

MEDIEVAL WESTERN EUROPE

c. 378-1492

GERMANIC INVASION AND THE FALL OF ROME. Beginning in the late fourth century AD, under mounting pressure from the Huns from central Eurasia, a large number of German tribes broke the Roman imperial frontier on the Rhine and Danube Rivers, destroying the Roman army. In succeeding decades, they overran Roman provinces in modern Italy, France, Spain, and North Africa, sacking Rome in 410. Although the pretense of imperial Roman authority was maintained for a few decades in the West, for all practical purposes, the western half of the Roman empire was subjugated to Germanic warlords.

THE GERMANIC SUCCESSOR STATES. In the east, the Roman state survived in various strength and weakness periods as the Byzantine Empire until 1453. In the West, however, the Roman state was replaced by six kingdoms created from the amalgamation of Germanic tribes with conquered Roman peoples: the Franks and Burgundians in France, the Visigoths in Spain, the Vandals in North Africa, the Ostrogoths in Italy, and the Anglo-Saxons in Britain. In these regions a new civilization arose, synthesizing the Germanic tribal culture and values with Roman civilization and Roman Catholic Christianity.

THE SIX EUROPEAN CULTURAL ZONES AFTER THE ROMAN EMPIRE

France. As the most successful and important Germanic tribe, the Franks settled in France beginning in 482 under their great Christian warlord Clovis (481-511). By the mid-sixth century, the descendants of Clovis had conquered all of France, extending their domain back across the Rhine River into Germany. For the next three centuries they remained the preeminent German-Roman state.

Iberia. Under Visigoth kings, Spain witnessed a period of relative prosperity, with a fine cultural center developing at Seville under their brilliant Christian leader Isidore. However, in 711 a combined army of Muslim Arabs and North African Moors invaded Spain, crushing the Visigothic army and conquering nearly the entire peninsula. Spain would remain under Muslim rule for the next three centuries.

Germany. The homeland of the original Germanic tribes which overwhelmed Rome, Germany slowly merged culturally with the other Germanic tribes, as various German people would attempt to control their ancient homeland. By the ninth century, the German lands had been Christianized and became the center of an attempt by various kings and warlords to recreate a German-Roman Empire (the Holy Roman Empire).

Italy. After the Ostrogothic Germanic kingdom was crushed by the Byzantines in the sixth century (Justinian), Italy suffered a second wave of Germanic invasion under the Lombards, beginning in 568. Thereafter, Italy remained completely fragmented among the competing papal state, provincial princes and the German rivalries. As a result of the Alps, the peninsula remained more or less isolated from the serious invasions facing other parts of western Europe. Therefore, Italy retained stronger German and Christian influences, and a more urban and economic mercantile social order.

England. When Britain was abandoned by the Roman legions around 400. The Germanic tribes of the Angles and Saxons invaded and conquered much of Britain in the late fifth and sixth centuries. (The legends of King Arthur apparently derive from tales of a local warlord's (Arthur) attempts to battle these invaders.) While the island converted to Christianity, the Anglo-Saxon attempts to unify the island were unsuccessful. Seven competing kingdoms constantly fought over control of the islands, which culminated in a unified kingdom around 1000. However, the duke of Normandy, William the Conqueror, crushed this Anglo-Saxon government in 1066, installing himself as the King of England, which is the current monarchical government of Britain today.

Scandinavia. Scandinavia remained culturally untouched by western Europe for centuries. The Vikings remained in control of the region, and resisted attempts by the other German tribes to Christianize them.

THE RISE OF CHRISTIANITY

Denominations. By the first century BC, Judaism was an extremely diverse religion, with numerous political and religious sects. The two most important sects in Palestine were the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisee group emphasized strict obedience to Jewish law and tradition, while supporting Rome for protection, even though of the "pagan" beliefs of the Romans. The Sadducees, also emphasized strict obedience to Jewish law, however, the group believed that God would send a messiah to lead the

Jews out from under the rule of the Romans. Other groups included the Essenes, a small group who opposed the authority of Jerusalem and had their own set of scriptures and interpretations known as the Dead Sea Scrolls; and the Sicarii, followers of a man claiming to be the messiah and advocated armed rebellion against Rome. Also the Hellenistic Judaism practiced by many Jews influenced by the impact of Alexander's empire and the followers of King Herod the Great's rule in Palestine.

Jewish uniqueness. There were several elements of Jewish religion which were unique in the Roman world. First, the Jews were monotheistic, while the Romans had developed their own polytheistic religion and adopted most of the Greek gods as their own. However, not only did the Jews believe in only one god – the Romans probably could have tolerated a peculiar attachment to a single ethnic god – the Jews insisted their god was the only one that existed at all. The gods of the Greeks, Romans and all other peoples were either demons, or were figments of the worshippers' imaginations. Naturally, to the Romans this was a laughable absurdity. After all, it was the Romans that had conquered the Jews: Why would this all-powerful Jewish god have allowed the Romans to conquer his chosen people? It was a question the Jews found difficult to answer and caused much tension among the various sects of Judaism. However, the Romans did allow the Jews the exemption of making sacrifices to the Roman gods and emperor, which many leaders of Rome felt was an agreement for the Jews not making any political trouble for the Roman government.

CHRISTIANITY

The Messianic Idea. Christianity derived many of its ideas and practices from Judaism, especially from the Jewish concept of the messiah, which originated in the prophecies of Isaiah. *Messiah* means the "anointed one," or king, referring specifically to the Near Eastern custom of anointing kings with olive oil at their coronations. In most Jewish circles during the early Roman empire, the messiah was conceived of as a mighty eschatological warrior-king destined to bring political deliverance and supremacy to the Jews. During the first century of Roman dominance in Judea there were numerous unsuccessful militant false messiahs.

Jesus of Nazareth (c. 4 BC – AD 30). The most important claimant of the title of messiah was Jesus of Nazareth, who is still worshiped by hundreds of millions throughout the world. Jesus' career as an itinerant rabbi in Judea spanned only a few years, but his influence on his followers and on world history has been remarkable. Rejecting the traditional Jewish understanding of a militant messiah, Jesus proclaimed he was the Son of God. His messianic mission was to bring spiritual salvation and eternal life to individuals, not political or military salvation to the Jews. His messianic claims were rejected by most Jews of his day, and he was ultimately executed for blasphemy and sedition. His followers (apostles and disciples), however, were convinced that Jesus was resurrected from the dead, confirming his status as the Messiah and Son of God. Based on his impact on world history, Jesus – in the company of Muhammad, the Buddha and Confucius – is widely regarded as one of the most important people ever to have lived.

The Apostles and Paul. The conviction that Jesus had been resurrected from the dead, combined with the profundity of his moral teachings, inspired his twelve closest companions, the Apostles, to spread his message. Initially preaching the story and teaching of Jesus was led by Peter who emphasized spreading the message within the Jewish world, which did not accept the teachings and often persecuted those who were teaching about Jesus. However, the conversion of Paul (Saul) of Tarsus and the eventual agreement between him and Peter led to Christianity being preached to a wider gentile (non-Jewish) audience in the Roman empire, notably Greece and Italy. Paul's discussion of the doctrines of Christianity in his letters and his missionary efforts among the Greeks and Romans make him the most important apostle, who laid the foundation for the transformation of Christianity from a minority sect among the Jews to a world religion in the Roman empire.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIANITY

Monotheism. Christianity inherited the monotheism of Judaism (though eventually transformed into a Hellenized philosophical trinitarianism). As such, it was perceived by many in the Roman empire as

philosophically modern and enlightened compared to the mythological polytheism of the traditional Greek and Roman religions.

