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EPOCHS OF EUROPEAN HISTORY:
ANTIQUITY TO RENAISSANCE
COURSE GUIDE

Professor Geoffrey Hosking
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

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Antiquity to Renaissance

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**Epochs of European Civilization:
Antiquity to Renaissance**

About Your Professor

Geoffrey Hosking

Geoffrey Hosking is a professor of Russian history, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, at University College London. After teaching himself Russian as a teenager, he has spent most of his life teaching and researching Russian history. He gave the Reith lectures in 1988 and is the author of the bestselling *History of the Soviet Union* (which won the *Los Angeles Times* Book Award for History), *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917, The Awakening of the Soviet Union, The First Socialist Society,* and many other books. For ten years, he has taught a course intended to introduce students to the main themes, institutions, and ideas of European history.

Introduction

The four main themes of this course are answers to the question, "What makes Europe distinctive compared with other parts of the world?"

1. The Nation State. The idea of the State or sovereign authority takes on a new significance when it is attached to a nation or a people who have an idea of a common origin and identity. This idea was developed first and most powerfully in Europe.

2. Citizenship. When a nation is made up of citizens, they feel a greater commitment to the community.

3. The scientific method enables one to ask questions about the universe and the nature of human beings, and to obtain answers that work well in practice.

4. Developed Broadly Based Public Finance. The idea that government can mobilize the wealth of a whole people.

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Raymond P. Scheindlin's *A Short History of the Jewish People:
From Legendary Times to Modern Statehood*.

The Jews played a key role in European history.

• They generated some of the most powerful ideas: ethical monotheism, the
  Covenant, the Promised Land, the Ten Commandments, the Chosen
  People, Messianism.

• They took the lead in developing a modern European and international
  economy.

• They remained outsiders (for many nations and religions, the "Other"),
  regarded with suspicion, resentment, or even hatred. In the twentieth
  century, they became the victims of Europe's greatest crime: the Holocaust.

Jewish History

  For the purposes of this lecture, Jewish history begins when the Jews
approached the Red Sea somewhere between 1600 and 1300 BCE, escap-
ing from slavery in Egypt when the wind temporarily blew away the waters so
that they could cross. This was a sign that they were God's "chosen people."
This was confirmed during their years of wandering in the Sinai desert when
their leader, Moses, as he communicated it to his followers, concluded a
covenant with Yahweh under which Yahweh would award them a promised
land and make them a chosen people.

  The condition was the Ten Commandments. In the history of Europe, this
was the beginning of ethical monotheism. The Covenant was with the whole
people, not just Moses and the tribal leaders. Men, women, and children
were all considered part of the Covenant in a three-way agreement: God,
leader, people—each equally important.

  What kind of God was Yahweh? Yahweh was, in one sense, merely the
Israelites' tribal god. The function of a tribal god was to win battles for his tribe.
According to Moses, though, He was the universal God, creator of the universe.
His law was for all peoples, but nevertheless, He was prepared to treat the
Israelites as special and be bound by the terms of an agreement with them.

  The Twelve Tribes were the embryo of the first nation in European history
and also the first precursors of the global community. They were the bearers
of a universal morality, yet they also regarded relatively less important tribal
customs as crucial to their identity (things like circumcision, the dietary laws,
and the keeping of the Sabbath).

Conquering the Promised Land

  Land had been promised to the tribes of Israel in Canaan (roughly modern-

day Palestine), but they still had to conquer it, which was no easy prospect. The land was fertile—the land of "milk and honey"—and much fought over. It took them some two hundred years to conquer most of it, and they then had to defend it from jealous neighbors like the Philistines, a rich, trading, proto-Greek people who established themselves in city-states along the coast.

Like any people under threat, at this stage the Jews set up a more authoritarian system, a monarchy. They did so reluctantly, for monarchy was contrary to their traditions of tribal military democracy: heads of households meeting together to make decisions under a leader who served for military purposes only. It was only possible because the transfer was mediated by a prophet, Samuel.

Jewish Monarchy

Samuel believed the tribes needed to be united under a monarch if they were to drive the Philistines and other peoples out of their "promised land." He persuaded the tribes and anointed the first king, Saul (significantly from one of the smaller tribes), who proved a highly successful military leader. Under him the Twelve Tribes became a kingdom, and perhaps a nation.

He was succeeded by David, perhaps the most revered of the Israelite kings. He combined in his person the role of prophet and monarch. But David was also a highly capable military leader. He built a force of knights and professional soldiers loyal to him over and above the tribal levies. He took a census, probably for taxation and military conscription. He conquered the city of Jerusalem—convenient for a monarchy because it did not belong to any of the tribes—and he set up his court there. He brought to it the tabernacle (tent) containing the Ark (box) of the Covenant, the scroll containing the record of Moses' words.

David's successor, Solomon, went on to build a temple in Jerusalem as the center of national worship, with the tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant in the inner sanctum. During this time, the Jews developed the arts, science, and music, and wrote down their national history for the first time. This was in the first five books of the Old Testament, also known as the Torah—the Law.

Note the implications of having a monarchy, a court, a standing army, and a temple. The tribes were marginalized, with the adoption of a settled and sometimes urban way of life. Solomon replaced the tribal elders with his own appointed governors. The Jews traded much more with other peoples, and this meant socializing with them. Sometimes they even worshiped at their shrines (for example, to Baal, the Canaanite god of fertility). Solomon practiced religious tolerance and probably worshiped Baal himself. This was not observing the Covenant.

A settled, urban way of life also meant riches for an elite at court. Solomon's court even had a harem. The royal army could only be equipped by imposing heavy taxes. The building of palaces and the Temple also entailed forced labor, reminiscent of Egyptian slavery.

This situation stimulated the revival of prophecy as an oppositional institution. The prophets did not oppose monarchy as such, but insisted that monarchs rule in accordance with God's will and the Ten Commandments. They opposed depriving a man of his property or his freedom, thereby reducing him to helpless poverty so that he could not discharge his social and family obligations. And of course they denounced idolatry, the worship of false gods.

The first major prophet of this kind, Elijah, appeared in the reign of King Ahab, whose wife, Jezebel, was a worshiper of Baal. Elijah became popular during a long period of drought. It is related that he and the priests of Baal conducted a competition to see who could conjure up rain. Elijah was successful, and everyone took this as proof that his God was the one true God.

The prophets became especially important when the territory of Israel was conquered by the empire of the Assyrians, and many of them left Canaan to go into exile. This defeat was a real shock, because it showed that their God would not always win battles for them, which required a rethinking of their faith. The prophets interpreted these disasters as a punishment, the result of the people's sinful ways and their unfaithfulness to their God. Their message shifted the emphasis away from the idea of a God attached to a particular tribe, territory, or kingdom, toward the idea of a personal and community faith independent of land or political system. The most remarkable of the prophets, Isaiah, demanded that the people repent in the hope of warding off disaster. But he also had a vision of what might lie beyond disaster. According to him, the fall of Israel and Judah did not ultimately matter, because kingdoms were fleeting compared with the eternal relationship between God and His chosen people. He foretold that one day a messiah would come, a great leader who would testify to the power of God and save his people from oppression. At that stage, everyone would forgive one another; then God would forgive them and redeem them from captivity.

Through their faith in Isaiah's message, the Jewish people kept their identity and religion, even in exile. From the sixth century BCE, a majority of Jews lived outside the Promised Land, in the Diaspora. Imagine for a moment what

happens to a people without their own state, their own borders, their own political system—dependent on other people's governments and languages, forced to absorb other cultures and civilizations. They found the solution by gathering in their own special settlements or urban quarters (later known as ghettoes), forbidding intermarriage with other peoples, and focusing their national identity on

- Their sacred texts (above all the Torah, which was their history, law, and moral guide)
- The synagogue, a place where they could all meet to hear the Torah read and sing the psalms
- The ceremonies of community life: circumcision, Bar Mitzvah, weddings, funerals
- National celebrations: the Sabbath, the Passover, Pentecost (the giving of the Law), the Day of Atonement

The Jews remained mainly a people of the Diaspora, even though in 538 BCE the Emperor Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon and permitted the Jews to rebuild their Temple. Later on, Jews lived under Hellenic and Roman rule. Many Jews became thoroughly Hellenized or Romanized in their language, culture, and outlook. Many, however, stayed faithful to the Covenant, the Torah, and the synagogue.

The Fall of the Jewish Nation

In 66 CE, after the Romans expropriated the Temple gold, there was a general Jewish revolt. The Romans were expelled from Jerusalem. The first legion they sent to restore their authority was massacred in the mountains by Jewish forces. Eventually, in 70 CE, the Romans reconquered Jerusalem after a six-month siege, during which the defenders fought desperately to the last man. The Romans then burned down the Temple. The Jews staged a further desperate resistance on the broad mountaintop of Masada, which took years to reduce. Its thousand or so final defenders all committed suicide. All the Jews of Palestine had their property confiscated, and many of them were enslaved.

Conclusion

With the crushing of the Jewish revolt, the Jews became a people of the Diaspora until the twentieth century.

Questions and Essays

1. Why was the Covenant so important to the Jews?
2. What was the distinctive role of the prophets for the Jews?

Suggested Reading

Scheindlin, Raymond P. *A Short History of the Jewish People: From Legendary Times to Modern Statehood*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Other Books of Interest

De Lange, Nicholas, ed. *The Illustrated History of the Jewish People*. Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1997.

Johnson, Paul. *A History of the Jews*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1987.

Websites to Visit

1. Internet Jewish History Sourcebook at Fordham University. This is the recommended starting point for investigating the history of the Jewish people. The site contains hundreds of articles and links to other sites on the wide variety of topics included in Jewish history. — www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/jewishsbook.html

2. Jewish Virtual Library's "Timeline for the History of Judaism." The timeline has links to selected articles about different periods of Jewish history. — www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/timeline.html

3. Bahá'í Library Online featuring an unpublished article entitled "A History of Judaism from a Bahá'í Perspective" by Robert Stockman prepared for the Wilmette Institute. — www.bahai-library.com/unpubl.articles/judaism.bahai.html

LECTURE ONE

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**Lecture 2:
Jews and the Diaspora**

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Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Allan Levine's *Scattered Among the Peoples: The Jewish Diaspora in Twelve Portraits.*

How did the Jews cope with their new situation?

The Temple was finally lost. All Jews were now in the Diaspora, focusing their national and religious life on the synagogue. This situation lasted right up to the eighteenth century. Jews lived in many places—in the Middle

Detail from the Arch of Titus in Rome (erected 81 CE) depicting Jewish captives carrying the golden Menorah from the Second Temple destroyed by the Romans.

East and the Caucasus, in Khazaria (between the Volga, Caspian, and Black Seas, a khanate which for a time adopted the Jewish faith), in Spain (the Caliphate of Cordoba, eighth to eleventh century), in western Europe. Those in Spain, north Africa, and the Middle East are known as Sephardic Jews (strongly influenced by Arabic and Islamic culture), those in the rest of Europe as Ashkenazi Jews (strongly influenced by Christian culture).

In the synagogues, the experts on the Law and the sacred texts were known as rabbis. Their job was to know the Torah, the Old Testament, the Mishna (the oral tradition, law code, and everyday customs), and the Talmud (which began with commentaries on the Mishna and became a multivolume compendium of laws, tracts, commentaries, chronicles, and legends). The rabbi might come from any social origin, even a humble one: communities were prepared to finance promising young men to train for the rabbinate, which entailed long years of study, interpretation, and argument.

Life and faith in Jewish communities during these centuries were comparable with the Christian equivalent. But the differences are important:

• No central church organization like the Vatican, but rather a network of local, self-governing communities, each with its own synagogue and rabbi

• No pope or head of the church, only a general authority of the rabbis; no binding credo, but an authoritative set of laws and customs interpreted by the rabbis

• No monasteries, but holy law was strongly enforced in daily household and family life

Sometimes they interacted with the surrounding culture, as in Moorish Spain

(Maimonides, 1135 to 1204, wrote the nearest thing to a Jewish credo). In general, Jews got on better at this stage with Muslims than with Christians. More often they isolated themselves to maintain the purity of their faith and community life. From about the eleventh century, they often lived in ghettoes ("little towns" in Italian), a small town or city quarter, sometimes surrounded by walls, where only Jews were permitted to live.

From the late eleventh century onwards, the status of Jews deteriorated. Crusaders on their way to the Holy Land considered Jews to be enemies as much as Muslims, and on the way attacked Jewish quarters in the Rhineland. In 1275, Edward I issued a statute declaring usury illegal in England, and many Jews were imprisoned under it. In 1290, they were expelled from England altogether. In 1306, they were similarly expelled from much of France.

The Black Death (1348) made their situation even worse. Some Christians took the epidemic as a sign that they should no longer tolerate the "heresies" of the Jews. In many places, Jews were accused of deliberately spreading infection. Some of them confessed under torture, and thousands of Jews were burned at the stake.

In Spain, the centuries-long process of driving out the Moors (the Muslims) brought with it anti-Jewish pogroms, or heresy-hunting campaigns conducted by the Inquisition during which Jews were compelled either to convert to Christianity or leave the country. But there was ill-feeling even toward Jews who had converted: they were suspected of still being covert Jews—or perhaps there was already a racial as well as religious element here. In 1492, Jews were finally expelled from Spain.

In 1555, the Pope issued a bull requiring Jews to live in ghettoes, forbidding them from owning real estate, marrying Christians or employing them, and barring them from most occupations. These restrictions meant they tended to acquire skills and assume economic roles that elite members of the home community disdained. They became merchants, artisans, moneylenders, tax-collectors, stewards, and administrators. They were thus liable to persecution not only on grounds of heresy, but also because they violated the laws against usury.

In its early stages, the Reformation was just as damaging to the Jews. Early on, Martin Luther hoped that he might attract Jewish support against the papacy, but subsequently turned bitterly against them. He denounced Jews as "betrayers of Christ" and as bloodsuckers exploiting the poor as moneylenders.

It should be mentioned, though, that John Calvin's attitude to Jews was very positive. And the Puritans in England under Cromwell were the first regime to welcome Jews back as citizens—likewise the Dutch, so that by the late seventeenth century, the richest Jewish communities in the world were in London and Amsterdam. Under the English restoration monarchy, discrimination

John Calvin
(1509-1564)

against Jews was restored, but they suffered no worse than Catholics and Nonconformists.

Jews fled from France, Germany, and Spain (and some to Italy), but many finished up in Poland-Lithuania, at that time the most tolerant realm in Europe. Both the king and the landowners found their services extremely useful. Their arrival laid the basis for the large Jewish community living in small towns (*shtetls*) and in ghettoes of larger towns all over eastern Europe. There they spoke what had begun as a dialect of German, but developed its own syntax and absorbed Hebrew and Slavic words: Yiddish. They were allowed to set up their own local government councils, the *kehillah,* which would elect a committee of trustees to collect taxes for the Polish state and to maintain Jewish education and social welfare. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, they even had their own national representative assembly, a kind of Jewish parliament known as the Council of the Four Lands. At this time, Poland became the foremost center of Jewish culture and learning in Europe.

Here too, though, the Jews were eventually victimized in a national and religious revolution. The growth in the grain trade, source of much of Poland's wealth, led to the enserfment of the peasants and a lowering of their standard of living. The landowners were often absentees, enjoying life at one of Europe's royal courts. Their affairs were handled by stewards, many of whom were Jewish—as were the moneylenders to whom the peasants turned in difficulties. In 1648, the peasants rose under the leadership of Ukrainian Cossacks. Their rebellion was directed against the landlords and the Catholic Church, but their immediate target was the Jews, both as infidels and as exploiters. Whole Jewish communities were massacred.

How many Jews were killed in these pogroms is not known for certain, but the Jewish population of Poland fell by about a quarter from death and emigration. News of the massacres spread far and wide, provoking a new wave of messianic hopes. The idea for Jews of Messianic Coming is one that helped to sustain them through all of their misfortunes and which at times inspired them to extravagant hopes.

Jewish Emancipation

Despite the difficulties for the Jews in some parts of Europe, in other parts they were beginning to be welcomed by the sixteenth century. In England and the United Provinces, Jews were welcome because they were Europe's leading experts on finance and banking. Already in the late Middle Ages, Jewish merchants and bankers became indispensable to monarchs and aristocrats as sources of finance. From the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, monarchs needed to finance expensive armies (artillery, fortifications, large infantry). Many of them went to the Jews to borrow money and cautiously relaxed their country's restrictions by admitting Jews to their court.

In much of Europe, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and Napoleonic rule led to the emancipation of the Jews and the lifting of restrictions on them. Of course, this was welcome to the Jews, but the process generated its own dilemmas, for Jews had spent most of their history with the identity of being excluded from communities and developing their own much-smaller hermetic society.

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Emancipation for Jews was now often accompanied by the demand that they become fully "normal" citizens, without any special institutions of their own. Many Jews were afraid that if Jews could become like anyone else, they would cease to value the synagogue and the Jewish scriptures; they might even convert to Christianity. So-called Reform Jews began to downplay the distinctive elements in the Jewish tradition and, for example, stopped wearing special costumes, following the dietary law, and practicing prayers in Hebrew. They believed Judaism should become part of a worldwide movement toward greater enlightenment and scientific progress, while retaining its moral law and its belief in a single universal God—essentially the same God as the Christians'. In their own way, they wanted to return to the universal promise of the Jewish prophets.

This was known as the Haskalah, or Jewish Enlightenment, which played down the ritual and mystic elements in Judaism and instead taught that it was a rational and universal religion that had anticipated the tolerant humanism of the European Enlightenment.

There was also the opposite tendency among Jews: to reaffirm Jewish distinctiveness and to try to increase its appeal to ordinary Jews. One form this took was Chasidism. It began in the eighteenth century in Poland, inspired by a preacher, Baal Shem Tov ("the Master of the Good Name"). It denied that rabbinical learning was essential for piety and emphasized the devotional aspects of the faith, communal singing, and dancing. Some practiced rapturous prayer, shouting, and moving the body wildly to achieve states of ecstasy. Their leaders, the tsaddikim, the "righteous ones," were said to have within them special sparks from heaven that gave them greater insights than rabbis and enabled them to intercede directly with God. During the nineteenth century, the movement became more sober and is now little more than an ultraconservative branch of Judaism.

Clockwise from top: Russian Jewish orphans, Turkish Jewish chair caners, a group of Polish Jewish children, and three Middle-Eastern Shephardic men

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The emancipation of the Jews did enable them to play a leading role in economic, intellectual, and cultural life in many nineteenth- and twentieth-century countries. Some of the great figures of this time include Heine, Marx, Mahler, Freud, Trotsky, and Einstein. They were mostly politically or intellectually radical, partly perhaps because of the Jewish tradition of popular messianism, but partly because throughout Europe the Jews still suffered from social snobbery and religious prejudice, even where the laws no longer oppressed them.

The World Financiers and the Rothschilds

In the nineteenth century, Jews played a leading role in international finance. This was a period when the expenses of European states were high, mainly for war needs, but banks and capital markets were poorly developed and parliaments usually unwilling to grant high taxes. So they would issue bonds (that is, raise loans from people willing to buy them as a source of income). Jewish banks were better placed than anyone else to meet this need, and none more so than the house of Rothschild.

