 751–768): First Carolingian (see Glossary) to become king. He allied with the popes, defeated the Lombards in Italy, and fostered church and cultural reform.

Plato (429–347 B.C.): Pupil of Socrates, teacher of Aristotle, founder of the Academy. Philosopher best known for his theory of “forms,” or “ideas.” Prolific author of dialogues and treatises.

Plautus (254–184 B.C.): Brought Greek style “new comedy” to Rome. Author of, among other plays, *The Pot of Gold*.

Polybius (c. 200–c. 118 B.C.): Greek historian captured by the Romans. Lived in elegant exile at Rome and wrote a history of the Hellenistic world, emphasizing Rome’s rise to greatness and the unique features of the Roman constitution.

Pompey (106–48 B.C.): Roman politician who won military glory and joined with Julius Caesar, then turned against him.

Ptolemy (127–48 B.C.): Hellenistic scientist best known for collecting enormous amounts of astronomical observations and formulating a theory of planetary motion that was dominant until Johannes Kepler (q.v.).

Pythagoras: Greek who taught in southern Italy in the late 6th century. Stressed pure contemplation as the only path to true knowledge.

Quintilian (c. 35–100): Author of *Institution of Oratory*, antiquity’s most influential work on rhetoric.

Sargon (2371–2316 B.C.): Ruled over the Akkadians. Built first known imperial state.

Seneca (4 B.C.–A.D. 65): Stoic philosopher of plays and other works.

Socrates (469–399 B.C.): Athenian philosopher who developed the *elenchus*, a rigorous method of dissecting the arguments of others. Taught Plato, among others. Put to death by the Athenian authorities.

Solon: Aristocratic Athenian entrusted (c. 594) by fellow citizens with revising the laws to prevent social strife.

Sophocles (496–406 B.C.): Second author of tragedies whose works survive. Called by Aristotle the “most tragic of poets”; his *Oedipus Rex* is one of the finest plays ever written.

Suetonius (c. 70–c. A.D. 140): Wrote *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*.

Sulla (138–78 B.C.): Unscrupulous conservative politician from a distinguished family who sought to turn back the clock in Roman public life to a time before the Gracchi.

Tacitus (c. 55–c. A.D. 117): Coolly analytical historian of early imperial Rome.

Terence (c. 190–159 B.C.): Author of Latin comedies marked by brilliant, elegant style.

Teresa of Avila (1515–1582): Reformer of the Carmelite order and prolific author on the subject of Christian spirituality. Named a doctor of the church by Pope Paul VI.

Thales: Early materialist philosopher from Miletus, wrote around 600 B.C.

Themistocles: Athenian popular leader during and after the Persian Wars who got legislation passed giving the lowest classes virtually full political participation.

Theodulf of Orléans (c. 750–821): Versatile scholar under Charlemagne who was an administrator, theologian, biblical expert, poet, and architect.

Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274): Italian Dominican, trained at Paris and Cologne, taught in Paris and Rome, produced *Summa theologiae* and *Summa contra gentiles*. Greatest scholastic philosopher and theologian.

Thucydides (460/455–c. 400 B.C.): Wrote a penetrating analytical history of the Peloponnesian Wars down to 411.

Vasco da Gama (c. 1460–1524): Portuguese navigator who, between 1497 and 1499, sailed around Africa into the Indian Ocean, conducted trade, and demonstrated potential profitability of the whole region.

Virgil (70–19 B.C.): Roman epic poet, author of *Aeneid*, *Georgics*, *Bucolics*.

Waldseemüller, Martin: In 1507, published a map calling the lands discovered by Colombo (q.v.) the “New World.”

William the Conqueror (c. 1028–1087): Duke of Normandy who conquered England in 1066 and ruled effectively as its king.

Xenophon (428/427–354 B.C.): Prolific writer of histories of the final years of the Peloponnesian War and the early 4th century.

Ximenes de Cisneros, Cardinal Francisco (1436–1517): Church reformer and Christian humanist in Spain. Founded University of Alcala and sponsored production of Complutensian Polyglot Bible (see Glossary).

Zeno (335–263 B.C.): Philosopher who taught at the *stoa poikile* (painted porch) in Athens. Founder of Stoicism (see Glossary).

Zwingli, Hildreich (1484–1531): Parish priest who initiated reform of the church in German Switzerland.

Bibliography

A bibliography of all relevant and instructive publications on Western civilization would be immeasurably vast. I have listed here works that are widely acknowledged to be important, even classic, treatments of their subjects and books that I myself have found helpful or influential. I adopt the following conventions: “General” books survey large subjects in readable and authoritative ways; “Essential” books are fundamental scholarly works; and “Recommended” books are primary sources and a few secondary works that are of great interest. Books that themselves contain excellent bibliographical orientations are marked with an asterisk.

General

Barzun, Jacques. *From Dawn to Decadence: 1500 to the Present, Five Hundred Years of Western Cultural Life*. New York: HarperCollins, 2001. Utterly stunning as a dissection of the fate of modernity’s promise. By one of the greatest of scholars.