Miracles. Christians professed the reality of both miracles and God's direct intervention in the present, replacing the vague claims of the intervention of the Roman gods at unspecified times in mythological antiquity.

Exclusivism. The exclusivism of Christianity – once you became a Christian you could no longer worship any of the numerous other Hellenistic gods – was originally a negative factor, limiting its acceptability to the Roman, who perceived it as arrogant and irrational. Ultimately, however, each convert to Christianity represented a weakening of Roman religion. As Christianity grew it eventually gained momentum and slowly strangled paganism.

Moral Ideas. The principles of Christianity, as taught by Jesus, include some of the most profound moral ideas in religious history. Although today they may seem commonplace, the ideas were revolutionary in the world of moral decay in the Roman empire, especially as many people were blaming this lack of morality on the decline of Roman power.

Proselytizing. Unlike most other religions in the Roman empire, Christianity was missionary oriented, seeking to convert all who would listen. The very fact that Christians attempted to convert non-Christians, even with moderate success, meant that over the decades the number of Christians would increase while the number of pagans decreased.

THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY TO 450

Roman Reaction. Initially the Roman authorities paid very little attention to Christianity, considering it a strange and eccentric sect of Judaism. Aside from sporadic persecutions, the Romans for the most part left the early Christians alone. Ultimately, however, as Christians increased in number, the Romans began to perceive it as a threat, both to society and the state, and organized persecutions broke out. In the long run these persecutions were ineffective, and Christianity continued to spread and flourish. When Christians took control of the state under Constantine, the persecuted became the persecutors.

Denominations and heresy. As time progressed, these small Christian communities grew through conversion, creating numerous regional denominations of Christianity, often divided on linguistic and doctrinal grounds. As the leaders of Christianity attempted to maintain some semblance of order within these communities, there arose a series of disputes over doctrinal, practice and administration. The ultimate consequence was the creation of a remarkable number of denominations within early Christianity, including Judeo-Christianity, Hellenistic Christianity, Gnosticism, Arianism and Monophysitism. Although important in their own day, with disputes between denominations often leading to persecution and bloodshed, most of these early denominations of Christianity have disappeared.

Constantine (324-337). The decisive event in the rise of Christianity was the conversion of the Roman emperor Constantine. His conversion had a major impact on the development of Christianity. First, state patronage of Christianity allowed the religion to spread more rapidly among the Romans. Many Romans, accustomed to worshipping the state gods, were transformed into nominal Christians when the emperor became a Christian. Others joined because they saw Christianity as a mechanism for promotion and power within the empire. Finally, under Theodosius (379-395), non-Christian religions were outlawed and slowly disappeared.

The second effect of Constantine's conversion was the establishment of religious orthodoxy as a state issue. It was not sufficient to be a Christian; rather, one had to be a member of the "politically correct" (i.e. imperially patronized) branch of Christianity. Thus one effect of Constantine's conversion was the elimination of religious diversity within the Christian movement. Another effect was that the old decaying Roman empire was revitalized and reunified by the new imperial ideology, Christianity, which would remain the ideology of the eastern Roman empire, the Byzantine, for over one thousand years.

Church councils. Despite occasional outbursts of interdenominational strife between different church groups, more rational attempts were also made to reconcile differences and define Christian doctrines through holding councils of Christian bishops and leaders. The most important of these councils were the council of Nicaea, which convened in 325 under the direction of Constantine, and the council of Chalcedon in 451. The outcome of these councils was paradoxical. On one hand, they laid the foundation for all future doctrine, practice and theology for the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic branches of Christianity. Thus, in a sense, they can be seen as having been successful in their attempts to promulgate

Christian unity. On the other hand, dissenters from the newly proclaimed orthodoxy were branded as heretics, expelled from the Church and persecuted. Ultimately, these and related councils, which sought to unify Christianity, also served to formalize and institutionalize the already existing divisions, causing a permanent split between European Christianity, and the branches of Christianity in the Middle East, Asia and Africa, which led to these groups eventually succumbing to other religions.

Church fathers. As Christianity spread, a growing group of late Roman intellectuals, known as the Church Fathers, became prominent leaders of the Church. The Church Fathers attempted to achieve a number of goals: 1) clearly define Christian doctrine; 2) intellectually defend Christianity against attacks by pagan scholars; 3) make Christianity intellectually understandable and acceptable to pagan Romans; and 4) create a synthesis of Christian ideas with Hellenistic philosophy and culture.

Augustine. Most important, perhaps, was Augustine (d. 430). His conversion from Manichaeism (a form of Zoroastrianism) is recounted in his *Confessions*, while *The City of God* attempts to explain why God preserved a pagan Roman empire for nearly a thousand years only to let the Christian Roman empire be destroyed by the barbarians. His writings laid the foundation for the theology of medieval Roman Catholicism, and greatly influenced the ideas of the German Protestant reformer Martin Luther in the sixteenth century.

Patriarchs. The formal organization of Christian denominations became focused on the Christian leaders (patriarchs) of major cities: Jerusalem, Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and, after 325, Constantinople. Four of these patriarchs became the leaders of independent Christian churches and ethnic groups. The three eastern churches (Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch) were initially by far the most important in early Christianity: the patriarch of Jerusalem received his prestige from his association with the Holy Land; the patriarch of Alexandria, the intellectual center of early Christianity, governed Egyptian Christians. In the seventh century, however, these capitals were conquered by Arab Muslims, and declined in significance among Christians thereafter.

It was the patriarchs of Rome and Constantinople, however, who were to play the major role in later Christian history. The patriarch of Rome derived his prestige from his authority over the capital of the Roman empire, as did the patriarch of Constantinople when the capital of the empire was transferred there in 325. These two European churches became the most important in the history of Christianity, with the patriarch of Rome becoming the pope, the leader of the Latin Roman Catholic Church, and the patriarch of Constantinople the leader of the Greek Orthodox Church.

Schism. The division of the Roman empire into a western Latin half and an eastern Greek half was paralleled by the division of European Christianity into a western Latin Roman Catholic half centered at Rome and eastern Greek Orthodox half centered at Constantinople. Although these two branches of Christianity remained united for several centuries, they increasingly drifted apart in doctrine, practice and administration, until they eventually split into two distinct denominations.