The French occupation of Frankfurt in 1792 speeded the emancipation of the Jews there and also gave them the opportunity to make money by taking on contracts to supply armies. The Rothschilds proved to be better at this than anyone else.

For much of the nineteenth century, they were the leading suppliers of money to the royal houses of Europe and of credit for new industrial projects, notably the railways. Their personal connections were amazingly widespread, including most of the European heads of state and finance ministers. Their information network was faster and more accurate than any other, giving them a vital edge over competitors.

So for a time they fulfilled the roles of a (rationed) international news agency and international money market. People trusted the Rothschilds with their money because of personal acquaintance, but also because they knew them to be honest, systematic, and well informed. But obviously they aroused much hostility too: in France, the Goncourts called them "the pariah kings of Europe," and Napoleon III set up the Crédit Mobilier in the 1850s specifically to free himself from the need to go to them and in order to establish a proper French system of credit.

Meyer Anselm Rothschild
(1743-1812)

Unlike many other Jewish bankers and merchants, the Rothschilds remained with the Jewish faith. They visited the synagogue regularly and did not turn to reform Judaism or Christianity. They supported Jewish charities. The brothers and their successors pursued a rigid policy of conserving the family wealth by inheritance and consulted each other regularly. On the other hand, female members of the family and sons-in-law were not allowed even to see the accounts. Later generations sought royal honors, bought splendid country houses, took part in hunting, and generally tried to become part of the aristocracy, especially in England. It is against this background that the emergence of the modern form of anti-Semitism can be seen.

Questions and Essays

1. How did Jews sustain their sense of community in the Diaspora?
2. Why were so many Christians anti-Semetic during and after the Middle Ages?

Suggested Reading

Levine, Allan. *Scattered Among the Peoples: The Jewish Diaspora in Twelve Portraits*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2004.

Other Books of Interest

Cohen, Naomi Wiener. *Jacob H. Schiff: A Study in American Jewish Leadership*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England and Brandeis University Press, 1999.

Feiner, Shmuel. *The Jewish Enlightenment*. Trans. Chaya Naor. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.

Ferguson, Niall. *The House of Rothschild: Money's Prophets, 1798-1848*. New York: Penguin Books, 1999.

Ferguson, Niall. *The House of Rothschild: The World's Banker 1849-1998*. New York: Penguin Books, 1999.

Ross, James R. *Fragile Branches: Travels Through the Jewish Diaspora*. New York: Penguin Putnam, Inc., 2000.

Websites to Visit

Internet Jewish History Sourcebook at Fordham University. The sections applicable to this lecture are "Emergence of Judaism," "The Jewish Middle Ages," and "Jewish Life Since the Enlightenment." — www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/jewishsbook.html#The%20Emergence%20of%20Judaism

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read *The Oxford History of Greece and the Hellenistic World* by John Boardman, Jasper Griffin, and Oswyn Murray.

By the middle of the eighth century BCE, the inhabitants of the Greek islands had become quite prosperous through trade and cultivation of the land, and they were beginning to colonize not only the Aegean, but also much of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. They remained overwhelmingly an agrarian people, and, increasingly, their economic well-being depended on slavery. Slaves were usually either former farmers who had fallen into debt, and thus bondage, or they were the captives of warfare.

It can be argued that the growth of slavery was what made Greeks peculiarly conscious of the value of freedom. They fought to avoid being enslaved themselves, and they arranged their political institutions to remain free. Greeks tended to look down on the subjects of Eastern empires as "barbarians" and as slaves oppressed by tyrannical rulers who, in effect, were no better than slave-masters.

There was little threat from Eastern empires at this time, so Greek cities could pursue their rivalries unhindered. They had a sense of common identity based on use of the Greek language, participation in the Olympic Games (which began in 776 BC), and common hostility to the "barbarian" peoples and the "tyrannical" empires farther east.

Another unifying factor was the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi, which enjoyed a high reputation among most Greeks. Apollo was the son of Zeus, whose will he made known. Greeks would often come from their cities to consult the Delphic Oracle before making major political decisions, making laws, founding new colonies, or going to war.

Greek Style of Fighting

There was also relatively little land on the Aegean islands on which horses could be pastured, so the Greeks developed a style of campaigning based entirely on infantry. They fought in phalanx formation (that is, ranked shoulder to shoulder in a compact mass). Each soldier wore a bronze helmet and held a convex shield in his left hand and an iron-tipped spear in his right. These soldiers were known as *hoplites*, from the term "*hoplon*," or shield. Actual combat took the form of each phalanx advancing at a clumsy run straight up to the other and trying to break through. Members of the phalanx that broke first

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Macedonian Troops in Formation

The formation of a solid body of *hoplites* was known as a phalanx among the Greeks and was brought to perfection by Alexander of Macedon.

were extremely vulnerable, because they could be speared from their uncovered rear.

Sparta

Sparta was a land-locked city on a plain in the middle of the Peloponnese. All young male citizens were trained and hardened for the military life from an early age, while conquered slaves, or *helots*, performed agricultural and other kinds of manual labor. The soldiers lived separate from the rest of society in a warrior assembly, or *syssition* (communal mess), where they were frugally fed, ferociously disciplined, and kept in constant training through martial games and communal exercise. There was a strong emphasis on male bonding, which included the taking of male lovers. They were taught to read and write, but serious study was discouraged. However, they were expected to learn poetry and music.

Land was divided equally, so that no family should be rich or poor (at least in theory), while all luxury trades were forbidden. Money was iron, so that it had no value outside Sparta and there would be little trade with other cities. Marriage was strictly for procreation, and, if a man was found to be sterile, it was normal for a relative to "service" his wife so that she could have children. A male baby belonged to the community. If it was sickly, it was exposed on a mountainside till it died; if healthy, it was awarded a plot of land for its upkeep, and, as soon as it was old enough, it was taken away for military training and communal life in the mess.

Spartan boys in training

Athens

Athens's citizens numbered 30,000 to 45,000. Because the army required the enthusiastic participation of people of modest wealth, the economic system could not allow many to fall into debt—and hence slavery—and the political system had to give them some say in matters of war and peace. Solon, who came to power in 594, cancelled all existing land debts, and those bonded for debt were emancipated. He divided the citizens into four categories by their annual income as measured in grain, olive oil, and wine. Those in the top category, the "500-bushel men," could be military commanders; those in the second could be cavalrymen (rather few of those); those in the third were the *hoplites* and those in the fourth were auxiliary troops and other common soldiers. All four categories were entitled to attend the Assembly (*ecclesia*), which was the sovereign body in the *polis*.

At this stage, however, the notion of membership in a *polis* (republic, city-state) was still complicated by the existence of tribes (*phylai*) and, within them, *phratries*: military brotherhoods based on clans. These were strong kinship networks that might claim the primary loyalty of any of their members. Each *phratry* had its own god and its own festival day. Each had a chief who presided at its assemblies and chaired its court.

Religious Ritual

The identity of the city-states was reinforced by religious ritual. Each city was associated with a particular god or goddess, whose worship brought the citizens together on festival days and public occasions, before battles, or at times of crucial decision-making. The goddess Athena was regularly woshiped in Athens: she was the protectress of cities in general (as opposed to the countryside), the goddess of war, handicrafts, and practical reason. She was usually portrayed wearing armor and a helmet and carrying a spear and lance. The Parthenon was erected on the Acropolis as her temple.

Athena, goddess of Athens, holding the head of Zeus

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The Tragic Form

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Tragedy grew out of the choral singing at the sacrifice of a goat to the god Dionysus. The occasion gradually came to include a narrative element: masked actors would perform the lives of heroes while the chorus sustained the narrative and made comments. This became more elaborate and came to include the clash of ideas, beliefs, and personalities, and eventually the concept of a great hero undone by the gods exploiting his own weaknesses.

Tragedy dramatized the conflicts and anxieties that beset Athenian citizens at a time when they were renouncing old authoritarian political arrangements (their tribes and ancestors) and also challenging mighty

empires. The first tragedies date from the 470s and 460s, about the time that the aristocratic Council of Areopagus was finally abolished and the powers of the Assembly and Council of 500 correspondingly increased.

The Persian War

The Persian Empire was one of the largest and most powerful in history and stretched across the Middle East as far as northern India. The Ionians, who were Greeks living under Persian rule on the eastern side of the Aegean, had rebelled against the empire. Persian king Darius sent a punitive expedition that was defeated at the Battle of Marathon (490). Thereupon his son Xerxes, determined not to be defied again, assembled a huge army and navy to invade and conquer the heartland of Greece. He made good progress at first, and the Athenians hastily put together an alliance of city-states. They also made the crucial decision to build a large navy, financed by the proceeds of the silver mines at Laureion and manned by 40,000 oarsmen.

The turning point of the war came when the Athenians evacuated their city and challenged the Persians on the sea. They fled, taking their city gods and sacred objects with them, and resettled on the Peloponnese to the south and west. The Persians overcame the ferocious resistance of quite a small Greek detachment at the pass of Thermopylae (480), conquered Athens, destroyed it, and burnt the Acropolis. However, the newly built Athenian navy proved effective, and under its commander, Themistocles, it defeated the Persian navy in the bay of Salamis, not far from Athens. The Greek confederate army was able to take on and defeat the Persian army without its naval support at the battle of Plataea in 479.

For a mere city-state, or even a confederation of them, to overcome the main army and navy of a great empire was unprecedented. The Greeks put an end to Persian expansion and ensured that Greek civilization would flourish in peace for some time to come. The Athenians returned to their city, rebuilt the Acropolis, restored their gods, and then rebuilt the city in an even grander style than before. Their democracy had to be reformed too: the oarsmen of the *triremes* came from an even more humble social background than the *hoplites*, and it was necessary to draw them too into the assembly.

The Athenian system was highly unusual, but it was widely imitated in the Greek world. The Greek city-states prided themselves on their *politeia* as something that distinguished them from their "barbaric" eastern neighbors. There was a price to be paid for this intense individuality and democracy, however: each *polis* was extremely proud of its own rights and territories, and war between the city-states was therefore endemic.

The battle of Plataea, 479 BCE

This system meant that all or at least most citizens recognized that there was such a thing as the "common interest" or "common cause" (in Latin: *res publica*) to which, at least in a crisis, it made sense to subordinate personal or family concerns. That in turn implied that certain norms and customs had universal validity, regardless of one's provenance, wealth, or social status.

This balance of participation, obligation, and rights constituted the essence of citizenship, together with the feeling that there was a common interest that imposed its obligations on everyone. However, citizenship was narrowly distributed. Women, slaves, immigrants, minors, and most colonists had no citizenship. Those who did take their place among the citizens of Athens felt that much was at stake and that participation in the *politeia* was a matter of pride and solidarity. Devotion to the common cause was central to the Greek idea of citizenship.

The Pelloponesian Wars

The anti-Persian alliance did not long survive the great victory over Persia. Athens set up a naval confederacy, the Delian League, consisting of most city-states, to provide against a revival of the Persian danger, and introduced its coinage, its weights and measures, and its courts into the other cities. In other words, it was taking the first steps toward setting up a Greek "super-city-state." Eventually, some of the other cities decided to defend their independence. The league fell apart and the rebels, led by Sparta and including Corinth, Thebes, and the major colony of Syracuse in Sicily, attacked Athens. In the 450s and again from 431 to the end of the fifth century, the Greek city-states fought each other in the Peloponnesian wars. Athens was defeated, though only after a long and ferocious war. Spartan domination did not last long either, as most Greeks found it too oppressive. The Greek city-states were too fiercely proud of their independence to work together for long.

Some of them tried to defend their independence by enlisting Persian help, which of course was a dangerous ploy, and it brought Greek and Persian culture closer together. Ultimately, however, the greatest threat came from an unexpected quarter. The kingdom of Macedonia was a relatively wild and primitive region on the border of the Greek *ecumene*, which many considered not properly Greek at all. There Philip (who came to the throne in 359 BCE) created an effective army, using cavalry and siege artillery (catapults) as well as infantry. He crushed a confederate Greek army at Cheronaea in 338 and then formed a new Greek league under his own leadership.

This league tried to banish the Persian danger once and for all in a campaign led by Philip's son, Alexander. In the course of four years (334-331), the Greek-Macedonian army defeated the Persians decisively, occupied and destroyed their capital, Persepolis, and killed the emperor, Darius. Alexander was proclaimed king of Asia and successor to Darius. In just over a decade, he created an empire that stretched from the Black Sea to southern Egypt, and from Sicily to northern India.

The Effects of Alexander's Rule

Under Alexander's leadership, Greek and Persian culture began to fuse. Alexander deliberately created an imperial army and bureaucracy derived

from both peoples. He even required 10,000 Greek officers to marry Persian women. He adopted Persian court ceremonies and elements of Persian religion. The religious innovations were important, for the Persian religion was a kind of ethical monotheism. In Zoroastrianism, God is good and will ultimately triumph, but for the time being is engaged in a colossal battle with evil, and human beings are at the center of the battlefield. On the whole, good is identified with spirit, love, and life, and evil with matter, death, and the passions. Humans must cultivate the spiritual life through prayer and ritual. There was a tendency in Persian religion toward dualism—the belief that two equally matched deities, one good and one evil, are engaged in an endless war with one another.

In Alexander's empire, Greek religion moved toward monotheism, though the process had started earlier, from the time of Socrates. But the culture of Alexander's empire was largely Greek: Greek culture, language, and learning spread over the whole empire. The greatest repository of Greek learning, for example, was in Egypt, in a library in the city that bore Alexander's name: Alexandria.

This mixture of Greek and Persian politics, religion, and culture is called Hellenism. By 280 BCE, Alexander's empire had broken into a number of Hellenic kingdoms in Macedonia/Greece, Egypt (Ptolemaic), Syria, and Persia (Seleucid). These Hellenic kingdoms often nominally retained the institutions of the Greek city-state, even under what were undoubtedly absolute monarchies. The next challenge and the next great empire came not from the east, but from the west: Rome.

Questions and Essays

1. What kind of institutions made citizenship effective in ancient Greece?
2. How democratic was a Greek city-state?

Suggested Reading

Boardman, John, Jasper Griffin, and Oswyn Murray. *The Oxford History of Greece and the Hellenistic World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Other Books of Interest

Fine, John V.A. *The Ancient Greeks: A Critical History*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985.

Fox, Robin Lane. *Alexander the Great*. New York: Penguin, 2004.

Websites to Visit

1. The Perseus Digital Library at Tufts University, containing texts by Greek and Roman authors, secondary sources, and museum photography on both Greek and Roman subjects. — www.perseus.tufts.edu/cache/perscoll_Greco-Roman.html
2. Holy Cross College (Classics Department) website article entitled "The Hoplite Experience." — www.holycross.edu/departments/classics/dawhite
3. Washington State University website with a short article by Richard Hooker on Sparta. — www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/GREECE/SPARTA.HTM
4. Washington State University website with a short article by Richard Hooker on Athens. — www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/GREECE/ATHENS.HTM
5. Good general overview of Alexander the Great by Professor E.L. Skip Knox at Boise State University. — www.history.boisestate.edu/westciv/alexander/

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy,* edited by A.A. Long.

The Greeks firmly believed that participation in civic affairs had the effect of enlarging and educating men's characters and of releasing their innermost potential. As Aristotle put it, "man is a political animal," hence in some way stunted or unfulfilled if unable to play a full political role.

Certainly, the Greeks advanced all branches of science, speculation, and creative activity to such an extent that their achievements became models for almost all later European civilizations.

The Beginnings of Systematic Enquiry

The Greeks produced the first people we recognize as serious scientists and philosophers (the Greeks made no distinction between science and philosophy). They believed that certain regularities existed in nature and that the human mind, by exercising its innate faculties, could comprehend them and then turn them to good use.

Pythagoras

Pythagoras is supposed to have founded a philosophical school and religious brotherhood on the island of Samos about 525 BCE. His fundamental intuition was that reality, including the human soul, was mathematical and musical in nature. Through philosophy—love of wisdom, the thirst for knowledge and

Frescoes of Greek musicians

understanding—the soul could purify itself and seek union with the divine. Pythagoras seems to have claimed a semidivine status associated with Apollo. The members of his religious brotherhood were required to practice an ascetic and pious way of life and to share property. Their aim was the purification of the soul; like Buddhists, they believed this could not be accomplished in the course of one lifetime.

Pythagoras was the first thinker to elucidate the numerical basis of music by measuring the vibrations that generate pitch: harmonies could then be

expressed as arithmetical proportions. He believed that the universe was constructed on the same principles. As developed by later thinkers, especially Ptolemy, this idea led to the notion of the "harmony of the spheres": The universe has a harmonious and rational structure that can be both intellectually understood and emotionally felt.

Hippocrates and Medicine

It is not certain that Hippocrates actually existed: he may represent an amalgam of various doctors or healers. But the time of his reputed life, the second half of the fifth century BCE, was the time when medicine ceased to be a branch of magic or divination and became more like a science. Hippocrates believed that the human body was an organism that could be understood by the application of observation and reason. Aristotle and his followers later built upon this work. Hippocrates carefully noted too the effect of diet, climate, and occupation on disease—and tried, where possible, to use natural therapeutic treatments.

His most famous legacy is the Hippocratic Oath, which binds doctors to dedicate themselves to the healing and well-being of their patients, to the preservation of life, and to absolute confidentiality about the affairs of patients during therapy. Doctors are also bound by it to reveal their knowledge free of charge to those who have taken an equivalent oath.

The First Historians: Herodotus and Thucydides (Fifth Century BCE)

Most previous histories had been either annals—lists of events—or *panegyrics* designed to glorify some ruler or dynasty. The work of Herodotus and Thucydides, by contrast, rested on the assumption that general principles governing human society could be under-

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Oath of Hippocrates

I swear by Apollo the healer, by Aesculapius, by Hygeia (health) and all the powers of healing, and call to witness all the gods and goddesses that I may keep this Oath, and promise to the best of my ability and judgment:

I will pay the same respect to my master in the science (arts) as I do to my parents, and share my life with him and pay all my debts to him. I will regard his sons as my brothers and teach them the science, if they desire to learn it, without fee or contract. I will hand on precepts, lectures, and all other learning to my sons, to those of my master, and to those pupils duly apprenticed and sworn, and to none other.

I will use my power to help the sick to the best of my ability and judgment; I will abstain from harming or wrongdoing any man by it.

I will not give a fatal draught (drugs) to anyone if I am asked, nor will I suggest any such thing. Neither will I give a woman means to procure an abortion.

I will be chaste and religious in my life and in my practice.

I will not cut, even for the stone, but I will leave such procedures to the practitioners of that craft.

Whenever I go into a house, I will go to help the sick, and never with the intention of doing harm or injury. I will not abuse my position to indulge in sexual contacts with the bodies of women or of men, whether they be freemen or slaves.

Whatever I see or hear, professionally or privately, which ought not to be divulged, I will keep secret and tell no one.