Boardman, John, Jasper Griffin, and Oswyn Murray, eds. *The Oxford Illustrated History of Greece and the Hellenistic World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. Readable, accessible essays by a series of specialists, with beautiful pictures.

*———, eds. *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Roman World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. A book just like, and as easily recommended as, the history of the Greek world.

*Bowersock, Glen, Peter Borwn, and Oleg Grabar, eds. *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999. Long and short articles by leading authorities. Comprehensive.

*Brady, Thomas A., and Heiko Oberman. *Handbook of European History, 1400–1600*. Leiden: Brill, 1994. Important articles of differing levels of readability and interest by major scholars.

Braudel, Fernand. *Memory and the Mediterranean*. Trans. Siân Reynolds. New York: Knopf, 2001. Interprets the first three millennia of life around the inland sea.

*Brunschwig, Jacques, and Geoffrey E. R. Lloyd. *Greek Thought: A Guide to Classical Knowledge*. Trans. under the direction of Catherine Porter. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000. Several dozen essays by world-class authorities on almost all aspects of Greek scientific and philosophical thought.

*Cartledge, Paul, ed. *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Greece*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Lively thematic essays and terrific pictures.

*Coogan, Michael D., ed. *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. An authoritative and readable companion to historical or biblical studies.

*Duffy, Eamon. *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997. A beautifully written and illustrated history of the West's oldest continually functioning institution.

Fernández-Armesto, Felipe. *Millennium: A History of the Last Thousand Years*. New York: Scribners, 1995. A breathtaking panorama of the world's modern history. Serves well to put these lectures into contemporary perspective.

*Horden, Peregrine, and Nicholas Purcell. *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000. A brilliant evocation of the social, political, and more important, ecological, roles of the Mediterranean.

*Linehan, Peter, and Janet L. Nelson, eds. *The Medieval World*. London: Routledge, 2001. More than 30 essays of uniformly high quality on all aspects of medieval life.

Pomeroy, Sarah B. *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity*. New York: Schocken Books, 1975. Superseded by many monographs but not yet by a single study.

Randsborg, Klaus. *The First Millennium A.D. in Europe and the Mediterranean*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. A distinguished archaeologist looks at what changed, and what didn't, over a millennium.

*Ward, Allen M, Cedric A. Yeo, and Fritz M. Heichelheim. *A History of the Roman People*. 3rd ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998. The standard college textbook.

Wells, Colin M. *The Roman Empire*. 2nd ed. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995. A readable and authoritative survey enlivened by the perspectives of an archaeologist.

Essential

*Abels, Richard. *Alfred the Great: War, Kingship and Culture in Anglo-Saxon England*. Harlow: Longmans, 1998. An excellent introduction to Alfred and to his England.

Allmand, Christopher. *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War, c. 1300–c. 1450*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. The best introduction to this important subject.

Anderson, John. *Xenophon*. New York: Scribners, 1974. The basic book.

Andrewes, Antony. *The Greek Tyrants*. London: Hutchinson University Library, 1974. Remains the fundamental introduction to political change in archaic Greece.

*Annas, Julia. "Plato." In *Brunschwig and Lloyd, *Greek Thought*, pp. 672–692. A clear and succinct introduction to a vast subject.

Badian, Ernst. *Foreign Clientelae*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958. Derives Roman imperialism from Roman social practices.

Bainton, Roland H. *Here I Stand: A Biography of Martin Luther*. New York: Scribners, 1950. After all these years, still the best entry point into the life of Luther.

———. *Erasmus of Christendom*. New York: Scribners, 1969. Not yet surpassed as a one-volume treatment of Erasmus's life and thought.

Baldwin, John. *The Government of Philip Augustus: Foundations of French Royal Power in the Middle Ages*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. A detailed and clear exposition of institutional history.

Barnes, T. D. *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992. A major book by the leading contemporary authority on Constantine.

Barolsky, Paul. *Why Mona Lisa Smiles and Other Tales from Vasari*. State College: Penn State University Press, 1991. A book about the historian Giorgio Vasari, Leonardo, and traditions of art criticism.

Bartlett, Robert. *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change, 950–1300*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993. A bracing interpretation of Europe's physical and cultural expansion.

Bemrose, Stephen. *A New Life of Dante*. Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2000. A fine introduction to the life and times of the great poet and a satisfactory introduction to his major writings.

Bernstein, Alvin H. *Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978. A readable and reliable bio-historical study of the great reformer.

Beye, Charles Rowan. *Ancient Greek Literature and Society*. 2nd ed. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987. Smart and entertaining, this book will instruct the expert without leaving the novice behind.

*Biers, William R. *The Archaeology of Greece: An Introduction*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980. Readable and intelligent, this is an excellent book for the beginner.