Missionary efforts. Christian missionary efforts in the early period can be divided into two phases: missions within the Roman empire and missions to peoples outside the Roman empire. As Christians and Classical culture became increasingly merged in the fourth century, missionary efforts became in part an attempt to extend Christian-Roman culture beyond the boundaries of the Roman empire. Thus they eventually obtained by conversion what had been unattainable by military conquest – the integration of the Germanic tribes into Roman civilization. Along with their new religion, Christian missionaries often brought literacy, new forms of social organization and improved international contacts to converted peoples. The major early Christian missionary efforts included missions to the Germanic and Celtic tribes, Arabs, Persians, Nubians, and Ethiopians. The most successful and historically significant missions were those to the Germans and Celts, which also influenced Christian traditions with the introduction of many celebrations including Christmas and Easter. It is ironic that the barbarian German tribes which invaded and destroyed the Christian empire of Rome were for the most part themselves Christians, although of Arian denomination. Ultimately, Christianity spread both by conversion and conquest, until it became the catholic (Latin word meaning universal) religion of Europe.

ROMAN CATHOLICISM

Origins. During time of the early Christian church, the believers of the new religion were struggling with mere survival. While many people were being converted in Rome, and eventually the Roman emperor, there were other peoples being converted to the new religion. Many of the Germanic people were converted to Arian Christianity, who believed that Christ had a fundamentally different nature from God. In Ireland and Britain, Celtic Christianity was dominant. The Greeks also had a tremendous

influence on early Christianity. In addition, the Romans practiced their own version of Christianity, which created a competition in western Europe for dominance of the Christian religion.

Christianization of Western Europe. In the first centuries after the fall of Rome, Christians were not only arguing with themselves, but were facing outside threats from the German pagans and the Arabs. However, the church was unified in Western Europe under the control of the Roman Catholic Church because of various factors. First, while the political struggle for Western Europe was raging, people longed for the peaceful times of the Roman Empire, and the only remaining institution from Rome was the Roman Church. Therefore, many people turned to the Church for guidance in restoring the peace they had enjoyed under Roman rule. Second, for liturgical and ecclesiastical purposes, the Church maintained a literate, educated and administratively trained clergy. Kings therefore allied themselves with the Church in order to use the administrative expertise of the Church within their kingdoms, which provided military protection for the Church. Third, the conversion of Clovis, pagan king of the Franks to Catholic Christianity was a crucial event. Had Clovis remained pagan or become an Arian Christian, Catholicism may not have become the dominant religion in the West. The political alliance between the strong Franks and the papacy (king of the Christian Church) guaranteed the survival and triumph of Catholicism. Finally, with the strength of the Catholic church, missionaries eventually converted (sometimes with force) the Irish (fifth century), Anglo-Saxons (597), Germanic peoples (ninth century), the Hungarian (ninth century), the northwestern Slavs (tenth century) and some of the Baltic Slavs (twelfth century).

Catholicism Triumphant. Thus, by the eleventh century Roman Catholicism had become the definitive religion of western Europe, replacing, absorbing, or dominating all competing religious systems. During the next five centuries, forces of dissent were generally manifest within the framework of Catholicism, however, the Roman pontiffs were not as successful as the Arab Ummayyads in longtime peaceful conversion to the religion and the Catholics often had problems within their church. Ironically, at the height of its spiritual, intellectual, cultural, political, and economic power, the Church was overtaken by a series of crises which culminated in the Protestant Reformation.

Christendom. As noted earlier, Europe was divided along six distinct lines. The distinction between these regions were in part linguistic, social, geographical, cultural and political. The major binding factor these six regions had was their common acceptance of Roman Catholicism. Thus arose the fundamental medieval concept of Christendom: spiritual unity within political diversity. Despite all of the differences, all peoples and kingdoms felt they were bound together by a higher power which transcended those differences. The Church was able to develop this within Europe because of its control over the administrative parts of the various kingdoms, which answered to the leader of the church in Rome. This situation remained the fundamental aspect of western European politics and religion until the early 16th century.

The Crusades. The most fascinating form of Christian warfare against the Muslims was the Crusades. Conceived as a mixture of pilgrimage and holy war, the goal of the Crusades was the capture of Jerusalem and other holy places in Palestine from the Muslims. Through two centuries and seven major expeditions, the Crusaders fought a relentless war against Islam, only to be defeated (the Christians managed to control Jerusalem for only 70 years) and driven from the Near East by 1291. The long-term political impact of the Crusades was to revitalize the Muslims under the leadership of the Ottoman Turks, who developed gunpowder weapons as a defense against the Christians.

THE AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION

The agricultural revolution of medieval Europe was based on several important technological and social developments. The invention of the heavy plow which turned soils deeper permitted both the replenishing of vital minerals and plant nutrients, and farming in more difficult lands. The development of new yokes and the horse collar allowed the use of the horse in pulling plows; animals could then pull heavier plows without choking. New types of crops, introduced from Asia and eastern Europe, provided a superior diet and a healthier population. Methods of crops and field rotation allowed the planting of multiple crops per year, with some lands lying fallow and becoming fertilized by grazing animals.

Effects of the agricultural revolution. There were two major effects of the revolution. The first was a population increase; more land under cultivation and greater productivity meant that more people could be fed. This brought greater revenues for feudal lords and kings, and increased political and military power for these rulers. Second, the increased production meant that more food could be produced by the

same number of workers, which led to a surplus population to specialize in various trades. Thus, the formation of cities in western Europe.

FEUDALISM

Origins. Outside of the attempt by Charlemagne, western Europe did not have a central authority to protect the inhabitants of the region from its internal and external enemies. A patchwork of small principalities and kingdoms ruled by warlords who had taken upon themselves the task of defending their provinces. These warlords organized a system of local military defense based around a castle that provided maximum manpower and protection at the local level, with minimal control from higher central authorities. Over time, the lower levels organized around political and/or religious ideas, which would create the basis for the rise of kings and nations.

Characteristics. The medieval feudal system consisted of two major elements. First, the basic structure of feudal society was bound together by an interlocking network of oaths of loyalty and mutual obligation. Feudalism was based on vassalage, by which a warrior would swear to obey and defend his lord; in return, the lord agreed to provide his warrior vassals' sustenance. Second, wealth in society was largely based on agriculture; wealth derived from control of the land. This control fed the warriors as well as the people who worked the land (serfs). The serf would work the land in return for the lord to provide protection, which centered around the castle. The local defense of land was the center of feudal society and often caused kings problems as they would attempt to centralize power in a larger region. This conflict between monarchs and nobles was a constant theme of medieval politics.

Urban Life. Following the collapse of the Roman empire in the fifth century, urban life and international trade in western Europe declined drastically. The numerous wars accompanying the fall of Rome made international trade dangerous and expensive; it therefore declined. Without international trade, small regional kingdoms and states were forced to become increasingly self-sufficient, further decreasing the demand for trade. Kingdoms thereby suffered economic depression, making them weaker militarily and more susceptible to attack. Cities, whose economic function was to serve as centers for industrial production and exchange, also suffered when they were no longer able to exchange their surplus industrial produce. Cities retained their administrative and cultural functions, but decreased in size and became more important for feudal protection from attacks than providing an economic center for the hinterland.