If, therefore, I observe this Oath and do not violate it, may I prosper both in my life and in my profession, earning good repute among all men for all time. If I transgress and forswear this Oath, may my lot be otherwise.

From *Hippocratic Writings,* translated by J. Chadwick and W.N. Mann, Penguin Books, 1950.

stood through rational enquiry. This predisposition went along with a critical attitude toward sources (that is, the realization that documents and artifacts reflect the prejudices and presuppositions of those who made or composed them).

Herodotus

The main subject of Herodotus was the series of wars against the Persians. He had traveled widely in the Persian Empire and had encountered many diverse peoples and customs. These experiences gave him a certain relativism, the realization that customs, laws, and religious beliefs varied and one should not condemn one from the viewpoint of another. His work, therefore, does not reflect the contrast most Greeks made between themselves and "barbarians." He was impressed by the Persian leaders' ability to weld unity in their army, something he felt the Greeks were incapable of doing. All the same, he attributed the Greeks' success in the Persian wars to the fact that they were free men and not slaves.

Thucydides

Thucydides was one generation younger, and his theme is the Peloponnesian Wars, the wars between the Greek city-states of the 420s in which he was himself a commander. He failed to prevent the Spartan capture of an important city, and so was recalled, put on trial, and exiled. This gave him the opportunity for reflection on his experiences and also to travel in Sparta and pick up the other side of the story. Unfortunately, he did not long survive the end of the wars, so his history is incomplete, breaking off in mid-paragraph.

His aims were similar to those of Hippocrates: to describe the various ways war affects human beings and leads to the degradation of society. In a way, he was trying to "diagnose" the strengths and weaknesses of various communities and observe and describe the ways they changed under pressure of war.

Herodotus and Thucydides were really the first social scientists as well as the first historians. They shared the idea of understanding societies as a whole and deducing principles about the way societies worked.

Socrates and Plato

Socrates served as a *hoplite* during the Peloponnesian War. Afterwards, though widely recognized as a major thinker and teacher, he refused to serve in politics, because to do so would require him to compromise his fundamental moral principles.

There is a distant parallel between Socrates and Moses. They both represent a turn away from multiple, amoral gods to a single, ethical god—though the Greeks, unlike the Jews, rejected the revelation. In 399, Socrates was indicted for "corrupting the young" and for "neglect of the gods whom the city worships and the practice of religious novelties." He was found guilty and condemned to death. There was a month's delay before the sentence could be carried out. During this time, Socrates remained in prison, receiving his friends and communicating his thoughts on fundamental philosophical and

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1 - HERODOTUS
2 - THUCYDIDES
3 - SOCRATES
4 - PLATO
5 - ARISTOTLE

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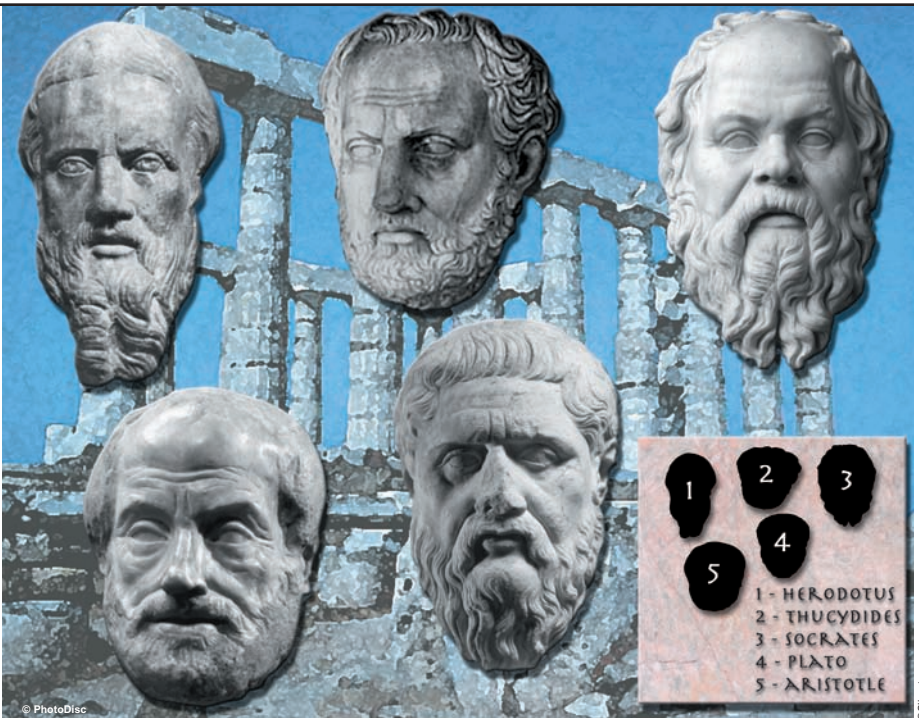
moral issues. These were written down and later taken up by Plato, together with accounts of his earlier life and conversations.

The Socratic Method

 Socrates said that the only respect in which he was wiser than other men was that he was aware of his own ignorance. He was leading people to think beyond what we can ascertain through reason to the essential fundamentals that we know to be true, even if we cannot prove them. Socrates' principal teaching was concerned with the right ordering of human lives, about "virtue." He believed that most individuals sought short-term gratification in possessions, power, or the pleasures of the body. The individual soul, he believed, is immortal; it comes from God; it is that which enables human beings to discern beauty and to live in harmony and solidarity with others. He regarded the worship of local gods as necessary to strengthen human solidarity and patriotism, but he denied that one could attribute absolute significance to any local deity.

 He was an opponent of Athenian democracy, believing that politics should be conducted by those who were expert in politics and by good people, those who could "tend" the souls of their fellow citizens and make them as virtuous and harmonious as possible. He put this case in a famous dialogue with Protagoras, who expounded the contrary argument, that politics is not an expert profession but the necessary business of every citizen.

Plato

Plato admired Socrates and made it his mission to expound his thinking. He was born in 428 BCE, the son of one of the most distinguished families in Athens. At one stage, he contemplated entering politics on the antidemocratic side, but soon became disillusioned, like Socrates, with the limited personalities and aims of most politicians.

His greatest contribution to the public life of Athens was the foundation of the Academy in about 387 BCE. The aim was to bring together thinkers, philosophers, and scientists for research, public lectures, and the exchange of ideas.

In most of his writings, Plato adopts the form of the Socratic dialogue, which often makes it difficult to discern his own views. Like Socrates, he likes to play with ideas, balancing assertions with counterassertions and weighing one against the other. Like Socrates, he believed the individual soul to be immortal and that human beings are indissolubly involved with something greater than themselves to which they can gain access through reason and by cultivating virtue. Plato believed that beyond the world of appearances is one of form, of ideals, the ultimate reality that gives validity to our limited and partial world. Plato posited that there exists in a higher reality an absolute truth. Plato claimed that philosophy allowed man to leave the "cave" of reflected reality and enter into the "sunlight" of a real reality.

With regard to politics, Plato was antidemocratic. He believed that the best political leader was the man who has perfected himself. He called this the "philosopher king." He believed the orders of society reflected the tri-part divisions of the human soul: (1) the statesman (reason); (2) the army (will); and (3) the majority (appetite).

Aristotle

Aristotle, by contrast, was much more the kind of thinker we would recognize as a scientist. He was more empirical in his reasoning, coming to inductive conclusions based on a more "visible" reality of the world around him.

He was born in 384 BCE. His father was court physician to the king of Macedonia, grandfather of Alexander the Great. He studied for many years at Plato's Academy before becoming a tutor to Alexander the Great. Returning to Athens after his time in Macedonia, he set up the Lyceum as a kind of rival to Plato's Academy. It laid greater importance on empirical research in subjects such as biology and medicine and in the training of younger people.

Where Aristotle differed most markedly from Plato was in his understanding of the forms. He considered them not realities in a higher world but rather devices of classification that enable us to use language properly. The job of science is to explore and describe those things that objects have in common.

Aristotle classified objects in terms of their four basic constituents: air, fire, water, and earth. He also classified things in terms of their *telos*, or their essence, toward which they "tend" by their very nature. For example, he taught that planets move in circles around the Earth because that is their nature. Therefore, he taught, God is the ultimate cause that set all things in motion and gives them their nature.

In politics, he believed that man was a political animal, and that his nature is best fulfilled through participating in the city-state. However, he was not dogmatic about which political setup was best. He thought also that democracy was capable of being abused. Much of his work in politics was based on description and classification of the political forms.

Many of his works were lost in the fire of the Alexandria library, but those that survived constitute the foundation of Western learning and remain the basis for modern science. Many of the terms we still use today were originally coined by Aristotle: form, essence, substance, energy, and cause.

Stoicism

Stoicism takes elements of Socrates' and Plato's teaching and develops them into a somewhat different philosophy of life. The fundamental belief of Stoics was that the universe could be understood and that it was accessible to reason. The world was basically material, so they were more inclined to pay attention to surface realities. The task of human beings was to strive to know themselves and the cosmos and to order their behavior according to this knowledge of the world. This constituted virtue. In particular, it was the duty of human beings not to give way to their passions, but to ensure that their lives were regulated by reason and understanding.

Stoics viewed the political world as a kind of cosmos to which the citizen has the obligation of loyalty. They believed it was the duty of citizens to take an active part in their city's affairs and that best of all would be a universal city-state in which all people, as well as women, would be equal. The Stoics were the first people to raise the idea of citizenship to a universal level.

Questions and Essays

1. Can we talk of the ancient Greeks as being the first scientists?

2. Compare and contrast Plato's and Aristotle's approach to natural phenomena.

Suggested Reading

Long, A.A., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Other Books of Interest

Adler, Mortimer J. *Aristotle for Everybody: Difficult Thought Made Easy*. New York: Touchstone Books (Simon & Schuster), 1997.

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Websites to Visit

1. The Internet Classics Archive by Daniel C. Stevenson. "The Histories of Herodotus" by Herodotus, translated by George Rawlinson. — www.classics.mit.edu/Herodotus/history.html

2. Technology Museum of Thessaloniki (Greece). This section is on ancient Greek scientists listed by category and name. — www.tmth.edu.gr/en/aet/12.html

3. Internet Ancient History Sourcebook at Fordham University. This section is on Greece. — www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/asbook07.html

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read John E. Stambaugh's *The Ancient Roman City.*

Before Rome became an empire, it spent many centuries as a republican city-state much like the cities of Greece. In fact, even the empire was in theory based on the principles of the city-state, which stated that every citizen was entitled to participate in the running of the city, the law applies to every citizen, and no one citizen should have too much power for too long.

Rome began as a coastal city-state on the plains of central Italy on the estuary of the Tiber river. According to the poet Virgil, writing at the start of the reign of Emperor Augustus, Rome was founded by Aeneas, one of the defeated leaders of the city of Troy. Commanded by his cousin Hector to flee the city and found a new one overseas, Aeneas gathered his followers and took the Trojan city gods with him. Virgil thus attributed to Rome the same origins as Greece, but from the opposite side of the great battle. And Virgil prophesied that Rome was to have quite a different destiny from Greece: not to fall apart into squabbling city-states, but to create a great empire of peace in which art and a civilized life would flourish.

Rome began as a tribal system with an assembly attended by the tribal leaders and became an unusually successful city-state—partly because of its situation on a fertile plain near a great river mouth. Its location also enabled it to develop a more powerful cavalry than the Greeks: there was much more room to pasture and train horses. The Roman army was much larger and more versatile than that of any Greek city. Its basic unit, the legion, was much larger than the phalanx: it consisted of up to 5,000 heavy infantry, assisted by cavalry and light infantry for sudden rapid assaults. It could be divided into cohorts, each of which consisted of five or six "centuries" of 100 men. These could be concentrated in an overwhelming offensive, or dispersed for lighter tasks.
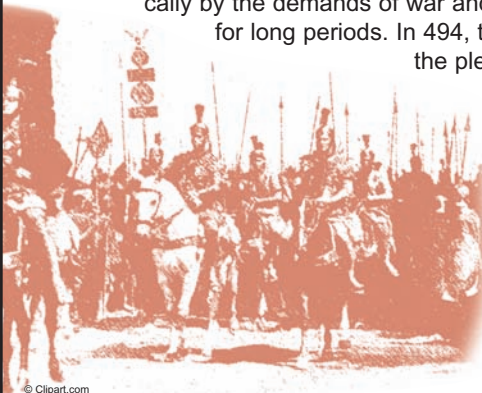
It wasn't only military success that distinguished Rome. As it expanded its territory, Rome treated defeated enemies with generosity, offering them a kind of second-category Roman citizenship: they could not vote in the Roman assembly, but they had full protection of the law and the right to marry and conclude contracts with Roman citizens. Each conquered city was allowed to retain its own institutions under Roman overlordship. In this way, by the mid-third century BCE, Rome had built up a strong confederation of cities known as the Latin League.

By the third century BCE, Rome was in some ways more like a nation than a city-state: a patrician nation of cultured and propertied citizens living in various cities but united by "Romanitas," which meant use of the Latin language, piety toward Roman gods, going to the public baths, attending triumphal ceremonies, and serving in the Roman army.

Compared with Athens, Rome had a relatively oligarchic constitution and citizenship. The Senate (originated from the tribal assembly) consisted of members of ancient families and of former office-holders who defended its power and privileges jealously.

In the army, the infantry were mainly small farmers, and their importance meant that they also had to be properly represented in the political system. This was achieved by dividing power between the elites and the masses, or the patricians and plebeians. The plebeians came from the class of smallholders. This division did not arise without conflict. During the fifth century, it was becoming apparent that many smallholders were being ruined economically by the demands of war and by being absent from their farms for long periods. In 494, there was a plebeian revolt when the plebs refused to serve in the army and instead marched across to a site on the other side of the river Tiber, threatening to set up a rival city there. A compromise was reached, as a result of which the plebs won the right to appoint officials to represent their interests before the Senate. These officials were known as tribunes. They also had the right to take part in the appointment of consuls, the two chief executive officers of the Senate, and to veto the decisions of lower magistrates.

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Also as a result of plebeian discontent, the College of Priests, who had dispensed the laws—rather like the oracle at Delphi—agreed to have basic laws inscribed on twelve stone tablets, displayed in the Forum. These laws concerned matters such as property, inheritance, debt, family affairs, and the main principles of criminal law. Inscription in stone meant that (1) law was stable and permanent, the same for everyone, and not alterable at the whim of powerful people, and (2) it was publicly known, not secret, and could be consulted at any time.

Even more than the Greeks, the Romans developed law into a science. The import of Stoicism from Hellenic lands suggested that law was an absolute value underlying all the transactions of society and that it had a basic principle: equity, or fairness. Another name the Romans and the Stoics gave for this was natural law, the law governing both the universe and human societies.

The Roman republic aimed at a balance between the wealthy and the poor, the elites and the mass of citizens. It also aimed at preventing too much power from being concentrated in the hands of any one person or family. Each year, the Assemblies of Citizens, patrician and plebeian, elected consuls, or chief magistrates. To prevent either of them from becoming dominant, each had a veto on the other's decisions. The Romans valued these "checks and balances" as a way of ensuring that no one could become a tyrant.

In any case, Roman society had one feature that ensured that things would

get done: patronage. A wealthy or power-ful family would take on clients, who would support its interests in return for protection and financial help. The homes of Roman citizens contained a large atrium, or open public area, partly because so much of their life was lived in public.

One peculiarity of Roman family life: the authority of the father was absolute and persisted even after his sons had married and set up their own homes or businesses. On the other hand, after the father's death, his property was divided equally among all his heirs, including the widow and daugh-ters. Women were respected and had a secure status as subsidiary citizens.

This was the society that over three cen-turies conquered and incorporated the other city-states of Italy, then achieved the extraordinary feat of overcoming the great

A fresco depicting Roman family life

Phoenician city-state of Carthage. Situated on the other side of the Mediterranean, Carthage had an extensive commercial empire in north Africa and Spain—and also in Sicily, at that time a large and fertile island. In a series of wars between the mid-third and mid-second centuries BCE, Rome succeeded not only in seizing Sicily, but also in eventually conquering Carthage. In defeating Carthage, Rome forwent its usual custom of treating enemies generously. They destroyed the city and either slaughtered its inhabitants or sold them into slavery. The conquered province of Spain was also a valuable acquisition. During the same period, Rome was being ever more drawn into the conflicts of the Hellenic kingdoms, and acquired client states and subject territories in western Asia. By the second century BCE, it was already a large and diverse empire.

The "poor bloody infantry" were generally not favored by war. While they were away on campaign, they were unable to tend their holdings or defend them against robbers or creditors. On return, they might discover that they had been expropriated and their families evicted. Then they would drift off to the capital city to join the proletariat there, the poverty-stricken thousands doing odd service or artisan jobs when they could. Because the landless were not accepted as recruits in the army, their condition also threatened Rome's long-term ability to defend its empire.

In the 130s and 120s, two tribunes, Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, tried to alleviate the crisis by imitating Solon and proposing the cancellation of debts, the limitation of the amount any individual could own, and the allocation of land from the *ager publicus* to landless soldiers and veterans. Unlike in Athens, however, the Senate rejected all these measures and also refused to countenance any kind of land tax. Tiberius responded by taking his proposal to the Assembly of Plebs and getting it supported there. Then he tried to pro-long his term of office by seeking an unprecedented second term to force his
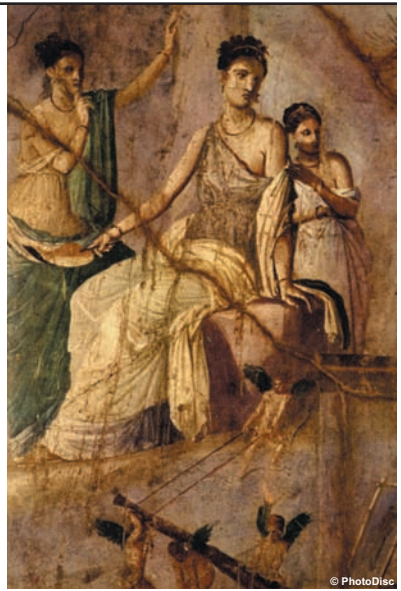
reforms through. In the course of the election campaign, he was killed in an armed skirmish.

His younger brother Gaius took up the campaign and suggested the creation of colonies in conquered territories where veteran soldiers could be settled. He also wanted to offer citizenship to broader categories of people, so that there would always be ready recruits for the army. The Senate resisted all these innovations. In the end, Gaius too was killed in rioting during an electoral campaign.

In 63 BCE, Catiline, a member of an aristocratic family, stood for consul on a program of debt cancellation. He had the support of some Senators, but was twice defeated in the vote. Catiline found support among the Roman poor, the landless veterans, the indebted, and also among factions in the Assembly. It appears that he intended to lead an armed insurrection, but Cicero made a passionate speech against him in the Senate and accused him of high treason. Catiline withdrew from Rome to join his rebels and was killed fighting at their head.

Cicero

Cicero was not only a brilliant orator and a forthright consul. He also had his own political philosophy, which became one of the most important bequests of Rome to posterity. He argued that a republic ruled by law should be above any person or faction in the Senate. He regarded the law of the Republic as an abstract principle in accord with natural law, whose requirements should overrule all personal or material considerations. In his philosophy, he was a Stoic who believed that human beings must learn to tame their desires and passions in accordance with the natural law and the overriding need to maintain order in the community where they lived.