Bisson, Thomas N., ed. *Cultures of Power: Lordship, Status, and Process in Twelfth-Century France*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press,

1995. Wide-ranging essays that open perspectives on the current debate about the “feudal transformation” of Europe.

Boardman, John. *The Greeks Overseas*. 4th ed. London: Thames and Hudson, 1999. Long the standard account of the history and consequences of Greek colonization.

———. *Greek Art*. New York: Praeger, 1969. Dated in some respects but still reliable and accessible as an overall survey.

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*Diamond, Jared. *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. New York: Norton, 1997. Brilliant and controversial, this book offers a biological, technological, and finally, cultural explanation for the distinctive characteristics of, and differences among, world civilizations.

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Edwards, Mark W. *Homer: Poet of the Iliad*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987. Amidst countless publications on Homer, this is the place to begin.

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Fagan, Brian. *The Journey from Eden: The Peopling of Our World*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1990. A readable and engaging *introduction* (this subject changes almost annually) to human evolution and to the dissemination of our species.

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in detail and penetrating in insight, this book puts politics in cultural and material contexts.

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———. *Opera Muliebria: Women and Work in Medieval Europe*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990. An entertaining introduction to all forms of women's labor in the Middle Ages.

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Hussey, Joan M. *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. The best single-volume introduction to Orthodoxy as a church, faith, and culture.

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the universities that argues for both secular and religious learning in those centers.

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Kraut, P., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. Authoritative essays on most aspects of Plato's thought and influence that differ in difficulty and accessibility.

*Lambert, Malcolm. *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992. The authoritative survey of this vast topic. Stresses political and social more than theological issues.

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Marius, Richard. *Thomas More*. New York: Knopf, 1984. A lot of debunking in this book but not so much as to take the life out of the subject.

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*Martin, Janet. *Medieval Russia, 980–1584*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. The best and most up-to-date introduction to an important and neglected subject.

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Meeks, Wayne A. *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983. Already a classic, this book tells why people were attracted to Christianity and who those people were.

Mellaart, James. *The Neolithic of the Near East*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1975. A readable introduction to a large and complex topic.

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*Murray, Oswyn. *Early Greece*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993. An excellent introduction to pre-classical Greece.

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*Ramage, Nancy A. *Roman Art: Romulus to Constantine*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1996. An excellent introduction to the subject with fine illustrations.

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———. *Daily Life in the World of Charlemagne*. Trans. Jo Ann McNamara. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978. An interesting book that delivers on the promise of its title.

*———. *Education and Culture in the Barbarian West*. Trans. John J. Contreni. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1976. A learned and readable discussion of the transformation of school culture from 500 to 900.

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*Riley-Smith, Jonathan. *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades*.

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Rösener, Werner. *Peasants in the Middle Ages*. Trans. Alexander Stützer. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992. A comprehensive introduction with good coverage of the often-neglected German world.

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*Scammell, Geoffrey. *The First Imperial Age: European Overseas Expansion, 1400–1715*. London: Unwin-Hyman, 1989. Successful as an introduction to a huge subject.

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Shotter, D. C. A. *Augustus Caesar*. London: Routledge, 1991. Detailed yet readable, balanced yet reliable in its interpretations.

*Snell, Daniel C. *Life in the Ancient Near East*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997. A fine, readable, learned book that combines the evidence of texts and archaeology.

Southern, Richard W. *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe*.

Oxford: Blackwell, 1995. The first volume of a projected three-volume study by the late master of medieval intellectual history, this book argues for a common scholarly vision in courts and schools.

Strouhal, Eugen. *Life of the Ancient Egyptians*. Trans. Deryck Viney. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992. Wide-ranging, accessible, and beautifully illustrated, this book provides a panorama of daily life.

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Summers, David. *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981. A difficult but rewarding exploration of the prolific artist.

Syme, Sir Ronald. *The Roman Revolution*. Rev. ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960. In one of the great history books of the 20th century, the author offers a controversial and intriguing interpretation of Rome's transformation from republic to empire.

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Macmillan, 1996. The best introduction to the world of Byzantium, although stronger on politics than on culture.

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*Wolfram, Herwig. *History of the Goths*. Trans. Thomas Dunlap. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988. A magisterial interpretation of Gothic history by a distinguished and influential scholar.

Zink, Michel. *Medieval French Literature: An Introduction*. Trans. Jeff Rider. Binghamton: State University of New York, 1995. Brief and lively, this book does just what its title promises.

Recommended

Alighieri, Dante. *The Divine Comedy*. Trans. John Ciardi. New York: Norton, 1961 (and subsequent editions). A verse translation that preserves the *terza rima* and is accessible to the nonspecialist.

Allen, Susan H. *Finding the Walls of Troy: Frank Calvert and Heinrich Schliemann at Hisarlik*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. The account of the intense rivalries surrounding the excavations at Troy reads like a detective story.

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Homer, *The Iliad*. Trans. Robert Fagles. New York: Penguin, 1998. This translation and the following one are vigorous and readable but a bit informal for some readers' tastes.

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The Letters of Abelard and Heloise. Trans. Betty Radice. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974.

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