Revival of International Trade. The recovery of medieval cities and international trade began in the ninth century, centering primarily in Italy, where economic ties with the Byzantine empire had prevented urban life from declining as drastically as in other parts of western Europe. As the western economy began to recover, become more productive, and have surplus products, Oriental trade with Byzantium, the Islamic world, and eastern Europe became increasingly profitable. Italy, especially in the north, became the conduit through which most of this trade was channeled. Other regions of Europe began to specialize in certain products for which their environments were especially suited: England for sheep and wool, France for wine, Scandinavia for wood. Specialized regional crafts and skills also developed, such as weaving in Flanders (Belgium).

THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

The Byzantine empire can be simply defined as the Christian state which had its capital at Constantinople. As such, it existed for eleven centuries, from the founding of Constantinople as the New Rome by Constantine in 330, until the conquest of the city by the Ottoman Turks in 1453. Throughout this millennium, the Byzantine empire endured numerous transformations and the steady diminution of its boundaries until, when Mehmet the Conqueror besieged the city in 1453, the empire consisted solely of the decaying shell of the former glorious capital city of Constantinople.

The Byzantine empire can be described by three major characteristics. First, the Byzantines were heirs of imperial Roman law, government and administration; indeed, throughout their history they consistently called themselves Romans. Second, in distinction to the Latin cultural basis of the earlier Classical Roman empire, the Byzantine Roman empire was fundamentally Greek in both language and culture. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Byzantine Roman empire was a Christian state, in distinction to the earlier

paganism of the Classical Roman empire. Thus the Byzantine empire was the political heir to Rome, cultural heir to Greece and the spiritual heir to Christianity.

POLITICAL HISTORY

A Christian Empire. Constantine's role in Roman history has been discussed earlier. From the perspective of Byzantine history, Constantine is not seen as one of the last strong rulers of a collapsing Roman empire. Rather, as described by Constantine's councilor and biographer Eusebius, he was the "equal of the Apostles of Christ," who transformed the decadent pagan tyranny of Rome into a Christian kingdom, the purpose of which was to defend and propagate Christianity and prepare the earth for the Second Coming of Christ. Thus, a new imperial ideology developed which borrowed the earlier pagan Roman idea that the Roman empire had been chosen by the gods to rule the earth. However, the emperor was demoted from being a god himself in the pagan Roman empire, to being the chief minister and representative of God on earth.

Administrative Reforms. Constantine's achievements were not solely limited to the Christianization of the empire and the creation of a new imperial ideology. Rather he laid the foundations for the Byzantine empire through reform of the army and the creation of a Christianized civilian bureaucracy. Constantine's currency and economic reforms allowed the survival of the Byzantine state through the economic chaos and depression of the next centuries. Indeed, the gold coinage created by Constantine remained the standard medium of exchange in the Mediterranean for centuries.

Justinian (527-565). The sixth century was dominated by the emperor Justinian, and his equally famous wife Theodora. Although initially facing unrest and discontent as manifest by the popular Nika revolt in Constantinople (532) in which 30,000 people were killed, Justinian ultimately secured his throne, initiating a policy of imperial aggrandizement and expansion.

The power and wealth of the sixth-century Byzantine state is demonstrated by the fact that Justinian was able to contemplate, even if overoptimistically, an attempted restoration of the Roman empire by the reconquest of the West. Under the command of Belisarius, one of the great generals of history, Byzantine armies managed to retake North Africa (533), Italy (535-554), and southern Spain (552). However, bubonic plague decimated the Byzantine army and population, while Slavic enemies in the Balkans and the Persians in the east attacked. The Byzantines were ultimately defeated in Italy by the Slavs and the Germans; the dream of Byzantine imperial unification of both halves of the old Roman empire was ended forever.

Although Justinian's attempts at military expansion were ultimately unsuccessful, two achievements had a lasting impact. His codification of Roman law for the eastern empire, represents the final culmination of nearly a thousand years of Greek and Roman legal thought and practice, and was extremely influential; for many centuries in both Byzantium and the West.

Civil Wars and Collapse. However, all of Justinian's achievements were purchased at a price. His military campaigns and monumental building programs left the state bankrupt. Furthermore, bubonic plague struck the Mediterranean in 541; thousands died, and plagues regularly reappeared for decades. The subsequent decline in population, state revenues, and morale created serious social and economic problems.

In addition, in ensuing decades of imperial mismanagement combined with constant military threat from the Slavs in the Balkans, Persians in the east, and Lombards in Italy created a major economic and military crisis. These new powers in the Mediterranean no longer feared major city powers since the smaller Goths had defeated the great, powerful city of Rome.

THE AGE OF CRISIS, 636-802

The Arab Threat. Following the death of the Arabian prophet Muhammad (570-632), the Arab tribes, now united by a new religion, began invading the Persian territories and the Byzantine empire. After

having permanently lost the wealthy provinces of Syria, which contained Jerusalem (638), Egypt (642) and North Africa (698) to Arab conquerors, the Byzantine empire barely survived direct attacks on Constantinople. The Arabs mobilized huge fleets and armies to besiege Constantinople itself in 673-678 and 717-718. The city was saved by a combination of the strength of its massive fortifications, the invention of a new secret superweapon, Greek fire (a type of flame-thrower which burned the Arab naval fleet), and the indomitable will of Leo III (717-741), who stole the throne from the weak Justinian II, and successfully led the resistance.

Although the Arabs were ultimately unsuccessful in completely destroying the Byzantine empire and conquering Constantinople, they were nonetheless the clear victors in these wars. Over half the territory of the empire was lost to the Arabs.

The Slavic and Bulgar Threats. Slavic incursions into the Balkans and Greece began as early as 540. Justinian had managed to limit the destruction of these invasions by building an extensive network of fortification and payment of bribes to forestall threatened attacks. By the end of Justinian's reign, however, the treasury was exhausted, plague had decimated the army, and the Slavs began a second wave of invasions in the Balkans beginning in 582. Within a few decades they had overrun all of the Balkans, and most of Greece. The deteriorating situation in the Balkans was compounded by the invasions of the Central Eurasian nomadic Bulgars (Onagur Huns). However, this invasion was controlled by the Slavs who began slowly helping the Byzantines after the Slavs began converting to Christianity.

By the end of this round of invasions into the Byzantine empire, the city of Constantinople had survived and remained the strongest city power in the Mediterranean. However, the large empire it once had was now gone, and it now had to defend what it had left.

Imperial Age 867-1071. Beginning in the early ninth century, the conditions of the Byzantine empire began to improve. This revival derived from several factors. The Arab caliphate (Islam split) had begun to fragment into several competing kingdoms; although still dangerous, they never again threatened the very survival of the empire. The Slavic invaders in the Balkans and Greece were ultimately converted to Christianity, and slowly brought within the realm of Byzantine authority. The plagues which had depopulated the area ceased; combined with new agricultural techniques and the expansion of farmland, this created a substantial rise in population, taxes, wealth, and military power.

Macedonian Warrior-Emperors, 867-1025. The rising power of the Byzantine state was paralleled by the rise to power of the dynamic Macedonian dynasty (867-1025), initiating a new age of imperial splendor for the Byzantine empire. Building on a growing population base and pride for the city, the Macedonian emperors united the remaining parts of the empire and placed an emphasis on military expansion.