But his fierce defense of property and contract had a downside. The failure to ease debts or redistribute landed property meant in the end that the army had to start recruiting landless people into its ranks—though still not slaves. The first to do this was Marius, who became consul and supreme commander in 107 BCE. He put down rebellions in Africa and the north, but actually was beginning the process of separating the army from society, turning it into a professional caste whose members served full-time and for life.

The loyalty of those soldiers focused less on Rome than on the legion, their fellow soldiers, and above all on their commander, who provided them with equipment, pay, occasional gifts, and a share in wartime booty—and the prospect of land and property at the end of military service. Each legion generated its own economy, using its weapons to

Cicero denounces Catiline

win land, slaves, and other resources.

One drawback of this system was that it needed continual conquest. It also turned army commanders into warlords who could deploy their troops to advance their own political interests. Their mutual feuds form the story of the last decades of republican Rome. Sulla, for example, crushed a rebellion by Mithridates, King of Pontus in Asia Minor, then came to Rome and took emergency powers that he used to sentence forty Senators, his personal enemies, to death. Pompey, having put down rebellions in Spain, brought his army to Rome to help him get elected consul.

Julius Caesar

Most famously of all, Gaius Julius Caesar, who had conquered Gaul and attempted to invade Britain, in 49 BCE refused to lay down his command at the end of his appointed term. Instead, he crossed the river Rubicon, which divided Gaul from Italy, in effect declaring war on his own civilian rulers. Overcoming Pompey, whom the Senators brought back from Asia Minor to confront him, he arrived in Rome and had himself proclaimed imperator (which at that stage meant supreme commander, not yet emperor) and also dictator, or emergency leader. He made himself popular in the city by appointing a lot of new men to the Senate—army officers, landowners, tax-farmers, and large-scale traders.

He had one interesting innovation. He dealt with the problem of debt in an astute way, by canceling interest payments and requiring creditors to accept repayment in assets valued at original prices after a period of rapid inflation caused by civil war. This reduced the debt burden considerably without blatantly violating property rights or contract.

At first, he had his title of dictator annually renewed, and then in 44 BCE tried to make it permanent, just as he was leaving with his army for the East to deal with the threat of the Parthians on the border. At that stage, on the Ides of March, a few staunchly republican senators, led by his old friend Brutus, assassinated him. They suspected—almost certainly rightly—that he wanted to make himself into a monarch. But they were wrong in thinking that most Romans objected to that. By this time, most people were tired of civil conflict and would have welcomed a strong authority. Instead, because of Caesar's assassination, they got more civil war, which lasted another thirteen years till Caesar's nephew, Octavian, took the name of Augustus and had himself proclaimed *princeps*—first consul. That is normally taken as the moment when Rome ceased to be a republic and became an empire.

Conclusion

Cicero had proclaimed the absolute value of law, property, and contract, and yet that solution failed. The Roman Empire had been unable to provide for the needs of soldiers and had allowed tycoons to turn massive armies into their own personal followers. The empire fell apart in civil war and mutual conflict. What was needed was the application of Cicero's ideal of a law-based republic, but on a level that recognized the need to provide for everyone, the poor as well as the rich. This is what Augustus attempted to do: restore the notion of equality.

Questions and Essays

1. In what ways did the Roman city-state differ from those of Greece?

2. Why did the problem of debt prove fatal to the Roman Republic?

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2. The Vergil Project at the University of Pennsylvania: An article entitled "The Legend of Aeneas and the Foundation of Rome." — vergil.classics.upenn.edu/comm2/legend/legend.html

3. The Cicero Homepage at the University of Texas, Austin, by Andrew M. Riggsby. — www.utexas.edu/depts/classics/documents/Cic.html

4. Livius: A non-commercial website on ancient history. This link is a twelve-part biography of C. Julius Caesar. Other pages within this site describe daily life in Rome and throughout the Roman Empire. — www.livius.org/caa-can/caesar/caesar01.html

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

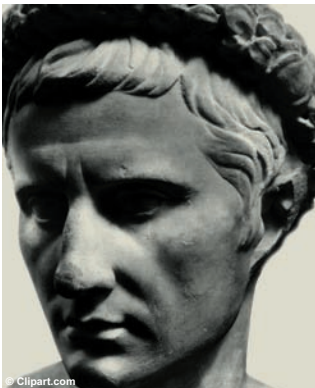Read Cassius Dio's *The Roman History: The Reign of Augustus.*

© PhotoDisc

Augustus was careful to cloak his appearance of absolute power in acceptable republican forms. For this reason, he called himself first consul. However, he took a number of other titles: president of the Senate, permanent tribune of the people, governor of many provinces. He had himself appointed chief priest and eventually had the Senate award him the title Pater Patriae (father of the people/homeland). He preserved many of the names and institutions of republicanism, and even after he took on the title of emperor he retained some republican symbols. The Roman Empire never became hereditary. This meant that when an emperor died, factions at court had to struggle over who would be named successor. What Augustus had established was an autocratic empire. The emperor was head of state, supreme judge, chief executive, high priest, and was actually sometimes worshiped as a god.

Bread and Circuses

Augustus set about centralizing the empire in many ways. He raised the

Augustus Caesar
(63 BCE-14 AD)

wealth of Rome by launching a huge program of public works. There was a water system set up for the city, a system of public granaries, and a coliseum for public entertainment. Augustus became known as a provider of "bread and circuses."

There was no absolute distinction between private and public wealth. Augustus's household exchequer, for example, was also the public treasury. He had unlimited wealth at his disposal, but was expected to spend most of it on public purposes. Augustus also tried to introduce universal taxes, and so carried out a census of land and population. In these ways, he was able to see that the army was regularly paid. He created an appointed civil service to replace the domination of the provinces by local elites and war-lords. He took personal supreme command of the

army and recruited soldiers from the provinces rather than from Italy.

Augustus also reigned back the lust for conquest of his army commanders, believing that further wars on the borders would be detrimental. Britain was an exception to this rule, as was present day Romania.

The Roman Empire was a confederation of self-governing cities, linked to each other by the authority of the emperor, the army, the Latin language, universal literacy amongst the elite, and Romanitas (Roman customs and traditions).

Under this system, there followed nearly two centuries of what became known as the Pax Romana (The Roman Peace). The empire was a huge zone of stability and peace, guarded by the strongest army in the world and intersected by well-maintained roads.

Roman Roads and Civilization

Roads were built of stone and granite. They crossed the landscape in a straight line that bore straight through mountains and crossed ravines on arched bridges. Along these roads, post houses were set up at regular intervals and permanently supplied with horses. In the countryside, mansions and rural villas were supplied with pumped water and under-floor central heating.

The Roman Economy

The Roman economy did not expand as strongly as might have been expected, given the long period of peace and stability. Much of the wealth of the empire came from conquest and plunder and was allotted to generals and commanders. The end of expansion during the first century BCE meant the curtailment of acquisition of both consumer goods and capital. Also, the existing reservoir of slaves to handle manual labor provided a disincentive for seeking technical innovations.

Another restraint on economic growth was the absence of any system for raising credit. Banks were primitive and rarely financed economic enterprise. Most loans were made by wealthy patrons to their clients and were intended to support consumption rather than investment or economic development. There was no concept of a continued corporate existence or investment. Agriculture and artisan trades remained the largest sector of the economy.

Germanic and Persian Incursion

During the 160s BCE, the Germans (Visigoths) began to penetrate the empire across the Danube. By this time, Germanic tribes across the border had been able to observe Rome and amalgamate into large federations. Furthermore, in 224, the Sassanid Dynasty came to power in Persia and renewed its offensives in places like Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Syria. The Romans, therefore, had to expand their army; but without economic growth, there were no additional sources of finance for these defensive forces. The result was inflation and the gradual impoverishment of the middle classes. Meanwhile, poorly paid soldiers looked to their generals to house and feed them.

Caracalla and Diocletian

In 212, the Emperor Caracalla tried to deal with the deteriorating situation by

sharply increasing the number of Roman citizens (all citizens would be taxed and available for military service). By Caracalla's edict, all free men throughout the empire, wherever they lived, became eligible for full Roman citizenship with all of its associated burdens, but without any practical possibility of participating in Roman assemblies.

Toward the end of the third century BCE, Diocletian attempted to restore the Pax Romana by re-introducing conscription and doubling the size of the army to nearly one million. This meant bringing in barbarian troops. His idea was to have some troops fighting on the frontier and others as a mobile reserve, but the empire was too large to have such a system function efficiently. Diocletian tried to fix fair prices to control inflation; he endeavored to introduce annual budget estimates and reform the tax system. In practice, he made provincial tax collectors responsible for coming up with all revenue for their area, which meant that colleagues were responsible for the shortcomings of each other. Since this made the post of tax collector undesirable, Diocletian made the job hereditary and compulsory.

Diocletian's reign marked the moment when Roman states ceased to be satisfied with universal tolerance and diversity and attempted to enforce an official state cult for everybody. He had the phrase "The Spirit of the Roman People" stamped on all coins, suggesting that the Roman people were a universal nation whose religion and views should be compulsory.

The Collapse of the Roman Empire

One of the measures Diocletian took was to divide the empire in two with a separate emperor for each half. This prepared the way for the permanent division of the empire into a predominantly Latin-speaking western half and a Greek-speaking eastern half. When the western half faced increasing attacks from the barbarians, the eastern half often turned away and did nothing. When Rome was sacked by the Goths in 410 CE, the Greek half did not come to its assistance.

Conscription was difficult to enforce, as landowners were reluctant to give up good workers and the enticement of plunder was no longer an incentive to possible volunteers. The great majority of citizens became separate from the army and lost their military traditions.

In many provinces, the end of the Roman Empire came when Rome could no longer supply local legions and these legions federated themselves with locals to survive. On many of the Roman frontiers, locals were banding together with so-called barbarians for mutual protection. Also, the incursion of nomads both as invaders and as allies made many Romans unhappy. Earlier assimilation was giving way to ethnic hostility and fighting.

Vikings sack Rome

Taxation and Its Problems

For most of Roman history, taxation could only be levied through tax farmers. Because they were landowners, they were often able to avoid taxation while extorting money from the poor. Some of the poor would flee from the cities to local landlords for protection from conscription and more dangerous tax lords. This was the beginning of serfdom. Diocletian continued Augustus's practice of census, which meant that people were not allowed to move. This "fixing" of people to land was another stage toward feudalism. At the same time, the difference between slaves and tenant farmers was being eroded and both became much the same as serfs.

The cities were becoming impoverished. They had been the basis of the wealth and culture of the empire, but the demands of taxation and conscription undermined them from the third century onwards. Also, the government's ongoing habit of financing the army by debasing the coinage caused great inflation and destroyed family fortunes. Land, instead of urban property, was becoming the only stable source of wealth. Townspeople began to seek protection from powerful and wealthy patrons.

Constantine

In the early fourth century, the Emperor Constantine tried to reunite the empire and built a new city at Byzantium called Constantinople. In the course of his battles, he decided to become a Christian. Constantine introduced Christianity with the idea that universal empires require a universal religion.

Justinian

The Emperor Justinian (527-565) is important because he made an ambitious attempt to codify Roman law, iron out its contradictions, and make it compatible with Christian principles. He produced a codex of laws but also a digest that summarized them. This was one of the most important bequests of Rome to later generations.

Roman Law

As passed down through the code of Justinian, Roman law stipulated that all citizens are equal before the law; the State is an entity above individuals; the accused are presumed innocent before being proved guilty; ordinary citizens, as jurors, decide verdicts; and families were subject to paternal authority.

Conclusions

Rome was the first empire in world history built on the idea of citizenship. This sense of citizenship, originally confined to Rome itself, spread to all people within the empire, where the idea of a common cause and social solidarity was prevalent. The Romans were the first people to conceive of the State as embodying a public good above individual family or faction. The idea of a universal state ruling over peaceful peoples in the name of God, and defending their legal rights, is an idea that remains today an enormously powerful concept. For that reason, the memory and symbols of Rome have retained their power in many later epochs of European history.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions and Essays

1. How did Augustus solve many of the problems plaguing the Roman Republic?

2. Why did the model of the Roman Empire prove attractive to many European rulers in later centuries?

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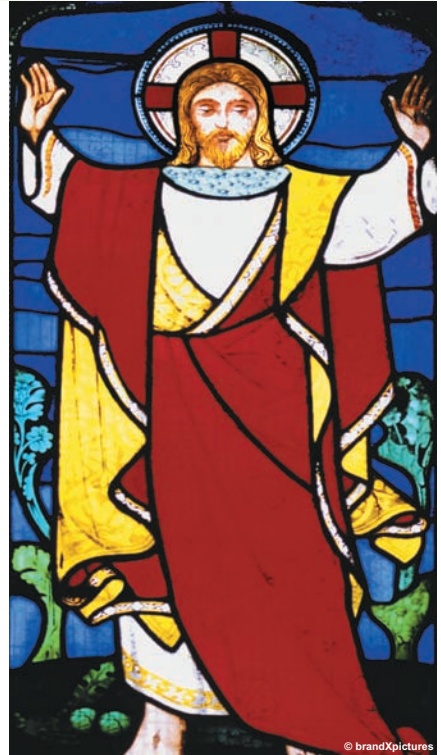
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1. *De Imperatoribus Romanus*: An Online Encyclopedia of Roman Emperors by Garrett G. Fagan, Pennsylvania State University. This page is a study of Augustus Caesar. — www.roman-emperors.org/auggie.htm

2. An article entitled "The Construction & Makeup of Ancient Roman Roads" by Adam Pawluk at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. — www.unc.edu/courses/rometech/public/content/transport/Adam_Pawluk/ Construction_and_Makeup_of_.htm

3. Internet Ancient History Sourcebook at Fordham University: This page is an article entitled "Diocletian (284-305 CE) and Constantine (308-337 CE): Efforts to Stabilize the Economy." — www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/ diocletian-control.html

4. Internet Medieval Sourcebook at Fordham University. Text of "The Institutes," *Codex Justinianus* (Justinian Code) 535 CE. — www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/535institutes.html

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Justo L. Gonzalez's *The Story of Christianity: Volume One: The Early Church to the Reformation.*

Jesus believed that the Kingdom of God was imminent and that Christians should preach baptism, repentance, and forgiveness of sins to prepare the way for it. Most of his ministry was conducted in Galilee and was accompanied by miraculous healings. All this was in the Jewish tradition of the *hasid* (a preacher, healer, and miracle-worker). But there was evidently a charisma unique to Jesus himself that attracted people. People would crowd round him, both to hear what he said and to seek help for the sick. His view of human nature was quite somber—he thought it impossible to avoid sin—but he managed to inspire others with the confidence that forgiveness and love are possible and crucially important because the Kingdom of God was at hand. He associated with people of humble social origin and preached against the evils of greed and covetousness. His morality was that of the Ten Commandments, but he was in favor of flexible interpretation, affirming its spirit over its letter, and he brought it to life with his vivid parables. Many of his followers regarded him as the Messiah, but the only title he gave himself was "son of man," an Old Testament metaphor for someone who leads suffering humanity toward God.

He was not a preacher of violent revolution against the authorities; on the contrary, he preached that even Roman authority was legitimate, but his opponents (both the Sadducees and the Romans) associated him with the Zealots. Fearing that he would be put to death, he gathered a community around himself to continue his work (twelve apostles symbolic perhaps of the Twelve Tribes of Israel). The climax and end of his life came when he transferred his mission to Jerusalem. There he held a last supper together with his disciples, one of whom betrayed him to the Roman authorities. He was tried for blasphemy before the Sanhedrin, the Sadducee high priests, and then before Pontius Pilate for sedition. Pilate condemned him to be crucified, the

excruciating and humiliating death the Romans inflicted on serious criminals and opponents of Roman power. Christians believe that he then rose from the dead and was able to inspire the disciples to continue their work before his final "ascension" into heaven.

The Christian Church

We do not know much about the first Christian church, a purely Jewish one headed by James the brother of Jesus. The Christian church as we know it was founded by Paul of Tarsus. He was a Pharisee who initially preached fervently against the contention that Jesus was the Messiah. While he was on the way to Damascus, he experienced a sudden conversion and came to believe that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, and that his gospel was intended not only for Jews but for all peoples. He regarded the crucifixion as the greatest event in history, through which Jesus had expiated the sins of humanity and given all human beings the chance of eternal forgiveness.

Paul's doctrines were eclectic, probably partly drawn from Eastern traditions, and in important respects differed radically from Judaism: Jesus was not only the Messiah (already a difference), but also himself divine, the Son of God; He had come to lead not only the Jews, but all human beings; He had taken on human form and then died as a sacrifice for the salvation of humanity (as in the Eastern mystery religions); and He had redeemed humanity from slavery to sin, which otherwise was ineluctable.

Paul believed the Jewish faith had reached its apotheosis through Jesus to become a universal faith. The Mosaic law was thereby replaced by the spirit of love and forgiveness. He saw it as his mission to bring the "good news" (gospel) to the Roman Empire, and he devoted the rest of his life to traveling around its major cities, setting up Christian communities, and then keeping in touch with them by letter. His correspondence is far and away the main source for the early decades of Christianity.

The original Jewish Christian church was severely disrupted by the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE and the subsequent expulsion of Jews from the city. So Paul's pro-Gentile church, based in the provinces and Rome itself, soon became dominant. Its strength lay in the individual city congregations, each led by an elder (*presbyter*) assisted by deacons. The elders were essentially priests: they performed a sacrament that recalled both mystery religions and Greek civic ritual by presenting the body and blood of Christ to the faithful in the Eucharist.

Christianity has three main origins: (1) the Jewish tradition of ethical monotheism, the Messiah, and the chosen people; (2) the Hellenic traditions of philosophical monotheism (Plato) and the close-knit citizenship of the *polis;* and (3) the traditions of the Eastern mystical religions, with their emphasis on personal salvation through the death and resurrection of a god.

The Christian church spread fast in most provinces of the empire. It helped that Roman elites shared a common language and culture. They could then pass the message on to merchant, artisan, and peasant communities. It

became popular among the poor, slaves, and women. One of its great strengths was that it attracted both sophisticated intellectuals, who needed a philosophically well-grounded faith, and also the uneducated, to whom it offered personal salvation.

The old Roman city-state gods were gradually losing their power. They were too parochial for such a huge and diverse empire. They were yielding ground to faiths that were monotheist and emphasized individual salvation available to everyone: Manicheism, Gnosticism, Mithraism, and the various Eastern mystery religions.

Most important perhaps were the ideas of neo-Platonism, which provided a metaphysical framework within which Christians could understand creation, the Fall and original sin, the incarnation, and redemption. The early Greek church fathers were mostly engaged in reshaping Platonism to make it compatible with Christian beliefs. The idea of God was combined with the Platonic idea of *logos* (word, reason, the way).

Roman Persecution

On the whole, the Roman authorities persecuted Christians only sporadically. Christians followed Jesus' advice to "render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's." They accepted the institutions of the empire. They did not attempt, for example, to abolish slavery—instead, they preached that service and manual labor were a worthy activity. They accepted private property, merely insisting that it imposed obligations on its owner and was not to be used irresponsibly.

However, especially as the empire's own crisis deepened in the third century, the authorities became suspicious of Christians, because they refused to worship the person of the emperor; declined all public office; increasingly refused to perform military service; met in "secret societies," which were seen by the authorities as potentially subversive; and actively proselytized, preaching to convert people (unlike the Jews).

The worst persecutions were under Valerian (257-8), who ordered all citizens to sacrifice directly to the Roman city-gods. Those who refused were stripped of their property and enslaved. Those who persisted in the faith were put to death. In 303, the Emperor Diocletian ordered the destruction of Christian churches, the burning of scriptures, and the imprisonment of priests and leading Christians.

In 312, Constantine converted to Christianity. But he did it, initially at least, partly for the old "tribal-god" reasons: he believed that it would win him battles. Thereafter, Christianity was fully legitimate, existing alongside paganism. Theodosius I (379-395) made Christianity the official religion of all Roman citizens; he closed down pagan temples and banned pagan sacrifices as blasphemous. So the previous situation was reversed and it was the pagans who were thrown to the lions.

The Official Faith

Once Christianity became the official Roman religion, it became less obsessed with the second coming and more attuned to everyday reality. It

lost some of its communal and egalitarian features and became more authoritarian, hierarchical, and patriarchal.

Christianity also became more monolithic and intolerant. The emperors attempted to ensure dogmatic unity. Under Constantine, the effort had been made to sort out the extraordinarily complex issues posed by the incarnation of Christ. In the East, so-called "Arians" maintained that Jesus could not possibly be the same being as the creator of the universe. The Council of Nicaea (325) condemned Arianism and confirmed that the Son of God was "of one essence" with God the Father.

The Fall of Rome and Christianity

The fall of the west Roman Empire faced Christianity with a serious dilemma. For Eusebius, the biographer of Constantine and one of the early historians of Christianity, the Christianization of Rome was the high point of history, the fulfillment of Romanitas.

For this vision of Christianity, the sack of Rome by the Goths in 410 was an inexplicable catastrophe. Pagans argued that the disaster was the gods' punishment of Roman citizens for abandoning the old civic religion. An alternative answer was offered by Augustine, bishop of Hippo in north Africa. He asserted that the fall of Rome was a revelation of the error of imagining that the earthly city was the only one. There was an alternative "city of God" not synonymous with the elite of the Roman Empire, but a mixture of people of both sexes, all social classes, and ethnic origins.

Augustine

Brought up by a pagan father and a Christian mother, Augustine received an excellent education and became a teacher of rhetoric and literature in Milan. In his youth, he was a follower of Plato, Cicero, and the Stoics. At this stage, he thought the Bible wholly lacking in philosophical sophistication. But he was constantly troubled by his own inability to live up to the high ideals of Stoicism and neo-Platonism. For a time, he found the answer in Manicheism, which regarded the world as an arena of struggle between two opposing divine principles, one good, the other evil. Eventually, though, Augustine became discontented with Manicheism, for he came to believe that the good-evil dichotomy was not the same as the soul-body one: the soul was in some respects corrupted too, as he observed in his own life and that of others. Platonism and Stoicism continued to seem unsatisfactory, because they assumed that human beings could master their evil impulses. Augustine continued to feel that all human beings were affected by corruption.

Like educated Romans, however, Augustine did accept that the life of the city, with its high culture and web of friendships and associations, was important to sustain the good in human beings. For that reason, he wanted to find some way of ensuring the survival of the civic spirit even when Rome was threatened. The City of God was a way of achieving this. He believed that humans should strive to become good citizens of this invisible city, in which all are equal. The full implications of this argument were brought out in Augustine's polemic with Pelagius, a layman highly regarded in Rome and later in Africa. He advised congregations that they should strive to gain God's

grace by their own efforts, living a life as far as possible free of sin and endeavoring to improve those around them. In his treatise, *De Libero Arbitrio*, he asserted that it was possible for human beings to live well enough to deserve God's grace, and he accused Augustine of encouraging a lazy acceptance of sin. Augustine denounced Pelagius for belittling the power and majesty of God, insisting that human beings on their own are irredeemably corrupt and incapable of deserving divine grace.

The division between these two views has marked the whole history of Western Christianity. In the short term, Augustine won: Pelagius's doctrine was condemned at two African councils and by the pope in 416-17. Augustine's outlook was perhaps natural to an age in which an old civilization was starting to crumble and there was great uncertainty about the future.

Augustine was the single most important formative thinker of Western Christianity: He created a synthesis between Platonism and the existing Christian tradition; he explicitly gave a spiritual content to the notion of "citizenship" and also made it available to people of all social and ethnic backgrounds; and his concept of the "elect" renewed Jewish teachings about the "chosen people."

An illustration of Saint Augustine
after a painting by El Greco

Questions and Essays

1. Why did the Roman Empire adopt Christianity?

2. What was the significance of St. Augustine's *City of God*?

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2. Internet Ancient History Sourcebook at Fordham University. This section is on Christian Origins. — www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/asbook11.html

3. Drew University, Madison, NJ. Professor Darrell Doughty's webpage entitled "Tacitus' Account of Nero's Persecution of Christians." — www.courses.drew.edu/sp2000/BIBST189.001/Tacitus.html

4. Catholic Encyclopedia: Life of St. Augustine of Hippo. — www.newadvent.org/cathen/02084a.htm

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Peter Brown's *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity 200-1000 AD.*

The Irish and Christianity

The Irish were the first people from outside the Roman Empire to be converted to Christianity. St. Patrick (c. 390-460), who brought them the faith, came from a Roman British family and was among those Christians left high and dry when the Roman soldiers departed. He was captured by Irish raiders from his father's villa and sold into slavery in Ireland, where he spent six years as a herdsman. He eventually escaped back to Britain, but then had a vision in which, he believed, God told him to return to Ireland to convert the pagans.

At that time, Ireland was an entirely tribal society without major cities, so that the Roman pattern of ecclesiastical organization, under bishops, was impossible. Instead, the focal points of Irish Christianity were monasteries. Some of the monks became hermits or wanderers who would carry the faith to ever more remote regions—including to the islands of western Scotland. The Irish brand of Christianity spread through much of northern Britain.

The Irish knew nothing of the Greek church fathers, who combined Platonism and Christianity, nor of the church councils that had been grappling with the intricacies of doctrine, specifically the Trinity. Of necessity, then, their theology was homespun. St. Patrick, for example, is said to have explained the doctrine of the Trinity by pointing to the three lobes of the shamrock. The Irish monks learned Latin as a completely foreign language, not corrupted by any local form of "dog Latin"—and took the utmost care in their inscribing of sacred texts. The best example of this is the *Book of Kells* in the library of Trinity College Dublin.

There were plenty of monasteries, but no monastic orders in Ireland. Each monastery had its own rule: the abbot reigned supreme. Some monks were actually married, had children, and lived in their families. In other houses, a severely ascetic and contemplative or mystical form of religion was practiced. Some monks lived in hermitages on remote islands or cliffs, often in distinctive beehive-shaped huts. Others believed it was their duty to become wanderers and spread the faith at any cost.

This was the impetus that brought Irish clergy into England, Scotland, and Iceland, and as far

Illuminated page of the Four Evangelists from the *Book of Kells*

as Burgundy, eastern France, Switzerland, and north Italy. In the end, though, their brand of Christianity had to yield to the more articulate doctrines and the firmer organization of the Roman Church.

Rome was also mounting a considerable missionary effort in a spirit that suggested direct competition with Byzantium. As the senior Patriarch and the only one not in the Byzantine Empire, the Bishop of Rome assumed a unique role in the Western Church. Pope Leo the Great (440-461) assumed the title of pontifex maximus. He held that the power of Christ had been passed on to St. Peter alone and, through him, to his successors, the bishops of Rome. He obtained from Byzantium a declaration that his rulings had the force of law in the Western empire. Pope Gregory the Great

Saint Gregory the Great
by Carlo Saraceni, 1620

(590-604) was perhaps the first Bishop of Rome to speak no Greek. He gave the Latin mass its authoritative form—hence the name "Gregorian chant." He took St. Augustine's *City of God* as his primer: that is, he was attracted by the Roman civic ideal. He strove to establish in as much of Europe as possible a *societas republicae Christianae*—the society of a Christian republic.

Conversions: Western

At this stage, there was no attempt to convert masses of people. Convert the king or tribal leader and it was assumed that everything else would follow. Often, missionaries would argue that if a leader converted to Christianity, they would win their battles. Having won a battle, a tribal leader would receive Baptism, endow churches and monasteries, and require his people to pay tithes and attend services. In this way, churches were built and parishes established. Monarchs found it useful to have Christianity as a way to enforce their rule. This led to an authoritarian Christianity, established from above in a conquered society. In the long run, though, the masses were converted.

Conversions: Eastern

In the eastern half of the Roman Empire, now called the Byzantine Empire, the relationship between church and state was very different. There was no question that the empire was the senior partner. Whereas in the West, it was the church that bore the heritage of Romanitas through the "dark ages," in the East, it was the state that did so. The emperor Justinian (527-565) made an attempt to reconquer the heartland of the western empire in Italy, but had to abandon it. Instead, he concentrated on turning Constantinople into a more splendid city than Rome. Justinian regarded himself as the custodian of this "rule of Christ." He finally brought paganism to an end by closing down the Academy of Athens, which Plato had founded 900 years earlier. He imposed serious restrictions on Jews' freedom of worship and took the lead in ferreting

A mosaic of Emperor Justinian the Great

out heresy. He took a leading role in shaping canon law—the law of the church—just as he had with civil and criminal law.

In the Byzantine view, the emperor was head of both church and state, the ultimate authority on all matters, spiritual as well as secular. He was considered the "equal of the apostles," but he was not a priest and could not administer the sacraments. It was expected that he should make every effort to act in accordance with God's law, and therefore on spiritual matters defer to the opinions of his leading churchmen, the patriarchs. This was the relationship referred to as *symphonia*, or harmony. The emperor ruled, but in spiritual affairs only on the advice of the patriarch.

East and West: Differences

These differences were not enough to engender schism. There were other factors too:

• The Muslim invasions made communications between Rome and Byzantium much more difficult.

• During the iconoclastic controversy, when the Eastern Church temporarily outlawed icons, the Western Church adhered strongly to the line that icons and frescoes were important for conveying the faith to illiterate people.

• There was a real cultural difference. The old eastern empire was far wealthier and more cultured than the West, especially after the barbarian invasion of the West. The East's language was Greek, not Latin, its philosophical and theological speculation far more sophisticated; in the West, paganism persisted far longer, and it was a struggle to maintain the basics of the faith.

• In the absence of a church leader who could claim earthly power, the Eastern Church insisted more strictly on regular ecumenical councils and would certainly not consent to major changes in creed or liturgy without the approval of one.

The Eastern Church was ruled more in strict accordance with canon law than the Western Church and had its own campaigns of conversion, carried out in an entirely different way from the West.

The Byzantine Church and the Slavs

The Slavs came from southern Russia and the Ukraine and infiltrated Byzantine territories during the sixth to eighth centuries. They were former nomads, settling down to agriculture and cattle raising. The Byzantines dealt

with the Slavs by trying to induce them to become peaceful neighbors and incorporate them into the empire.

Cyril and Methodius: Missionaries to the Slavs

Cyril and Methodius introduced a method into their missionary work that decisively altered the Christian world. They learned the Slavonic languages that were spoken by the ordinary people. They devised an alphabet and then translated the liturgy and gospels. This shocked Western clerics, who insisted that Latin should be the only official language. Eastern Christianity took up these new methods of conversion and carried them out in the languages of the local people. This gave Eastern Christianity a more democratic slant.

Vikings

Toward the end of the ninth century, a fleet of 200 ships entered the Bosphorus and unloaded an army of Vikings who plundered the suburbs of Constantinople. The Byzantines, as they did with the Slavs, tried to assimilate these Vikings into their culture. In the year 988, the descendents of these Vikings, who had by then become Slavs in language, were converted. By the end of the tenth century, Orthodox Christianity had spread from Byzantium to the Balkans to Rus (Russia) and to part of central Europe.

A twentieth-century icon depicting Saints Cyril and Methodius

Eastern Orthodox vs. Western Latin Christianity

Eastern orthodox liturgy was presented in the local language of the people. This made preaching and conversion much easier. It did, however, cut Eastern Christianity off from Latin and Greek culture and therefore general European religious and intellectual developments. Instead of a single universal church, the Orthodox Church became a series of national churches, each with its own language, headed by a local patriarch. Eastern churches maintained a married parish clergy that was more closely tied into worldly interests. The Eastern Church objected to the Western version of the Trinity because it had not been agreed to at an ecumenical council.

These growing differences between the Eastern and Western Churches led to formal schism, where neither church would recognize each other's practices or leadership. This rift remains a basic feature of Christianity, even today.

Questions and Essays

1. Did the Irish contribute any lasting features to Christianity?
2. Why did the Eastern and Western Christian Churches drift apart and eventually split?

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3. A short history of the Orthodox Church and its fellowship of *autocephalous* (self-governing) churches. — www.holy-trinity.org/about/intro.html

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5. Corcoran Department of History at the University of Virginia website. "'Vikings' Pilgrimage to the Holy Land" by Jessica A. Browner (*Essays in History*, Vol. 34, 1992). — www.etext.lib.virginia.edu/journals/EH/EH34/browne34.html

Lecture 9:
The Challenge of Islam

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Seyyed Hossein Nasr's *Islam: Religion, History, and Civilization.*

The most serious threat to Christianity and Christendom came from the new religion of Islam. It presented a challenge both to Christian religious belief and by force of arms to the Christian civilization.

Islam was born in the steppe and desert lands of Arabia, between the Roman and Persian empires, in the crossing zone between Africa, Asia, and Europe. This was the land of the Bedouins, the "camel nomads"—which is what the word Arab originally means—among whom tribal warfare was common. Each tribe had its own chief, its own assembly, and its own gods.

Mecca

The most important trading town was Mecca. Its security was guaranteed by the Quraysh tribe, who were more settled and mercantile than the other tribes. They declared and policed "truce months," and the annual trade fair, during which tribal fighting was supposed to stop so that the tribes could conduct trade among themselves and with outsiders. The Quraysh also guarded the Kaaba, a black rectangular sacred shrine where the emblems of the tribes were kept. The shrine was under the protection of the supreme God, Allah, who at this stage had no cult of his own.

Muhammad

Muhammad was a member of the Quraysh and a trader who at the age of about 40 began to have visions and revelations that he interpreted as coming from Allah, a great loving, but also just, God who on the day of judgment would judge each person's life and condemn him or her to eternal bliss or damnation. The moral basis for the judgment was the one we are familiar with from the Mosaic Ten Commandments. And Muhammad believed his revelation came from the same source, that Moses and Jesus were prophets like himself. He recorded what

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he had learned in the Koran, which he interpreted as being directly dictated by Allah. Allah, he insisted, was not just the supreme God, but the only God, and the worship of any other gods was idolatry. The only right religious attitude was submission to Allah, which is called Islam (one who submits is called a Muslim). This was a great challenge to the old tribal notions of pride, honor, birth, and the code of vengeance.

Members of the Quraysh tribe were not impressed. They scoffed at Muhammad's visions and demanded that he corroborate them by performing miracles. Muhammad refused, retorting that the beauty and persuasiveness of the Koran was evidence enough. So he withdrew with his followers, mostly slaves and outsiders, to Medina. There he found more supporters, formed an army, and eventually returned to conquer Mecca by force.

Even though the Quraysh rejected it, Muhammad's faith was a universalization of their own principles. It replaced the old tribal code of honor, pride, and vengeance with one of submission and obedience. Feuding was strictly forbidden: instead, tribes were to submit their disputes to Islamic judges. Muhammad considered Islam suitable to be the faith of all human beings. He defended the poverty-stricken and oppressed, and taught that compassion and alms-giving was the duty of every believer.

Tenets of Islam

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- Profession of faith: "There is no god but God; Muhammad is the prophet of God"
- Five daily prayers; some prayers are communal, under an imam or prayer leader
- Zakat, the obligatory tax used to help the poor
- Fasting during the month of Ramadan
- One pilgrimage to the Kaaba in Mecca

In family life, Muhammad insisted on the rights of women and tried to strengthen the nuclear family. To restrain the unlimited polygamy common among Arabs, he insisted that each man should have no more than four wives and should provide for them all equally. Married women were to have their own property independent of the husband. The veil became customary as a sign of a woman's independence: she would be attractive only to her husband and would not become the object of intrigues.

Other Characteristics of Islam:

- The most radically monotheistic and universal faith: no special ties to a chosen people (though Arabic is held to be the sacred language), no images or depictions of Allah, no subordinate gods.
- The most democratic faith: no priesthood, church, or religious hierarchy.
- The learned Muslims, the *ulema,* are experts in law (sharia), customs, and

traditions, as laid out in the Koran and in subsequent approved legal-moral compilations—the Hadith, part of which is based on the life and sayings of Muhammad. The Hadith dealt with the problems of reconciling the sharia with local laws and customs.

- Importance of contract: it was assumed that all human relationships, outside family and close friends, would take a contractual form, even if the contract was verbal only or even just implied. This was the basis of law court decisions. A contract was not binding unless there was real equivalence in the exchange. So usury was forbidden, since it usually resulted from the rich exploiting the poor or weak.

- *Jihad*: zeal in the faith, or struggle for the faith. *Jihad* has various meanings, including the struggle of the believer against his own evil inclinations. It also includes the notion of armed struggle in defense of the faith. Some would argue that spreading the faith by the sword was also legitimate. On the other hand, the Koran says that belief must be the free choice of the believer.

Early Islam in practice was extremely militant and aggressive. It was first of all highly effective in uniting the Arab tribes into large and cohesive communities, with the tribal martial spirit enhanced by their new universal religion. In the century or so after Muhammad's death, in 632, Muslim armies accomplished a series of conquests unparalleled except by the Mongols 600 years or so later:

- Invaded, conquered, and absorbed the Persian Empire

- Occupied the key Byzantine provinces of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, including the holy city of Jerusalem

- Swept across north Africa and crossed the straits to the Pillar of Hercules

- Conquered Visigothic Spain, breached the Pyrenees, and advanced far into Frankish territory, where they were finally stopped by Charles Martel at the Battle of Poitiers (732)—one of the most crucial battles in European history

Settled Islamic civilizations have been much more tolerant. Through their

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Now the Giralda Tower of the Cathedral of Seville, Spain, the bell tower was once the minaret for a mosque built by Muslims.

conquests, Muslims became the successors to great non-Muslim empires and the heirs of major centers of Hellenic and Middle Eastern civilization. Islamic states became the bearers of non-Islamic territorial, political, and cultural identity. In fact, Muslims ensured the survival of much of the civilization and learning of the ancient world at a time when the West was too fragmented and poverty-stricken to do so.