Military Expansion. During the ninth century, civil wars and fragmentation had greatly weakened the power of the Arab nation, allowing the Byzantines to turn to the offensive in the east. In the course of the next century a series of soldier-emperors and their generals made substantial gains against the Arabs, including most Syria and parts of northern Mesopotamia. Plans were even laid for the reconquest of Jerusalem itself. Ultimately, however, a renewed threat from the Bulgars in the Balkans, who had resisted conversion to Christianity, required most military attention be devoted to that regions. In a series of military campaigns between 996 to 1014, the Byzantine empire reconquered the Balkans from the Bulgars. Through a combination of diplomacy, threat and evangelization, Basil II managed to convert the Bulgars to Christianity in 870. The Russians, a branch of the Bulgar tribe, converted in 988.

By 1025 this newly revitalized empire was secure on all fronts, and was the most powerful state in Europe or the Near East. It is all the more remarkable, therefore, that the empire would once again be on the verge of destruction within a few short decades.

EASTERN ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY

The official state religion of the Byzantine empire became known to historians as Greek Orthodoxy. To the Byzantines, however, it was simply the one true form of Christianity. In structure, doctrine, and practice,

the Byzantine church was broadly similar to the medieval Roman Catholicism (though with some significant differences); its ecclesiastical leader was the patriarch of Constantinople, who regarded the Roman Catholic pope as simply the patriarch of Rome. Throughout the Byzantine period Greek Orthodoxy remained the definitive characteristic of a Byzantine citizen; all Byzantines were Orthodox, and all Orthodox were subjects of the emperor no matter where they lived.

Schism with the West. Initially united with Roman Catholicism, the Greek Orthodox Church eventually diverged over issues of doctrine, liturgy and especially ecclesiastical administration and jurisdiction. As the Roman church was gaining power in the west, the Byzantines rejected the Roman Catholic pope's claims of ecclesiastical primacy as laughably arrogant, because God allowed Rome to be conquered while Constantinople continued to thrive. These issues finally came to a head in the ninth century. After numerous disputes and mutual excommunications, the Greek and Latin churches split, first in 867 (the Photian schism), with a final schism in 1054. Attempts at reunification of the two churches in the fifteenth century under the threat of Muslim Turkish invasions proved fruitless; the attitude of the Byzantines was reflected in the saying "Better the turban of the Turk than the tiara of the Pope."

THE RISE OF ISLAM

Arabia on the eve of Islam

At the birth of Muhammad, Arabia was a peninsula with severe social, political and religious divisions comprised of desert Semitic nomads that had lived in the area for centuries. Indeed, there had never been an Arabian culture or state which encompassed the entire peninsula. In fact the only thing common throughout the peninsula was the domestication of the camel for transportation. The northern regions were client states of the Byzantines. The desert regions were controlled by various desert nomads, while the coastal regions were politically divided into several small kingdoms or city-states. Religiously, most Arabs were pagans, worshipping traditional tribal gods. However, there were small but important Christian, Jewish, Zoroastrian and nondenominational monotheistic communities. Religious wars between the Jews and the Christian factions had plagued the peninsula for decades prior to the birth of Muhammad. Also, outside military forces from Persia, The Byzantine empire and lower Syria had been interfering in Arabian politics also.

MUHAMMAD, THE PROPHET OF ISLAM, 570-632

EARLY CAREER. 570-622

Early Life. Born in 570, Muhammad was a member of a minor trading clan in the city of Mecca in the Hejaz region. Orphaned as a young man, Muhammad was raised by his uncle, playing an undistinguished role in the mercantile affairs of Mecca until his marriage, at age twenty-five, to a wealthy widow named Khadija. Under Muhammad's guidance, Khadija's trading enterprises flourished, until at about age forty he was able to enter into semi-retirement and devote an increasing part of his time to religious meditation. **Prophetic calling.** In 610 Muhammad was meditating in the mountains near Mecca. There he believed that the angel Gabriel appeared to him, revealing part of the Qur'an (Koran), and summoning to become God's prophet. Muhammad was so shaken by the experience that, fearing for his sanity, he fled to his home; his wife Khadija convinced him to act upon his revelations. As he preached God's message to his fellow citizens of Mecca, the revelations which were to become the full Qur'an began to come with increasing frequency.

RISE TO POWER, 622-632

The Hijra (Hegira), 622. Although Muhammad convinced a small group of friends and relatives, few Meccans believed the self-proclaimed prophet. As Muhammad began to denounce their sins and disbelief, many turned to active persecution and threatened Muhammad's life. In 622 he and his followers were forced to flee Mecca in the wake of an assassination attempt. He found refuge in the city of Medina, where most of the local inhabitants accepted him as a prophet and the leader of their community. Muhammad's flight (hijra or hegira) from Mecca to Medina is considered a seminal event by Muslims, representing the transition from a small persecuted event of believers to a fully established Muslim religious and political community. Year one of the Islamic calendar therefore dates from 622.

Muhammad at Media. As political and religious leader of Medina, Muhammad initiated a policy of proselytizing other Arab tribes and cities, and opposing his old enemies at Mecca. War soon broke out between the pagan Mecca and Muslim Medina. Although things initially went badly for the Muslims, Muhammad personally led his small army to several remarkable victories over the vastly superior forces of Mecca and the battles of Badr (623) and the siege of Medina (627). These victories were widely seen throughout Arabia as a miraculous sign of God's blessing on the Muslim community, and thousands flocked to Muhammad's banner at Medina and became Muslims.

The Conquest of Arabia. By 630, Muhammad had raised an army of about 10,000 men and marched on Mecca. Unable to resist, the Meccans surrendered and accepted Islam. For the most part, Muhammad treated his old enemies with great generosity, even though they had once tried to assassinate him. He insisted on cleansing the Ka'aba – an ancient temple at Mecca which was said to have been built by Abraham – of pagan worship. He thereafter rededicated it as the central shrine of Islam, instituting an annual pilgrimage of Muslims to worship there. Thereafter, a combination of military action and religious conversion, nearly the entire Arabian peninsula had converted to Islam or allied with Muhammad by his death in 632.

The impact of Muhammad. In the company of Jesus, the Buddha and Confucius, Muhammad is the founder of one of the world's great religions and civilizations. However, no other great religious leader had Muhammad's combined success in both spiritual and political affairs. In a short twenty-year period, Muhammad created a united nation of the disparate and feuding Arabian tribes. He produced a book of scripture which is accepted by hundreds of millions as the word of God, who also accept his life as their model for an ideal human being. Combined with his personal teachings, the Qur'an formed the basis of legal system which would be normative among Muslims for the next 1300 years. Finally, Muhammad's religious, social and political ideals succeeded in creating the first global civilization; within five hundred years of his death, the Muslim call to prayer could be heard in every continent in the old world (not America).

THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF ISLAM

THE QUR'AN AND THE SUNNA

The Qur'an. Muslims accept the Qur'an not only as the revelation of God to the prophet Muhammad, but as the perfect and eternal manifestation of God's word. As such, it is the definitive scripture of Islam, and the foundation for all Islamic beliefs and practices. Although not strictly poetry, the Qur'an is written in an elegant style of Arabic, and it is universally, like the Christian bible and the Jewish bible, considered to be a literary masterpiece of one person, unlike the Christian and Jewish bibles.

The Sunna. While the Qur'an is considered to be the word of God himself, Muslims also find an important source for doctrine and practice in the words of Muhammad, known as the Sunna. While not considered scriptural revelations, the teachings and practices of Muhammad have historically played an important role in the development of Muslim law and ethics.

THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

Faith. The basic article of faith of Islam is "There is no but God (Allah) and Muhammad is the Messenger of God." This statement implies strict monotheism, acceptance of the Qur'an as the revelation of the word of God, as well as beliefs in angels, a final judgment and an afterlife. Although differing in many details, the basic Muslim ideas on these latter matters roughly parallel traditional Jewish and Christian thought.

Prayer. Muslims are required to perform five ritual prayers daily; at set times each day faithful Muslims will face the central shrine of the Ka'aba at Mecca and perform a short ritual prayer. In addition, Muslims are required to come to a mosque (place of prayer) each Friday at noon for prayer and sermons.

Alms. Care of the poor is enjoined on Muslims, and generally takes the form of a standardized almsgiving of 2.5 percent of yearly income. This money can be directly distributed to the poor, or donated through religious institution.

Fasting. The fast of Ramadan (the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar) is celebrated throughout the Islamic world as a fundamental religious duty. The fast consists of daily abstinence from food and drink

(and all other physical pleasures). Meals are to be taken before sunrise, and after sunset. The fast is designed to celebrate the revelation of the Qur'an (which occurred during the last ten days of Ramadan), and to serve for spiritual purification and discipline.

Pilgrimage. While Arab pilgrimage to the Ka'aba antedates Islam, Muhammad turned a regional religious festival into an unusual act of global religious unity. If physically and financially able, each Muslim should participate in the annual pilgrimage once in his lifetime. Muslims find great spiritual power in the simultaneous worship of over two million people from all over the world.

Jihad. Although not one of the Five Pillars, the concept of Jihad is important in Islam. Widely misunderstood in the West to mean "holy war," jihad literally means "struggle": the command to work for the good of Islam. This religious struggle includes study and meditation, preaching and missionary work, and a wide variety of good deeds. Fighting for the faith – the typical understanding of jihad – is thus only one element of jihad. At times – such as the Arab conquests and the defense during the Christian Crusades – the Holy War aspect of jihad has played an important part in Islamic history.

MUSLIM POLITICS

Succession crisis. Following the death of Muhammad in 632, the Muslim community faced a major political and religious crisis. Muhammad had left no clear instructions for succession. While all agreed that no one could succeed to the prophetic authority of Muhammad, a spiritual and political leader needed to be selected for the Islamic community.

Two opposing movements developed. The first, known as the Sunnis, followed the principles of traditional Arab tribal democracy, attempting to elect the most pious Muslim as the successor to Muhammad through a vote of Islamic leaders. The second group, the Shi'ites, followed an equally strong tradition of Arab patriarchal government, believing that succession should fall to Muhammad's eldest male relative, since he had only daughters.

The majority Sunni faction elected Abu Bakr (632-634), Muhammad's closest associate, as his successor, while the Shi'ites chose Ali, Muhammad's adopted brother, cousin and son-in-law. At this point the Shi'ites agreed to accept the majority position, and followed Abu Bakr. But this agreement would not stand the test of time and the two factions will eventually split.

THE ARAB EMPIRE

In one of the most remarkable conquests in world military history, within a few years of Muhammad's death, Arab armies had conquered the entire Near East and were fighting on the borders of China, India and Europe.

The Rashidun Caliphs. The first four successors to the prophet Muhammad – known the rashidun, or "rightly guided" caliphs – are widely regarded as the ideal examples of leadership. Austere and pious bedouin rulers, the rightly guided caliphs guided the early Arab conquests of the Middle East.

Conquest of the Middle East. Syria and Palestine were conquered from the Byzantine empire following the Arab victory at the battle of Yarmuk in 636. Jerusalem, the sacred city of Jesus for Christians, surrendered to the caliph Umar (634-644) in 637. This city would be in Muslim for the next 500 years, a fact which contributed to the origins of the Crusade movement and the wars between the Christians, Muslims and Jews. Egypt was conquered from 639-642. Mesopotamia and Iran were overwhelmed from 633-642, the Sasanid (Persian) empire was crushed, and classical Zoroastrian civilization destroyed.

THE RISE OF THE OTTOMAN TURKS

Origins. As the Islamic world was breaking apart, various small bands had settled in the Anatolian highlands following the great Turkish and Muslim victory over the Chinese at the battle of Talas (751), which converted the region to Sunni Islam. In the early 1300s these Turks were divided into numerous petty tribes, which vied with each other in attacking and plundering the collapsing Byzantine empire. The

most important and successful of the tribal warlords was Osman (1281-1326), whose successors would rule Turkey and an empire for over six hundred years as the Ottoman dynasty.

Conquest of Constantinople. The Ottomans made steady military progress during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, conquering most of Anatolia from rival Turkish tribes, and conquering nearly all of the Christian Balkans in southeast Europe as well. Constantinople, the capital of the floundering Byzantine empire, with its massive walls, proved unconquerable until the Turks developed gunpowder artillery; in 1453 Constantinople fell. Renamed Istanbul, the new capital of the Ottoman empire was destined to become the greatest center of Islamic culture for the next several centuries.

Creation of the Empire. As masters of the new military technologies, Ottoman military expansion did not cease with the fall of Constantinople 1453. During the next century and a half, they conquered most of modern Serbia, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Moldavia and southern Russia from the Europeans. Syria and Egypt were conquered by the Mamluks by 1517. Mesopotamia and much of Arabia were added by 1538. Most of North Africa was conquered by 1574. Throughout the 16th and early 17 centuries, the Ottomans were not only the most important Islamic empire, but the largest and most powerful European state as well

EUROPE IN CRISIS

THE RISE OF THE FRANKISH KINGDOM

Battle of Tours. In the late 720s, the Arab Muslims began a new round of European invasion by launching an attack from the Iberian Peninsula across the Pyrenees mountains and into southern France. In 732 these troops were defeated by the Frankish warlord Charles Martel. This was a significant defeat for the Frankish Christians who could now claim that they were the defenders of the Christian faith. The Muslims never again attempted another significant advance into Europe (the civil war problems) and Christianity will grow to a point where they will try to defeat the Muslims in Arabia.

Rise of Charlemagne (ruled: 772-814). In 772 Charlemagne became king of the Franks after his father, Pepin, died. Charlemagne initiated a policy of imperialism aimed at uniting all Christian lands and forming a new Roman empire. Charlemagne's fundamental political policy was military expansionism. During the four decades of his rule, using a mixture of politically securing alliances with feudal lords and military strength, he campaigned relentlessly. In Spain, against the power of the Muslim Umayyads, he secured a strip of territory south of the Pyrenees mountains (795). In Germany he conquered and forcibly converted the Saxons (772-804), and other Germanic and Slavic tribes. In central Europe he defeated and converted the Central Asian Avars (Hunnish tribe), who had settled in modern Hungary, and who had long plagued Europeans with their raids (796). He also conquered the kingdom of the Lombards, who and threatened the Vatican, thereby absorbing northern Italy as well (799).