These states were created by military conquest, often by nomads from Central Asia, but once securely in power they revived the practice of past empires, which was religious tolerance. Jews and Christians, in particular, were accorded an honorable, though definitely subordinate,

THE EARLY EXPANSION OF ISLAM

First Islamic Expansion (632)

Second Islamic Expansion (632-661)

Third Islamic Expansion (661-750)

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status. They were allowed to form their own congregations, own their own corporate property, and enjoy legal protection, but typically they paid double taxes and suffered some civic disabilities.

In Islamic theory, religion and political power go together; indeed, Muslims considered strong government necessary to restrain men's evil inclinations. But in practice, the relationship between rulers and religious leaders remained tense and stressful. Rulers might call themselves caliphs (successors of the Prophet), but their courts were centers of riches, intrigue, and a secular and "immoral" culture. The Abbasid Caliphate was the greatest center in its day of Hellenic science, philosophy, and literature. But at the court of Harun al-Rashid (786-809), there were eunuchs, concubines, Persian singing girls, and musicians, while feasts were served in vessels of gold and silver studded with jewels.

There were constant disputes about the relationship between political power and religious law. There were frequent rebellions by the "piety-minded," who wanted to return to the original principles. Devout Muslims tended to create their own religious associations, with their own endowments, financed by the faithful. There would be schools where Islamic law was taught by teachers who gathered their pupils and disciples around them. Mosques were centers of worship, but also of community life, where alms would be distributed. Brotherhoods (*tariqat*) often consisted of the disciples of a Sufi mystic or teacher, but also extended to the general population healing, mediation, and welfare services. All these associations had a kind of tense coexistence with the rulers, bureaucrats, and armies.

The Great Dividing Line

There is another great cleft in Islam, between the Sunni and the Shia. Shia means "party," and the Shiites were the "party of Ali," those who believed that there should be a kind of apostolic succession from Muhammad through his

lineal descendants. That succession had been abruptly severed when Muhammad's son-in-law, Ali, was murdered in 661 by a factional opponent. His followers were subsequently defeated at the battle of Karbala (680) in present-day Iraq, which is today a pilgrimage shrine for all Shiites. To the present day, Shiites continue to hope for the return of the "hidden Imam," the great leader who will restore true Islam. They constitute about one-tenth of all Muslims. The Sunni majority are more pragmatic and prepared to accept the rule of any caliph who can uphold law and order and guarantee them the proper exercise of their religion.

Incoming conquerors often found Islam, as an already accepted justification for political authority, a useful spiritual tool in controlling newly subordinate populations. So they would restore mosques, build *medreses* (Islamic schools), endow religious associations, and appoint Islamic lawyers to posts in the bureaucracy.

The Effects of Islam

Islam had profound effects on Christendom. It disrupted for good the unity of the Hellenic and Roman Mediterranean civilization and the interregional commerce associated with them. It thus completed the process of plunging Europe into centuries of poverty, which had begun with the nomadic incursions of the fourth to fifth century. It marked out new boundaries for Christendom and gave Christians a new and formidable enemy, which perhaps deepened their faith and certainly gave them reasons for working together.

Yet Islam was also in some ways an ally of Christianity. It created realms of relative peace and good order, which guaranteed the inheritance of Greece and Rome, during a long epoch when the fragile kingdoms of western Europe were unable to do that. In that sense, without Muhammad, there would have been no Aristotelian learning and little science or classical culture in Europe—in fact, no Renaissance.

Questions and Essays

1. In what ways did Islam challenge Arab tribal usages?
2. How much do Judaism, Christianity, and Islam form one religious tradition?

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3. Princeton University site with a short history of the Umayyad Dynasty, including a genealogy of the caliphs, links, and a bibliography. — www.princeton.edu/~batke/itl/denise/umayyads.htm
4. Islamic Web. This page is a history of the Abbasid Dynasty. — www.islamicweb.com/history/hist_golden.htm

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Lecture 10:
Feudalism and Western Kingship

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Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Roger Collins's *Early Medieval Europe, 300-1000.*

During the centuries following the fall of Rome, the eastern and western halves of the former empire developed in very different ways, leading to two different kinds of civilization.

In the West, new forms of monarchy formed on an amalgam of Germanic tribal-military leadership, Roman culture and civilization, Christianity, and the idea of the *gens*, the people/ethnos who form a political community. Eventually, these four characteristics combined with a fifth, the ideal of Roman imperial rule, the Pax Romana.

Germanic tribes were led by kings whose job was to coordinate and lead the leaders of the fighting clans. These were not classic nomads, but mainly agricultural people suffering from population pressure and trying to extend their territory.

The Franks

The most successful of these people were the Franks. They broke across the Rhine in the fourth century and established a base in the Rhineland, present-day Belgium, and northern France—constantly seeking to expand their territory. At that stage, they absorbed many Roman ways of life, and in 498, their king Clovis was converted to Christianity. Gaining the support of Gallo-Roman leaders, the Franks advanced south into the rest of Gaul in the late fifth and early sixth century. Clovis viewed his victories as proof of the superiority of the Christian God. St. Gregory of Tours, his chronicler, described his conquests as a "holy war" for the Christian faith.

France

Christianity gave rulers the chance to rule peacefully over many tribes with the help of the Church—the idea of a kingdom based not on tribal allegiance, but on capital city, territory, and people. In the early sixth century, Clovis established the capital of the Franks in Paris. It was here that St. Denis, sent to Gaul in the third century to convert the people, had been martyred at a site near Paris during the persecution of Christians by the Emperor Valerian. This martyrdom offered elements of a founding narrative for the French.

For the moment, the notion of a peaceful Christian kingdom was largely an ideal—in reality, there were still feuding tribes led by warlords who could only be restrained by a strong king. Clovis had to build alliances based on mutual trust, and this was difficult to do. The simplest way was to create the model of a hierarchical community bound no longer by kinship, but by loyalty based on a Christian outlook.

Feudalism

Feudalism was put together out of elements left by the Roman Empire after it collapsed. The Roman idea of *coloni* and the Frankish models of clientelism/patronism, amalgamated with Germanic tribal forms, brought about the communal village and dependence on a personal leader. Ordinary people had to fall back on more primitive and localized forms of economic life and military security. The essence of feudalism was the combination of the *benefice* (benefit given in return for personal service) or *feod* (land thus awarded) and *vassalage* (the oath of loyalty to a lord).

In military terms, the central figure was the knight, the heavily armored horseman carrying a lance—a technique of fighting learned from the Persians via Byzantium. Feudalism provided the knight with the means to sustain his military speciality. The knight's sovereign, or liege lord, endowed him with land in return for providing military service for him whenever needed, usually by reporting for battle accompanied by a certain number of his own retainers as foot soldiers. Land awarded to him would be cultivated by peasants, as villeins or serfs, to provide him with food and income. They might also be his infantrymen.

Stone castles were also a cardinal element in feudalism. First of all, Christians needed to defend themselves against pagan invaders: Vikings, Magyars, Saracens, and others. Later, castles became important as Christian Europe moved eastward into formerly pagan lands in eastern Europe and around the Baltic Sea. Any lord, down to the knight, might build himself a castle and become impregnable to all but a determined, well-equipped, and well-organized attack.

This gave feudal lords considerable independence: they became warlords, willing and able to fight each other for often petty purposes—a small piece of territory, a better marriage settlement, and serfs. In practice, higher lords—kings and princes—had to accept feudal lords' right to rule over their tiny territories, for they lacked the power to do much about it. Sometimes they specifically acknowledged that right by granting an immunity or exemption from higher authority in certain fields: the right to levy taxes, make one's own laws, and hold one's own law court. Many towns, with their own fortifications, enjoyed chartered immunities of this kind. Churches and monasteries generally also enjoyed immunities, not because they were fortified, but because they preached the humble acceptance of earthly authority, which helped to keep the kingdom together. As a result, medieval society was a crazy patchwork of jurisdictions, allegiances, rights, and immunities.

In the economic sense, the central institution of feudalism was the manor. This consisted of the lands around a lord's castle or other home and was divided into the lord's *demesne* and the land assigned to the serfs. The serfs were given the *usufruct* of their land in return for unpaid labor on the *demesne*, or later in return for dues paid in money or kind. The manorial land was usually held in strips, and the village assembly would decide how to cultivate it by arrangement with the lord's steward. Very common was the three-field system, with one field for winter cereals, one for spring cereals, and one kept fallow.

The higher partner in each relationship was the lord, the lower one the vassal. Typically, there were four levels: king, count/duke/earl, knight, and serf. At the higher levels, the relationship was sealed by an oath of "commendation": the vassal knelt before his lord, received a banner, lance, and charter, and took an oath to serve his lord for life in return for protection.

The relationship was a hierarchical one, but contained an element of mutual agreement or contract, which distinguished vassaldom and serfdom, even at the lower levels of society, from slavery. This was true even when—as in the great majority of cases—there was no formal ceremony of commendation. Feudalism contained an explicitly Christian inner meaning: service from below and protection from above were considered to be the duty of the good Christian, and to break an oath of fealty was a terrible sin.

In practice, feudalism was far more than just military. The vassal became the subject of his lord, bound to obey his orders and regulations and submit to his judgment in disputes just as if he were a king. This was necessary in a highly decentralized society.

Chivalry

By the eleventh or twelfth century, feudalism had developed an elaborate system of moral concepts summed up in chivalry. A chivalrous person was meant to display honor and courage, loyalty and personal devotion, honesty, courtesy, and a duty to protect the weak.

One of its remarkable cultural forms was a knight's chaste devotion to a woman of superior social station. He would bear her banner into battle—or in

displays of jousting—and would perhaps compose poetry or sing love songs dedicated to her. This kind of ethereal devotion was absent from the ancient world. It seems to represent a sublimation of the kind of macho sexual desire one would expect of a warrior and its adaptation to a Christian and hierarchical culture.

Universal Kingship

The next stage in this progression was the ideal of universal kingship, leading toward the claim of restoration of the Roman Empire.

In 732, Charles Martel united the Frankish tribes to defeat the Saracens (Muslims) at Poitiers and showed what a strong king could do when he united the warlords. He was called Charles the Hammer because of his great victory, and he became the founder of the Carolingian dynasty.

Unlike in Byzantium, the Church needed defense by a secular ruler. During the eighth century, the pope was under increasing threat from the pagan Lombard kingdom. In 751, the Lombards captured Ravenna (the last Byzantine outpost in Italy). The pope appealed to both the Byzantine emperor and to the king of the Franks, Pepin III, to defend Rome. The emperor refused, but Pepin led his Frankish warriors across the Alps and defeated the Lombards. He handed Ravenna over to the pope as the first papal secular territory, the nucleus of what later became the "Papal States."

From then on, the popes no longer looked to Byzantium for secular protection—a decisive moment in the drifting apart of Eastern and Western Christendom.

Charlemagne

Pepin's achievement was dwarfed in the next generation by that of Charles the Great—Charlemagne—king of the Franks (768-814). He conquered and absorbed into the kingdom Lombardy in Italy, Saxony and Bavaria, Austria, and for a time northern Spain, defeating the tribes there and then converting them to Christianity. He thus ruled over most of what is today Christian western Europe, and it was under him that feudalism finally took shape.

On Christmas Day 800, the pope crowned Charlemagne as *"Most pious Augustus, crowned by God, the great and peace-loving Emperor."* Charles himself used the shorter title, "Emperor of the Romans," but later described himself as Rex Francorum et Imperator. On his seal, he inscribed the words *renovatio Romani imperii* (revival of the Roman Empire).

Charles made his imperial city Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen), where he was crowned once more—right on the border between today's French and German speakers. Charlemagne was able to rule effectively by creating close bonds between himself and his bishops and principal warlords. His decrees, or "*capitularies*," supplemented tribal laws, but did not usually replace them. Ultimately, though, the stability of his rule depended on acceptance by his aristocracy and by the Church. For that reason, Charles launched a program of reclaiming the cultural inheritance of both imperial Rome and Christianity.

As a territory, Charles's empire did not hang together for long, only a generation or so after his death. It was then divided into three at the Treaty of Verdun (843), leading ultimately to three realms, all of which claimed the heritage of Charlemagne:

- In the West, the kingdom of France (Capetian dynasty founded 987 after the death of the last of the Carolingians)

- In the center, the duchy of Lorraine or Burgundy: part of the Rhineland, Belgium, the Netherlands, and part of northern France

- In the East, the Holy Roman Empire, later the Holy Roman Empire of the German People, later the German Empire

The Heritage of Charlemagne

Many centuries later, Napoleon claimed that he was the successor to Charlemagne. The European Economic Community, set up in 1958, also evoked the heritage of Charlemagne and embraced roughly the same territory as his. Charlemagne's empire was a symbolic memory that many later rulers liked to evoke.

Europe at the death of Charlemagne – 814

The Roman imperial tradition was renewed in the eastern Frankish kingdom by Otto I, duke of Saxony, who was elected King of the Franks in Aachen in 936 and then was crowned in Charlemagne's church on his throne. He continued work done by his father in colonizing and converting the territories east and north of the Elbe, mostly then inhabited by Slavs. He defeated the Magyar invaders at the battle of Lechfeld in 955, important because it was the last time nomadic invaders threatened western Europe.

Otto also invaded Italy to secure his title as King of the Lombards, and eventually induced the pope to crown him as Roman emperor in 962. His son, Otto II, married a Byzantine princess, which implied that the Byzantines accepted the western empire as an equal partner. His grandson, Otto III, actually tried to make Rome his capital city in 998 and briefly introduced Byzantine-type ceremonies at his court before being driven out by city rebels in 1001.

Charlemagne

This was the beginning of the centuries-long attempt to combine kingship of the German people with rule over a universal empire. But the term "Holy Roman Empire" was first used only in 1254 and "of the German people" was not added until the fifteenth century.

The long ambiguity over whether Germany was an empire or a nation kept authority there fragmented and uncertain. No national German monarchy came into existence before the nineteenth century. This proved to be a weakness because the concept of a kingdom resting on a people or a nation was to prove the most effective political unit in Europe.

Questions and Essays

1. What were the essential features of feudalism?
2. Why did Charlemagne and subsequent monarchs attribute such importance to Christianity?

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Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Geoffrey Barraclough's *The Medieval Papacy.*

Medieval people yearned for peace. They lived in a world that was perpetually threatened by disorder and casual violence, whether from robbers, roaming armed bands, or greedy warlords. The great appeal of feudalism was that in return for service and loyalty one gained protection from someone armed and powerful.

But what about universal peace? Some time in the tenth century, churchmen began to believe that they might be the right people to bring about universal peace. After all, the Church was the greatest cultural and spiritual force in the former western empire. Through its rituals, sermons, church buildings, it strongly influenced people's outlook. Those who persistently flouted its teachings could be sanctioned by the imposition of penance, the withholding of communion, or in the worst cases, excommunication. Besides, the Church had a lot of worldly power through its landholdings, its courts, and its claims to tithes—ecclesiastical taxes—as well as through bishops working for monarchs.

To secure its spiritual power, though, the Church had to ensure its own purity and that of its congregations by a partial withdrawal from the world. Withdraw from the world in order to dominate it: that was the motto of the eleventh-century reformers.

Their work began in the monastery of Cluny, built in an obscure corner of Burgundy in the early tenth century. There the rule of St. Benedict was restored in its full purity. Monks divided their time between prayer, study, and manual labor to act as a welfare resource and a spiritual powerhouse for their communities. The example of Cluny soon spread to a whole network of monasteries covering much of Europe.

The Truce of God

With the help of some bishops, the Cluniacs sponsored the first peace movement in Europe under the name of the Peace of God, or the Truce of God. The Peace of God was intended to ensure nonviolence against certain categories of the population: children, women, pilgrims, merchants, at times Jews—those who could not defend themselves. The Truce of God was to restrain all fighting on certain occasions: Sundays, Lent, and certain religious festivals. Inevitably, churchmen found they could not impose peace themselves: they had to form their own militias to do the job or appeal to secular princes to back them up. Both methods contravened the spirit of the movement.

Hildebrand

There was one Cluniac who tried to achieve more—in fact, to establish Church domination over secular rulers. This was the monk Hildebrand, who became Pope Gregory VII in 1073. He declared that the "universal jurisdiction of St. Peter and his vicar" was a form of sovereignty higher than that of earthly rulers. The Church had the duty of protecting the vulnerable, poverty-stricken, and oppressed. To make his claims effective, he began tightening standards in the Church to ensure that right worship was practiced everywhere and that clergymen were free of vulgar concerns. In his proclamation *Dictatus Papae,* he claimed that the Roman Church could never err and that his actions could be judged by God alone, not by any human being. He also asserted the sole right to call church councils, act as the final appeal from all courts, appoint bishops and depose them, formulate doctrine binding on all believers, absolve subjects from their oaths of fealty to unjust rulers, and anoint and depose monarchs—even the Holy Roman Emperor himself.

Pope Gregory VII

The Emperor Henry IV refused to accept the pope's claims. He ruled over Germany as a member of the Salian dynasty, and he wished his son to succeed him, not to be dependent on the whims of the pope. Besides, bishops were a vital part of his machinery of government, and he felt it essential to be able to appoint and dismiss them himself. He appointed a bishop of Milan against Gregory's wishes. Gregory responded with a bull commanding him to withdraw the appointment and do penance for his impious deed. Henry responded with an epistle addressed from

"Henry, king not through usurpation but through the holy ordination of God, to Hildebrand, at present not Pope but false monk. . . . Relinquish the apostolic chair which thou hast usurped. Let another ascend the throne of St. Peter, who shall not practice violence under the cloak of religion, but shall teach the sound doctrine of St. Peter."

Henry followed this broadside by calling a synod of German bishops, who declared Gregory's election to the papacy null and void. Gregory thereupon excommunicated Henry and absolved all his vassals from fealty to him.

Those German barons who were Henry's enemies now felt entitled to call a council, declare his abdication, and elect a new emperor, Rudolf of Swabia, in his place. To placate them, Henry made a mid-winter journey across the Alps to the small town of Canossa, where he stood bare-headed in the snow until the pope would see him. He begged for Gregory's absolution and agreed to do penance.

This dramatic confrontation suggested that the pope had won. But Henry returned to appointing bishops himself. For the pope to take the "nuclear option" of excommunication each time would have meant continual warfare in Europe—the opposite of what he was trying to achieve. In any case, the sec-

ond time Henry did not allow himself to be humiliated. He reacted by convening a synod of bishops who elected another pope. This was the first of a series of schisms within the papacy that seriously endangered the spiritual authority of the Church.

In the end, Henry decided to use direct force. The next time he crossed the Alps, it was at the head of an army. In March 1084, he took the city of Rome. Gregory was rescued by Sicilian troops, but had to go into exile in Salerno, where he died the following year.

Henry hadn't completely won either. No emperor could risk losing the loyalty of his principal vassals. The fact was that the emperor and pope had to learn to work together. His son Henry V concluded an agreement with the pope (Concordat of Worms, 1122), under which the emperor agreed to allow bishops to be canonically elected by church councils, but was granted the right to be present at the election, cast a deciding vote if the elections were inconclusive, and appoint bishops to secular offices. Similar compromises were reached in England and France.

The Crusades

Just before Gregory became pope, the Seljuk Turks invaded the Byzantine Empire. By 1071, they defeated the imperial troops and occupied the heartland of the empire. Emperor Michael VII appealed for help to Gregory, who wrote epistles urging Christian princes to respond, hoping to use this occasion to unite Eastern and Western Christianity. The Turks continued to conquer and in 1095, the pope launched a new idea—the crusade: making a vow and taking up arms to save the Holy Land, in return receiving "indulgences" (remissions of sin). Urban II first preached the crusade at a great outdoor assembly at the Council of Clermont.

Cries of "*Deus volt!*" (God wills it!) met Urban's proclamation, and even common people came forward to take the vow and sew the red cross on their backs that marked them as crusaders. Many prospective crusaders sold or mortgaged their property to have the means to finance their crusades. Many believed that in Jerusalem they would witness the second coming of Christ. Urban promised a plenary indulgence for all those who took the vow, and later this indulgence was extended to those who paid others to go on crusade.

The First Crusade

The existing enmity between the Sunnis and Shiites allowed the First Crusade to capture some of the major cities of the Holy Land in 1098-99. The crusaders slaughtered the Jewish and Muslim inhabitants and then established control over a narrow part of the Palestine coast, and there set up the Crusader States. They also established control over southeast Anatolia. The success, however, did not last long. In 1144, the Turks retook much land and a second crusade was called.

Further Crusades

Pope Eugene III called for another crusade. This time very senior secular rulers took part, including the Kings of France, Poland, and Bohemia. They besieged the city of Damascus but were unable to capture it. This crusade

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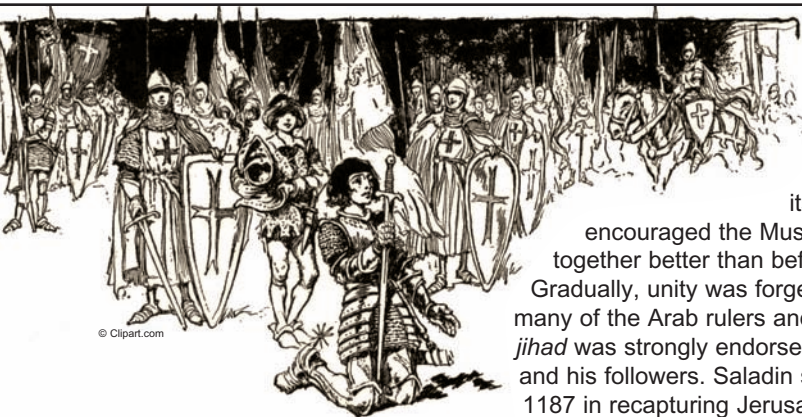
was the largest and best supported of all, and its failure encouraged the Muslims to work together better than before. Gradually, unity was forged amongst many of the Arab rulers and the idea of *jihad* was strongly endorsed by Saladin and his followers. Saladin succeeded in 1187 in recapturing Jerusalem, where he treated the Christian population with much greater restraint than the crusaders had done the Muslims and Jews.

Pope Gregory VIII called a third crusade. This was led by Frederick Barbarossa and then Richard I, who conquered Cyprus but was unable to reconquer Jerusalem. Instead, they concluded a treaty with Saladin, under whose conditions Christian pilgrims were able to visit the holy places.

There were several crusades after this, but one of them actually attacked the Orthodox Church. This meant that Western Christians were beginning to regard Eastern Christianity as a form of heresy or infidelity. The Fourth Crusade was intended to conquer Egypt, but ended up attacking Constantinople. There, in 1204, they put Alexis on the throne, but when he was murdered, they decided to rule Constantinople themselves and established the Latin kingdom of Constantinople.

Despite their early successes, after two centuries the Crusades ultimately failed. The Holy Land returned to complete control by Muslims.

Instead, the notion of crusading was applied to different kinds of campaigns. For example, there were the crusades against the Moors in Spain, pagans in northern Europe, and against various heretical movements.

The Church had made its bid for secular power and, though it did not truly succeed, it learned how to organize, collect money, and create an effective bureaucracy. The Crusades augmented the appeal of the papacy in some respects and extended its administrative scope. It became a worldly organization of great wealth and reach, something contrary to early Christian teachings. Finally, monarchs learned from the papacy that it was possible to create an extensive, secular organization for political purposes.

A depiction of the Battle of Damietta during the Fifth Crusade in 1219 from a fourteenth-century French manuscript

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions and Essays

1. Why did popes who preached the Truce of God also preach crusades?
2. To what extent was crusading a popular movement?

Suggested Reading

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Websites to Visit

1. The University of Kansas Lawrence, Kansas, page featuring "Cluny and Ecclesiastical Reform" by Lynn Harry Nelson, Emeritus Professor of Medieval History: a discussion of the Truce of God and the Peace of God. — www.ku.edu/kansas/medieval/108/lectures/cluny.html

2. North Park University, Chicago, site with a short fact sheet on Pope Gregory VII. The site contains several pages that furnish information covered in this lecture. — www.campus.northpark.edu/history/WebChron/WestEurope/GregoryVII.CP.html

3. From the Medieval Sourcebook at Fordham University, an article entitled "The Crusaders in Mainz, May 27, 1096": Two selections taken from a Hebrew historical account by an eyewitness named Solomon bar Samson, who wrote about 1140. — www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1096jews-mainz.html

4. The Catholic Encyclopedia has a good overview of all the crusades, with descriptions of terms and places through links in the narrative and good information about the people who became crusaders. — www.newadvent.org/cathen/04543c.htm

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Joseph R. Strayer's *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State.*

The modern state is characterized by a defined territory with borders, permanent and impersonal institutions, the rule of law, and sovereignty: agreement about an ultimate source of authority.

There were two preceding models: (1) the city-state, which commanded the intense loyalty of its full members, but was too small to survive indefinitely—was eventually defeated or absorbed in a larger authority, and (2) the empire, which was large and strong, but could command the full loyalty of only a small proportion of its inhabitants, usually a cosmopolitan elite, and was liable to fragment and break up.

The modern state combines the strengths of both these models: the nation-state resting on the notion of citizenship. This is a European development, and it helps to explain the strength of Europe in the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Asia has been building large and increasingly successful nation-states, and perhaps the Asian hegemony that existed in the world up to the eighteenth century will be renewed.

Factors That Favored the Eventual Rise of the Modern State in Medieval Europe:

- The gradual stabilization of western Europe following the defeat of the Magyars, the last Asiatic invaders, in the tenth century (though remember the Mongols devastated large areas of Eastern Europe in the thirteenth century)

- The growth of commerce, trade, and increasing use of money

- The gradual identification of a king with a particular core territory and a particular people (*gens*)

- The adoption of Roman law and the systematization of customary law

- The revival of the Roman ideal of *res publica*: political authority in which all citizens have a stake

- The adoption of symbols from the ancient world and from Christianity (the Roman Empire, David and Solomon from the Old Testament, relics of the True Cross)

- The use of bishops as administrators

- The model of the medieval papacy: canon law, tithe-collecting, church courts, establishment of consistent written divine service all over Europe, the ideal of the Peace of God, the organization of the Crusades

The Church's ambitious aims in the Gregorian revolution and the resulting conflict between church and state in the Investiture Contest almost demanded a secular institution that could take over and make effective the aims the

Church could not realize.

The Investiture Contest also fatally weakened the "Holy Roman Empire" and made it necessary to invent another political organism, which could take over many of its failed functions. In the long run, this was the national monarchy.

Growth of literacy in the twelfth century became an important factor. For permanent, impersonal institutions, written records are essential. Many of the early literates were churchmen, and they played a major part in royal administration—even up to Cardinal Richelieu in seventeenth-century France.

War made new demands on monarchies: from the thirteenth century, gunpowder came from China and was introduced first of all in large iron or bronze cannons, then in personal firearms. Defense against them required much stronger fortifications and much larger numbers of infantry. Feudal levies had to be supplemented by mercenaries. All this was terribly expensive and could not be financed out of the monarch's domains.

Because of these demands, royal household management was gradually transformed into fiscal institutions. This led to monarchs taking in tolls and market dues, income from fines imposed by law courts, and customs duties. These had to be systematically collected and precise records kept. Monarchs had to try to levy taxes systematically, which required an elaborate bureaucracy.

Royal courts of justice gradually became accepted for serious crimes and as sites where the decisions of lower courts could be appealed. This made it possible to reduce the incidence of feuds and blood-vengeance, and hence of local wars. This policy was popular with everyone except warlords and helped to augment royal authority.

In all these matters, the papacy offered the first example: Justinian's Law Code had been largely supplanted by Germanic tribal laws in secular society, but its concepts had always underlain canon law in the Church. From the eleventh century, it filtered back into the practice of secular princes. Scholars at Bologna began the recovery and study of the Justinian Code, and students sent by princes flocked to study under them. This was the origin of the first European university.

England

The first example of a modern kingdom was in England:

- Already in the eleventh century, it had a national record of landholdings and property
- Royal courts increasingly dealt with serious crime and with disputes over land and property
- In the twelfth century, it had an exchequer, which audited accounts submitted by officials from all regions
- It was able to begin assessing and levying taxes, first for emergencies and later as a permanent feature

Raising taxes was an especially sensitive feature, and from the mid-thirteenth century, kings felt it was advisable only with the consent of social elites. The king was also becoming the focus of loyalty for a whole people.

When the English barons rebelled against King John in 1215, they were not trying to destroy this unity, but rather to change the arrangements within it in their own favor.

Becket

The one power that initially stood out against the king was the Church, whose ultimate focus of loyalty was Rome. Henry II (1154-1189) had his chancellor Thomas à Becket elected Archbishop of Canterbury, expecting him to augment royal power. To his horror, Becket became an exponent of Gregorian reform, resigned as chancellor, and began to resist taxation of the Church and to insist on the right of Church courts to try all clergymen. The king demanded the right to try clergy and to influence the choice of bishops. Thomas appealed to the pope, and then fled abroad. There was an attempt at a compromise and Thomas returned to Canterbury in 1170, but was there murdered by four knights. Henry later did penance at Canterbury, but Thomas was generally regarded as a martyr, and his grave became a shrine.

Henry II being whipped at the grave of Thomas á Becket

France

The French monarchy developed in a similar way to the English one, but more slowly because its potential territory was much larger and the princes and lords were much stronger. But the French king was gradually able to project his power outwards, driving the English out of Normandy, Anjou, and Poitou in the early thirteenth century. As provinces were absorbed, they were allowed to keep their own customs and laws, but royal officials were posted there to supervise their operation, and to enforce consistency in tax collection, the raising of armies, and the treatment of serious crimes. The king established his right to hear appeals from local courts, tax the clergy, and try clergymen in spite of the pope's protests.

By the thirteenth century, the cult was beginning to develop of the French king as a "holy monarch" ruling over a special and chosen people. Louis IX (1226-1270) became known as "Louis the Pious" and led the Seventh Crusade (1248-50). Philip IV (1285-1314) called himself "the most Christian king," even when in conflict with the current pope.

Conflicts

From the 1330s to the 1450s, the English and French monarchies were both caught up in conflicts over the English claim to territories in France. Warlords, and sometimes foreign armies, once again roamed the countries with their armed bands, making law and order impossible to enforce. But that very danger meant that the restoration of order was perceived as a sacred duty, and in the long run gave greater prestige to royal power.

Joan of Arc

In 1428, Joan, the daughter of a tenant farmer, persuaded the Dauphin to let her lead an army to relieve Orleans, which had been besieged by the English for months. She claimed that she had been personally commanded by God, and she went into battle with a banner depicting Christ in Judgment. Her army defeated the English. Later she took part in the ceremony of crowning the Dauphin as Charles VII in Reims cathedral. Such was the disunity of the country, though, that she was captured and tried as a heretic by an English-dominated court, then burned at the stake. Her legend, however, did much to confirm the French sense of being a chosen people.

Spain

Spain built its own national legends during the long, slow process of *reconquista*, wars fought against the Muslims with the aim of driving them out altogether. In the twelfth century, the great mosque of Toledo became a Christian cathedral. In the process, small monarchies, like those of Leon, Aragon, Navarre, and Castile, moved from conflict and rivalry toward amalgamation in one Spanish crown in 1479, finally sealed by the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile.

Germany and Italy

Germany and Italy formed counter-examples. In both, the ideal of the Holy Roman Empire rivaled and in many ways displaced the sense of a German or Italian political community. The Golden Bull of 1356 laid down that the Emperor was to be elected by seven superior German princes, or electors, all of whom received full sovereign rights in their own territories. In practice, all German princes claimed equivalent rights. In Germany, the growth of secular sovereignty benefited not the emperor, but rather the lower-level rulers, the princes, and the cities. In Italy, too, it was the cities that came to exercise the most powerful authority.

Parliaments

The long-term result of the development of kingdoms was the emergence of the institutions we have come to call parliaments. We consider elected parliaments an essential feature of democracy. However, we should bear in mind that this "democracy" is quite different from the democracy of ancient Greece. In modern parliaments, citizens do not participate directly, as they did in the assemblies of ancient Athens. This is representative democracy, in which citizens elect representatives to conduct business. The origin of this system is in the Middle Ages, not the ancient world.

Kings would summon their chief vassals to take counsel with them and to celebrate religious festivals or great occasions. Major decisions were often taken at these "privy councils." They could also function as supreme courts, to which appeal might be made from lower courts. So they helped the king to consolidate his authority, which was essential in an age when kings might be in conflict with the papacy, trying to restrain over-mighty barons from rebelling, securing acceptance for their coinage, and collecting taxes to pay for bigger and better armies.

Sometimes kings had to reach specific agreements with their chief vassals for cooperation to continue. Thus in England, John, faced with possible rebellion by his barons, negotiated with them the Magna Carta (1215), under which barons and freemen were not to be taxed without their consent, nor imprisoned or dispossessed except under the law and by the judgment of their own peers. Merchants were also guaranteed the right to trade peacefully. In Hungary, the Golden Bull (1222) made similar provisions, though more favorable to the barons. All subsequent Hungarian monarchs had to swear to uphold the Golden Bull.

In the Spanish kingdom of Leon, representatives of the cities met with the king before the end of the twelfth century. In other Spanish kingdoms, representatives of the three "estates"—lords, clergy, and burgesses (townsmen)—met regularly by the mid-thirteenth century. This was probably necessary to restore authority after the Moors were driven out and to continue that process. Most German princes also called their principal vassals periodically in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and the German cities developed their own municipal assemblies. At the level of the Holy Roman Empire, however, the imperial Reichstag, attended theoretically by the emperor's tenants-in-chief, had little real power.

In England, from the thirteenth century, the king summoned representatives from the shires and boroughs to join his tenants in chief in deciding issues of justice, finance, or war, and to join with him in issuing important new decrees, which carried more weight if they had the imprimatur of an assembly. In England, the higher clergy usually sat with the lords, and the lower clergy were not represented at all, so that there gradually took shape not three "estates," but two chambers, Lords and Commons.

The way in which such assemblies evolved differed greatly from one country to another. In France, for example, the Estates General never managed to negotiate a permanent status for itself. Much more power remained with provincial assemblies. The so-called *parlements* were in fact law courts, with the Parlement of Paris as the Supreme Court.

In Poland, by contrast, the nobles, or *szlachta*, gained so much power in the *sejm* that the kingdom was officially referred to as a "republic" or "commonwealth." Among their rights was to elect the monarch, and they ruled their landed estates like tiny sovereigns—to the great detriment of the status and living standards of the peasants.

In different ways, these assemblies all embodied the political community, whether that was described in terms of "estates" or "nations." Rulers no longer claimed personal loyalty from particular individuals for particular purposes, but claimed a general and impersonal subjection from all the peoples and communities living on a certain territory. This was the first step on the way to the nation-state.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions and Essays

1. What features of the modern state can be found in the Middle Ages in western Europe?
2. Does it make any sense to speak of "nations" in the Middle Ages?

Suggested Reading

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Websites to Visit

1. Professor James B. Calvert, University of Denver article entitled "Cannons and Gunpowder," a short, but thorough, treatment of the subject. — www.du.edu/~jcalvert/tech/cannon.htm

2. The Medieval Sourcebook at Fordham University article entitled "Edward Grim: The Murder of Thomas Becket," translated by Dawn Marie Hayes of New York University. — www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/grim-becket.html

3. The International Joan of Arc Society repository of scholarly and pedagogic information about Joan of Arc, collected by faculty, independent scholars, and students at Southern Methodist University. — www.smu.edu/ijas/

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Carlo M. Cipolla's *Before the Industrial Revolution: European Society and Economy, 1000-1700* (Chapters 4 to 8).

Primitive societies get by on barter—but any trade beyond family and immediate community requires some token that is generally acknowledged and accepted.

Money needs to be (1) recognizably valuable in itself, (2) durable and unchangeable, and (3) portable. Cowrie shells and amulets have fulfilled this function, but they are only acknowledged within a limited range. Gold and silver have definite advantages: their value is widely recognized, they do not decompose, and they can be carried.

However, because most people cannot actually test the value of a coin, it is essential that someone trustworthy guarantee its value. This may be a bank, but more often coins are validated by the image of the ruler stamped on their reverse. This also serves as a way by which the ruler propagandizes his image, his power, his benevolence, and his piety. Often a formula such as "defender of the faith" is found on a coin.

Money is infinitely interchangeable and flexible, and can be broken down into a quantity of units of exactly the size one requires. It is pure instrument, neutral with regard to all ideals and beliefs. In fact, its presence has a tendency to downgrade values, to reduce them to insignificance or even dissolve them altogether. With friends, money defiles or at least complicates the personal relationship. With enemies, the basic underlying trust necessary for monetary transactions is lacking.

Money embodies social trust: it can be safely used and exchanged by people who have never met before and will never meet again. It enables them to carry out complex transactions, which may deeply affect each other's lives. If that underlying trust is not present, money will not create it. This is one of the most crucial roles of the state.

Once that underlying trust is present, then money is especially useful to outsiders and people who have low status. They can use it in place of other social levers to acquire resources or influence people.

Money has another tendency: it tends to accumulate in the hands of those who already have a lot of it. In this way, it intensifies social inequality. We have already seen what a problem this was to the Greeks and Romans: indeed, that problem probably destroyed the Roman Republic.

Indirect Money

A remarkable feature of late medieval European society is the appearance of monetary instruments and forms of credit that had earlier been absent or underdeveloped. They appeared because of an improvement in the European

economy that resulted partly from relative peace, but also from technical factors such as horse-shoes; scythes; iron ploughs; water-mills; increasing trade with the stable and wealthy Arab empires and even along the "silk road" with China; and the clearing of forests, draining of swamps, and acquisition of new land in Eastern Europe.

Such changes meant that agricultural production would sustain a larger population. The population of Europe probably rose from about 40 to 60 million between 1000 and 1200, then to 73 million by 1300, before the sharp decline caused by the Black Death. Towns became larger and more numerous, and in some countries gained "immunities" from their feudal lords, including the right to bear arms and form their own militias; make laws and levy taxes; hold law-courts; form corporations and guilds; and award any immigrant freedom from serfdom once he had lived there for a year and a day.