Charlemagne and the Vatican. By 800, Charlemagne was supreme in Europe, and was recognized as a world leader of equal status with the Byzantine emperor and Muslim caliphs of Baghdad. After he helped Pope Leo III (795-816) defend against a Lombard threat to the control of the Roman church, the pope reciprocated by crowning Charlemagne emperor on Christmas Day, 800. There were three important implications of this event. First, it increased a growing rift between the West and the Byzantine emperors (who claimed the sole right to the imperial Roman title), thereby contributing to animosities which culminating in the split of the two powers. Of greater long-term significance, however, was the creation of an imperial title and ideology in the West, from which would derive the Holy Roman Empire in Germany. Finally, after Charlemagne, western emperors and kings had to be crowned in Rome by popes (divine right of kings), who could thus lay claim to ecclesiastical authority over kings and emperors.

Disintegration of the Carolingian State. Charlemagne's empire did not outlast him. Continuing the German tradition that inheritance should be divided equally among all sons, Charlemagne's empire was split among his three grandsons, who immediately commenced a struggle for supremacy. The chaos caused by these wars of dynastic succession was compounded by the local lords who wished to regain independence after the death of Charlemagne. After three decades of conflict, the empire was divided into three parts (roughly equivalent to modern France, Germany and Italy).

MEDIEVAL MILITARY EXPANSION

After the end of the wars of Frankish Succession, western Europe entered into a phase of military buildup. There were several reasons for this expansion. First, most political policy making in Europe was

dominated by the martial values of the feudal military aristocracy, who saw war as their legitimate occupation. Second, Europe's major military enemies – the Vikings, Muslims, Central Eurasians, Slavs and Byzantines – had all converted to western Christianity or had declined by the 11th century, giving Europeans the opportunity for military expansion. Third, the growing population and economic wealth of Europe provided the manpower and resources for successful military campaigns. Finally the Catholic Church provided the ideological basis for military expansion, which kept the western Europeans from fighting themselves, through the concept of the crusades. Medieval imperialism took several forms: wars against the Muslims of Spain and southern Italy, the crusades and eastern Europe conquest.

The “Reconquista.” In Spain, ongoing centuries of warfare between Muslims and Christians led to the eventual slow reconquest of the entire peninsula from the Arabs and Moors. The Reconquista led to the creation of not only the kingdoms of Spain and Portugal, but to the development of a militant Christian mentality among the Spanish nobility, which would later manifest itself in their conquest and colonization of Latin America in the sixteenth century.

Eastern Europe conquests. Expansion into eastern Europe took the form of a campaign focused on converting the remaining pagan Slavic and Baltic peoples. Germanic imperial ambitions, aided by the militant Christianity of the Teutonic Knights, brought Roman Catholicism and western European culture to the modern regions of Poland, Lithuania and Estonia.

Impact of militarism. Medieval western European militarism nearly doubled western European territory through the conquest and/or conversion, most of Iberia, Sicily, Croatia, Hungary, Bohemia, Poland, and the Baltic states (with the exception of the Serbians). The militant expansionist mentality which originated in this period carried on into the sixteenth century when rivalries among nations begin again and the age of exploration and conquest begins.

FRENCH EXPANSION

Under the Capetian dynasty medieval France achieved a period of prosperity and power after France had suffered a long period of decline and chaos following Charlemagne. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries witnessed the consolidation of royal power in France, the beginnings of constitutional and parliamentary institutions, and the growth of a national consciousness. In the thirteenth century Louis IX (1226-1270) led two crusades and was considered the most powerful ruler in Europe. The power of the French monarchy culminated in the early fourteenth century under the brilliant if unscrupulous rule of Philip the Fair (1285-1314).

ENGLISH EXPANSION

Five major political developments occurred in England during the Middle Ages. First, William the Conqueror, duke of Normandy (in France) conquered England in 1066, destroying the old Anglo-Saxon monarchy, and creating in its place an Anglo-Norman society with close cultural and political ties to France. For the next five centuries England would play a fundamental role in continental politics. Second, the dynamic Plantagenet royal dynasty (1154-1399) created an increasingly centralized and powerful monarchy, which also helped solidify the Magna Carta, a document guaranteeing noblemen certain rights, and Parliament, a representative body for noblemen, as central parts of English government. Third, these Plantagenet kings managed to conquer Ireland (1171), Wales (1172), and Scotland (1173), creating a single kingdom of the entire British Isles. Fourth, as both kings of England and dukes of Normandy, Plantagenet kings pursued a policy of continental expansion in France, culminating in their attempts to unite the crowns of England and France in the First Hundred Years War.

THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS WAR

A succession crisis in France brought the Valois family to the throne. The English king had claimed their right to the throne through marriage as the Duke of Normandy. However, the Valois family emerged as the royal family of France. This dispute led to the disastrous Hundred Years War in which English armies, unpaid mercenaries and French peasant rebel bands devastated much of France, while the Black Death and famine swept through Europe.

Joan of Arc. By 1420 it seemed that France would soon succumb to the English. At this point, however, the remarkable Joan of Arc, a young French peasant woman who claimed to have visions from God, led the French to a series of victories over the English. Although ultimately captured and burned as a witch by the English, who hoped the execution would break the will of the French to keep fighting, Joan's

faith in France and example for the people to follow revitalized the morale of the French, who subsequently defeated the English and reestablished a strong monarchy. By the end of the fifteenth century France was again one of the strongest states in Europe.

War of the Roses. Since the English royal ambitions for France came to a disastrous end with the French driving the English from the continent with new military techniques and cannons, the English monarchy was weakened. This led to England itself plunged into the War of the Roses (1455-1485), a civil war over the succession to the English throne. In the end, strong central government was restored under the Tudor dynasty (1485-1603), which again made England a major power in Europe and laid the foundation for eventual English world expansion.

GERMANY AND THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

A leftover problem of the fall of the Roman Empire in Western Europe was the tensions between the Italian peninsula and the Germanic tribes to the north. Various attempts were made by German leaders to exert influence over Italy through the Catholic Church, while the Italians attempted to control the Germans through the Church. This led to the fundamental characteristic of medieval Germany and Italy. The tension was between the imperial ambitions and claims of the German Holy Roman emperors, and the desire for independence on the part of the German and Italian feudal nobility. Power constantly fluctuated between the emperors and the feudal nobles. Ultimately, however, imperial ambitions in Italy and the desire by the emperors to dominate the papacy led to a rift with Rome. A series of popes undermined the authority of the Holy Roman emperors, contributing to the ultimate fragmentation of Germany into small feudal principalities.

The Saxon Dynasty, 919-1024. Germany in the tenth century was dominated by the Saxon emperors, who had been elected to replace the defunct French Carolingian dynasty in 919. The first half of the century was spent subduing the semi-autonomous dukes of Germany, and in wars with the Magyars who finally decisively defeated at Lechfield in 955. Thereafter, Otto the Great (936-973) carried out expansionist military operations, conquering northern Italy, and subduing the Slavs to the east, culminating in his being crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 963 by the pope in Rome. The Carolingian imperial title, which had lapsed elsewhere, thereafter became the exclusive domain of the Germans.

The Salian Dynasty, 1024-1125. In the eleventh century, the Salian emperors maintained and expanded the territorial domain of their empire. However, the popes resented imperial control over Rome, which threatened to turn the pope and the church into a dependent imperial ecclesiastical office. They, therefore, strongly opposed German control over the Church and northern Italy. This conflict culminated in the investiture controversy (below) of 1077, which was only temporarily ended when Emperor Henry IV submitted to Pope Gregory VII.

The Hohenstaufen Dynasty, 1137-1268. The ongoing conflict between the pope and emperor, and Church and State, came to a head during the rule of the Hohenstaufen dynasty. The struggle between the popes and emperors continued unabated. Emperor Frederick II nearly achieved his aim of creating a single united empire of Germany and Italy.

Decline of Germany. After the death of Frederick II in 1250, however, German power in Italy collapsed. Thereafter, the Holy Roman emperors limited their ambitions to Germany itself, where an electoral system for selecting emperors weakened imperial authority. In the fourteenth century Germany increasingly became a confederation of independent principalities loosely bound by an elected emperor, whose authority had been undermined. The international power of Germany therefore declined.

Italian Mercantile States. A remarkable characteristic of the Middle Ages in Italy was the strength of Italian cities, industry and trade. Despite problems and periods of decay, Italy's urban and economical life remained vibrant and substantially superior to the rest of Europe. This was manifest in the growth of the great maritime city-states of Genoa, Pisa and especially Venice. Holding only small amounts of territory in Italy, the wealth and power of these states derived from industry and control of trade from the Orient to Europe, which was no longer centered from Rome because of its problems after its fall from power. The wealth from trade allowed Venice and Genoa to create massive and beautiful cities, with navies, colonies and conquests ranging throughout the eastern Mediterranean. Venetian merchants such as Marco Polo traveled throughout the entire Old World in search of trade and profit. The wealth and power of these Italian maritime city-states rivaled that of the larger kingdoms and empires of Europe and were instrumental in the attempts by the popes to stop the growing German threat; in 1204 the Venetians even managed to orchestrate the conquest of Constantinople. The cultural manifestations of medieval Italian

wealth culminated in the creation of one of the golden ages in world thought and art – the Italian Renaissance (see second semester).

PROBLEMS BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND STATE

In the Byzantine East, the empire survived the Germanic invasions. There, Greek Orthodox Christianity became intimately linked to the Byzantine empire in a system known as Caesaropapism. The Church became almost a department of the State, with the emperors selecting patriarchs and determining issues of doctrine. In the West, on the other hand, there was no equivalent political power capable of either dominating or protecting Rome and the papacy, which rapidly passed through the hands of various political powers: Goths, Byzantines, Ostrogoths, Lombards, Franks and Germans. In the end, the popes emerged as independent political rulers of the Papal States in central Italy.

Conflicting authority. According to papal theory, all kings of Europe were subordinate to ecclesiastical authority; in reality they were frequent political rivals. Furthermore, as more and more land was donated to the Church as pious offerings, the Church became the major landowner in Europe. In medieval times land equaled wealth and military power; kings therefore wished to control, tax, or otherwise benefit from land within their domain which was owned by the Church. They therefore attempted to select loyal bishops and abbots who controlled the Church lands. Such bishops would in effect be feudal nobles, like secular lords, they were often concerned more with their own wealth and power than with the spiritual needs of the Church. Indeed, the papacy itself could be infected with greed and corruption as it passed under the control of emperors and kings. These developments contributed to the growing tension between Church and State.

Investiture Controversy. These tensions culminated in the eleventh century in the investiture controversy. Efforts at clerical reform by the new Clunian monastic order created a series of conflicts and confrontations. Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) led the effort for both internal reform and external papal supremacy, advocating the idea that the pope's leadership of Christians extended to kings as well. Henry IV (1050-1106), the Holy Roman Emperor, opposed Gregory's efforts to assert papal control over the investiture (selection) of high clergymen within the German empire. The dispute culminated with Henry being excommunicated by Gregory, which freed all his feudal vassals from their oaths of loyalty, creating political chaos in Germany. To regain authority over his rebellious vassals Henry submitted and did penance to Gregory at Canossa in Italy in 1077. But the dispute was not really resolved; after Gregory's death in 1085, the struggle continued with German invasions of Italy and the contested election of popes. The controversy was never fully resolved and led to greater political problems with other monarchs involved themselves in the controversy.

Babylonian captivity. Attempting to escape the constant conflict within the Holy Roman Empire and seek the protection the powerful French kings could provide, Pope Clement V in 1309 deserted Rome for Avignon and the domination of France. During the so-called Babylonian captivity (1309-78) all the popes were French, all lived at Avignon, and all were under the control of the French kings. The Avignonese papacy represented the culmination of the administrative structure of the church, which reached into almost all corners of Europe.

Great Schism. The Great Schism began shortly after Gregory XI returned the Papacy to Rome in 1377, after its "Babylonian Captivity." Gregory died within a year. The subsequent papal election was conducted under considerable "pressure" for the election of an Italian pope by the Roman baronial families and rabble. The cardinals took the hint, and elected Urban VI (1378-1389), an Italian from Itri. But as soon as the election was over, some of the French cardinals reconvened at Avignon, declared Urban's election void, and elected another pope, Clement VII (1378-1394), a Frenchman. Thus began the Great Schism, as two lines of popes continued to succeed each other, one based at Rome and the other at Avignon, each appointing cardinals. The kings of Europe soon began choosing among the popes, based on their political objectives (England favored the Roman line, France the Avignon one). The whole affair caused a scandal throughout Christendom. An attempt to resolve the problem through a church council only resulted in the election of a third pope. In the end the whole business was resolved when the fortuitous coincidence of the death of one pope and the resignation of another allowed their cardinals to convene together to elect Martin V (1417-1431): the third line of popes had never attracted much support, and was ignored. Martin proved a very able pope, and a dedicated reformer, but the prestige of the papacy had been seriously injured, helping to pave the way for Protestantism (see second semester).

THE BLACK DEATH

Economic growth and recovery in medieval Europe was not continuous, nor without social costs. Problems of uncontrolled urban growth and population expansion (especially after the end the Crusades) created pollution and unsanitary conditions in many of the cities. In 1347, the Bubonic Plague appeared in Europe, brought by traders from the Near East. The polluted, unsanitary and rat-infested cities of Europe were havens for the spread of the disease, which was spread by fleas on rats. Within a few years, all of Europe was infected; one-third of the population died. As a result, widespread panic spread throughout Europe, and many kingdoms began blaming other kingdoms. With the Catholic Church temporarily weakened politically because of the failure of the Crusades, the militarism of western Europe turned inward with various wars of varying size occurring in all regions of western Europe. Ultimately, however, the inherent strength of the agricultural and mercantile society led to economic recovery and by the end of the 1400s, the Church was experiencing renewed power (The Renaissance Period), and prosperity was returned to western Europe. This, however, would come to a crashing end in 1517 with the Protestant Reformation.