Urban Revival

The urban revival began in northern Italy and then in the Low Countries, where the textile industry began to mass-produce clothes in the twelfth century. Trade between the two passed over the Alpine passes, then up the Rhine, which became the principal commercial artery of western Europe.

The first centers of international commerce were the trade fairs. The first of them was Champagne, in Burgundy, not far from the Rhineland trade route. Merchants and moneylenders from much of Europe would congregate there for a few days each year to display their wares, buy and sell, settle their mutual accounts, and then disperse to their home towns or carry on to another fair. This helped to produce a division of labor and thereby increase the value of all production.

Associations of Trading Cities

The Hanseatic League arose in the wake of German missionaries converting the pagan peoples of the Baltic and the Teutonic Knights setting up viable principalities there. It was an association of merchants of the trading towns on the North and Baltic Seas and on the lower reaches of rivers flowing into them. They were rivals to each other, of course, but they also had a hefty common interest in secure and peaceful trade throughout northern Europe. The League was founded in the late twelfth century and reached its height about a century later.

The League's aim was to create stable conditions for trade by ensuring that portage, storage, and marketing were available, and by providing means of peacefully ensuring payment and settling disputes. It established its own supreme court in Lübeck, and Hanseatic laws and practices were widely accepted all over Europe as a basis for commercial procedures.

Trade in Southern Europe

In southern Europe, the Crusades for a time stimulated Mediterranean trade. It was Italian cities that mainly benefited. It was then, naturally enough, in Venice and the Italian city-states that the new monetary instruments first appeared. In the Italian cities from the twelfth century or so, a powerful sense

A ship of the Hanseatic League at a port-of-call

of social solidarity was built up comparable to that in ancient Athens or early republican Rome.

The major cities of northern Italy all had Roman or even pre-Roman foundations, so they had a long history and venerable institutions. None of them, however, was strong enough to lead a movement toward Italian national unity. During the eleventh century, the Holy Roman Emperor lost control over them, and as a result, the region descended into anarchy, with aristocratic factions fighting one another in long-lasting feuds. To protect themselves against the resulting destruction, a number of cities either created new communal institutions or revived long dormant ones. The emperor at first resisted these incorporations and tried to retain his regalian powers, but he proved unable to reassert them by armed force: he was defeated at the battle of Legnano (1176) by the Lombard League, headed by Milan. Thereafter, by the Peace of Constance (1183), he explicitly permitted the cities to set up their own assemblies, elect their own governors, make their own laws, and rule over the *contado*, the rural hinterland of each city.

The eleventh to thirteenth century was a period of remarkable economic growth in northern Italy. With the decline of the Byzantine Empire, much of the affluent Mediterranean trade was taken over by Venice and Genoa. The cities of Tuscany were enriched by commerce and industry. Florence in particular was able to use the flowing rivers of the Tuscan hills for the processes of its wool industry. Around all these cities traditional agriculture gave way to much more lucrative market-gardening.

Guilds

During the twelfth century, there was great pressure from the *popolo* to enter the commune. They were not the urban masses, but usually rather what one

might call the intermediate elites or middle class, and they became much more numerous at this time. To press their case, they would form guilds: associations that organized the members of one profession or skill. Each guild was founded by a mutual oath-swearing ceremony performed in a church or chapel where the religious life of the guild was centered. They had many social functions, like providing for sick members or for orphans, and arranging funerals.

Public Debt

During the late twelfth century, some cities, beginning with Genoa, began to raise compulsory loans among its own citizens to fund the raising of mercenary armies. Loans were compulsory, firstly to demonstrate civic patriotism, secondly to evade the Church's ban on usury. The repayment of these loans, with interest, was guaranteed by the Council and had first call on the city's revenues. Lenders preferred this arrangement to direct taxation, because they received interest income and an asset they could sell. Over time, these loans came to be seen as sound long-term investments for wealthier or even not-so-wealthy citizens. This is the first instance in Europe of a public debt functioning as a focus of investment, and it greatly increased the cities' ability to raise finance when they needed it. It

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Worker's guild wreath from
Bavaria, ca. seventeenth century

was much more difficult for absolute monarchs to do so, because they were perceived as being more likely to default on loans. This was one reason why constitutional governments tended to become richer—and also why monarchs increasingly borrowed money through banks, rather than directly.

Banks

Another vital, though not exactly new, institution was that of the banks. Moneychangers and goldsmiths would offer to look after the coinage of their clients, keeping them in safes and vaults. The receipts they issued were often acceptable as money. Gradually, banks found that, provided they kept back a certain amount, they could safely lend out the rest and thus make some money for themselves. They could also help clients who had money on deposit by writing instructions to other banks to make them payments. Slightly more sophisticated was the bill of exchange: a banker in Florence would receive a payment in florins from a merchant and would instruct his agent in

London to make an equivalent payment to a merchant there in pounds sterling. This was much safer than traveling with a lot of coins, and also facilitated international trade with different currencies. Even more important, it increased the amount of money in circulation by offering credit. Banks' practices varied according to the degree of confidence they had in the economic situation and in individual debtors. But if they kept only one-third of the money needed for transactions, then the amount of money in circulation increased by three times. This was obviously crucial for stimulating trade and industry.

The Corporation

Another innovation of the time was the public company or corporation (in Italian, the *commenda*, or, in its more developed form, the *compagnia*). A *commenda* was originally a group of people who would club together to spread the risk and share the profits of a commercial voyage. They would finance a merchant for a distant voyage. He would take goods to sell there, and with the proceeds buy other goods and return home to sell them. Goods from the East were much prized and very valuable. By the fourteenth century, more extended partnerships were becoming common. Companies were appearing that combined maritime trading with banking and manufacturing.

Many companies began as family operations, operating on the principle of joint liability. But gradually they extended, drawing in other owners, or shareholders. Initially, shareholders were owners in the full sense: that is, they were liable for the debts of their company up to the full extent of their assets.

Some of the risks could be attenuated, or at least shared, by the device of insurance (for example, against the possibility of the shipwreck of a trading vessel). Some large banks offered that kind of cover—insurance was another financial technique with a great future.

Law

Revived Roman law was essential to these companies: especially corporate law, under which companies were legal persons separate from the individuals who composed them. Without a sound system of banking and bills of exchange, their operations would have been impossible. They also created new more sophisticated systems of bookkeeping that enabled them to identify which of their activities were profitable and which were not. This is the beginning of rational and systematic economics, which we take for granted today. It is also the beginning of capitalism and of modern notions of investment.

Downsides

The more money penetrates a society, and especially credit, the more social inequality grows. Therefore, social conflict and conflict over resources and economic status becomes crucial.

Money is already at one remove from the goods it buys. Instruments of credit are then at one remove from money. If confidence in people or in economic conditions should weaken, then the structure begins to look like a house of cards. A collapse can be sudden and cumulative. That is why the capitalist economy is cyclical, liable to surges of growth, but also to panics and crises.

On the other hand, when the new instruments of credit are adopted by constitutional states representing whole nations, then their capacity to generate economic growth is immense. That is one fundamental reason for the power of nation-states in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

One of the outstanding results of the new wealth generated within the cities of Italy in the late Middle Ages was that people began to have greater confidence in their ability to manage their own fate. This helped to produce the characteristic culture of the Renaissance.

Venice (right) and Florence (below) were two of the earlier financial centers of the late medieval period in Italy.

Questions and Essays

1. How did the use of money change in the late Middle Ages?
2. Why was the sense of municipal identity so strong in the late medieval Italian cities?

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Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Paul Johnson's *The Renaissance: A Short History.*

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Chigi Madonna by Botticelli, 1470

The revival of the city-states didn't only show itself in the financial sphere, it also revived intensive interest in classical culture and civilization in general. This is what Renaissance means, a rebirth of interest in the classics, in ancient Greece and Rome, and a renewal of its ideas, institutions, and practices. It wasn't until this time that the period after the fall of Rome began to be referred to as the "dark ages" or "middle ages," implying that man was returning to a new period of light in the Renaissance.

During the Renaissance, a new confidence blossomed. The growth of the city-states and the economy, and the rise of credit, gave people the assurance to take fate into their own hands. However, this did not mean that the roots of the Renaissance were anti-religious. In fact, many of the institutions of the Renaissance grew out of religious brotherhoods and church parishes, the difference being that these institutions were opposed to the idea that human beings were helpless and enslaved by sin and corruption. In many ways, the Renaissance was anti-ecclesiastical, wanting to bring the Church under nominal secular control. In essence, during the Renaissance, there was a move away from the idea of the City of God and a return to the secular city.

Dante

A precursor to the Renaissance, Dante is an important figure for understanding the beginnings and tendencies that led to its inception.

Dante (1265-1321), a poet of the late Middle Ages, the greatest Italian poet of his generation, wrote the *Divine Comedy*. Its main figure, Dante himself, travels through the successive circles of hell, purgatory, and heaven, guided by Virgil for much of the way. Dante's work, though influenced by Roman concepts, portrays a cosmos that is shaped by divine intention, not by human intention, and its great characters are not heroes. In Dante's poem, the soul

travels from sin, through repentance, to salvation, and the culmination is a final vision of God. It is an epic not based on a city or community, but on the individual and his salvation and redemption.

The *Divine Comedy* was written in Italian, which was enormously important. He believed the vernacular speech of his native city of Florence was just as worthy a medium for exalted truths as Latin or Greek. The appearance of the *Divine Comedy* marks a point where a largely international clerical Latin culture begins to give way to a largely lay, vernacular, and national culture. Dante, by choosing the Florentine Italian dialect, was converting it into a literary language that eventually became a model for the whole Italian nation.

Dante Alighieri
(1265-1321)

Dante disapproved of the papacy's attempt to gain world power and didn't believe that it could guarantee a peaceful civilization. He lamented the fact that the continuing weakness of the Holy Roman Empire fragmented Italian civilization. He hoped to be able to point the way to the revival of civil peace and for the cooperation among Italian city-states.

Architecture and Painting

The Renaissance began in Italian city-states in the study of their numerous Roman ruins. During the fifteenth century, architects picked up Roman models and abandoned the soaring Gothic structures of the Middle Ages, returning to the round arches, columns, and pediments of classical architecture. In the early fifteenth century, Filippo Brunelleschi studied the mathematics of domes to build the very large one in the Duomo in Florence. He also calculated the means of introducing perspective into

The basic architectural project for the Cathedral in Florence was designed by Arnolfo di Cambio at the end of the thirteenth century; the cupola was created by Filippo Brunelleschi, while the facade that completed it was carried out as late as the late nineteenth century.

a two-dimensional painting, a technique taken up by Masaccio and other painters. This led to a general tenet of the Renaissance: depict reality as it really is. Painting was to become an imitation of reality, as opposed to the medieval focus on more symbolic representations. With the Renaissance, not only does the technique of perspective become prevalent, but so does accurate depiction of landscape and background. For these same reasons, painters began to take an interest in portraying individuals. So was born the art of serious portraiture.

Biographies began to be written during this period. Writers took more interest in individuals as individuals, giving detailed portraits of their lives to build the picture of a personality.

Science

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Drawings by Leonardo da Vinci: Self-portrait; the Vitruvian Man; technical drawing of a motor for a self-propelled automobile; sketches of a baby.

Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) was the illegitimate son of a Florentine notary. He was apprenticed to study painting and sculpture, and then employed by the Duke of Milan. He became, among many things, an advisor on architecture and engineering. He began to develop ways of studying natural objects, which he believed would lead to a better understanding of them. Quite often, he would draw them, because he believed that observing and recording objects in the natural world would help one to understand them. In the course of his life, he wrote a number of treatises, richly illustrated with his drawings, on subjects as varied as architecture, perspective and proportion, mechanics, human anatomy, optics, and botany. He was one of the first people to try to present a unified theory of natural forms and he has become the ideal of the all-around cultured person.
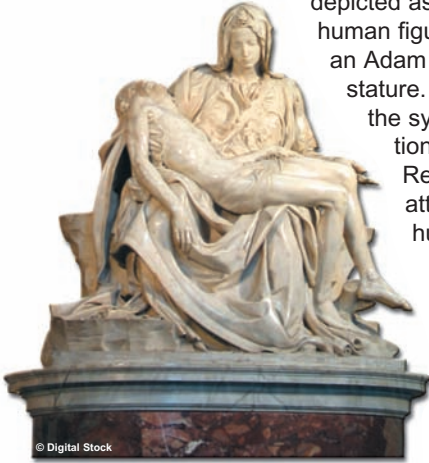
Michelangelo

Regarded as a follower of da Vinci, Michelangelo was also a Florentine citizen who grew up under the patronage of the Medicis. He developed many of da Vinci's ideas, especially as a painter and sculptor. He became noted for his ability, through the depiction of gesture and facial expression, to articulate complex emotional and physical states. He worked for the Vatican and sculpted the figure of David in front of the Cathedral in Florence, and in doing so revived the tradition of the heroic male nude as it had been practiced in

Greece. He also created a famous fresco of the creation of Adam, in which God the Father is depicted as a very human figure alongside an Adam of equal stature. This shows the symbolic relationship that the Renaissance attributed to human beings.

David
by Michelangelo

Pietá
sculpted c. 1498-99
by Michelangelo Buonarrati (1475-1564)
Displayed in the Basilica of St. Peter, Vatican

The Medicis

By the late fourteenth century, the smaller Italian city-states were gradually falling prey to the larger ones. In the course of the fifteenth century, the larger city-states were, in turn, falling to the emerging European monarchies of Spain and France. In Florence, which was the wealthiest of the Italian cities, power fell into the hands of the Medici family. They were skilful patrons who took care to spread the offices of State widely, so that few factions were totally excluded, while retaining the main powers.

Cosimo de Medici, the first of the rulers from the Medici family, did everything he could to build the glory of the city. He patronized the leading artists of the time and organized the search for ancient manuscripts. He used what he found to create the Laurentian Library, which became a vital source on Italian humanism. Cosimo also tried to restore the unity of the Christian Church by calling a council that brought along a short-lived reunion of the Orthodox and Catholic Church.

Cosimo's grandson, Lorenzo, ruled Florence from 1469 to 1478 with his brother Giuliano, who was killed by a rival family with close ties to the pope and the king of Naples. It fell to Lorenzo to go to Naples to sort out the conflict. His success at achieving peace between two of the rival states gained him much respect. He became known as "The Wise," or "The Magnificent," both for his diplomacy and his patronage of the arts. He was a poet himself, encouraged the development of printing, and gathered around himself a circle of

Bust of Lorenzo de Medici
terra-cotta, ca. 1480
by Andrea del Verrocchio

humanist friends, whom he called "The Platonic Academy." Botticelli, da Vinci, and Michelangelo all enjoyed his patronage.

Lorenzo, however, did not have a talent for business and with his extravagant lifestyle squandered the family fortune. When he died in 1492, the Medici system began to founder. In 1494, Florence decided to revive its great council. The citizens were divided as to how to compete with the great monarchies of France and Spain. Savonarola, a Dominican monk sent to preach by Lorenzo before his death, had one suggestion.

Savonarola

The situation of the Church in Florence was an ambiguous one. Florence belonged to the faction that supported the Roman papacy, yet there was continuing tension between the Florentine Commune and the Vatican over the appointment of bishops and parish priests. This was partly because the Church owned nearly a third of the land in and around Florence, and sometimes the Church denounced the de Medicis for their corrupt practices within the Commune. The Church, in fact, began to call for a return to true republican liberty, which Savonarola took up. His response was to aim for a "City of God" in Florence. He believed that the city's problems were caused because the citizens were divided and had fallen from high standards of morality. Savonarola preached the need for universal repentance. He was at first very successful and was invited to reform the Florentine constitution. He tried to set up a Christian democracy whose principal body was a Great Council open to all the citizens. Under Savonarola's influence, many of the customary practices of Florentine citizens were banned, like gambling and prostitution.

Savonarola's success, however, was temporary. The anti-Medici faction that had brought him to power had grown weaker, and the people soon wearied of his Puritanism. The Franciscans loathed him and eventually the pope excommunicated him. He was arrested and executed.

Savonarola's death did not end the crisis. The appearance of French armies in the north of Italy and Spanish armies in the south meant that the international situation was more threatening than ever. Florence itself was still conducting wars with other city-states, in particular Pisa. Florence was forced to raise taxes to pay for mercenary armies, which it depended on for defense. At this stage, Machiavelli came forth to offer his attempts for reconciliation.

Machiavelli

Like Savonarola, Machiavelli confronted the same problems and wanted to increase the unity of citizens and improve their morale. However, the solutions he provided were quite different. He never had the opportunity to put his ideas into practice, but they are of enormous importance for the development of culture and our understanding of politics. He fell foul of the Medicis, was imprisoned, and then was released and put under house arrest. It was here that he wrote his famous book: *The Prince*.

At the center of Machiavelli's ideal are the Roman Republic and the morale of a republic sustained and defended by its own citizens. Machiavelli was unimpressed by the mercenary troops upon which Florence was dependent.

He raised a scheme to initiate a citizens' militia to fight in the city's defense. He believed that the patriotism and civic conscience of "civilian soldiers" would increase the strength of the city and its wealth too.

He realized, though, that Florence (and Italy as a whole) was incapable of reviving this sense of Roman civic virtue. He decided that the most important priority was to avoid constant civil strife, and that this could only be achieved by appointing a strong authoritarian ruler. He posited that the needs of the state take precedence over all other forms of morality. Christian morality would need to be laid aside, he said, when civil peace is threatened. For him, the achievement of peace within the city becomes the supreme goal of politics. The Prince, therefore, does not need to obey traditional or Christian moral principles, he merely has to proceed from the assumption that human beings' desires are limitless, and that therefore civil peace can normally only be attained by someone enforcing clear limits. That was the job of the ruler.

Machiavelli's work is an exploration of the consequences of detaching politics from Christianity. His work was also a handbook of advice for the ruler. In general, Machiavelli had a cyclical view of history. At certain phases, he thought civil virtue reached a height and then decayed. He was the first person to take a scientific attitude toward politics, trying to study it to discover general principles that could explain the political behavior of human beings. One can regard him then as one of the first modern social scientists.

Overview

Renaissance thinkers had confidence in human beings. They may have had a somber view of human nature, but nevertheless, they believed that the exercise of human willpower, based on knowledge, would enable human beings to overcome many difficulties and take control of their own fates. This meant not banning the Church, but giving it a more modest position in the scale of social values. Some people regard the Renaissance as the moment when European civilization at last came to maturity. It is possible to take the opposite view as well, that the Renaissance began to assert man's self-sufficiency and to create a rift between man and the eternal truths of Christianity.

The Renaissance generated new systems of finance and new ideas in the sciences and the arts, which have continued to be influential up to modern times. It created a new consciousness in politics and generated new ideas about how authority could be exercised. Whether considered good or evil, the Renaissance was undoubtedly a major turning point in European civilization.

Questions and Essays

1. What was reborn in the Renaissance?
2. What was "Renaissance humanism"?

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