

# A HISTORY OF WESTERN SOCIETY

THIRD EDITION

VOLUME II:  
FROM  
ABSOLUTISM  
TO THE  
PRESENT

McKAY  
HILL  
BUCKLER





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FROM ABSOLUTISM  
TO THE PRESENT

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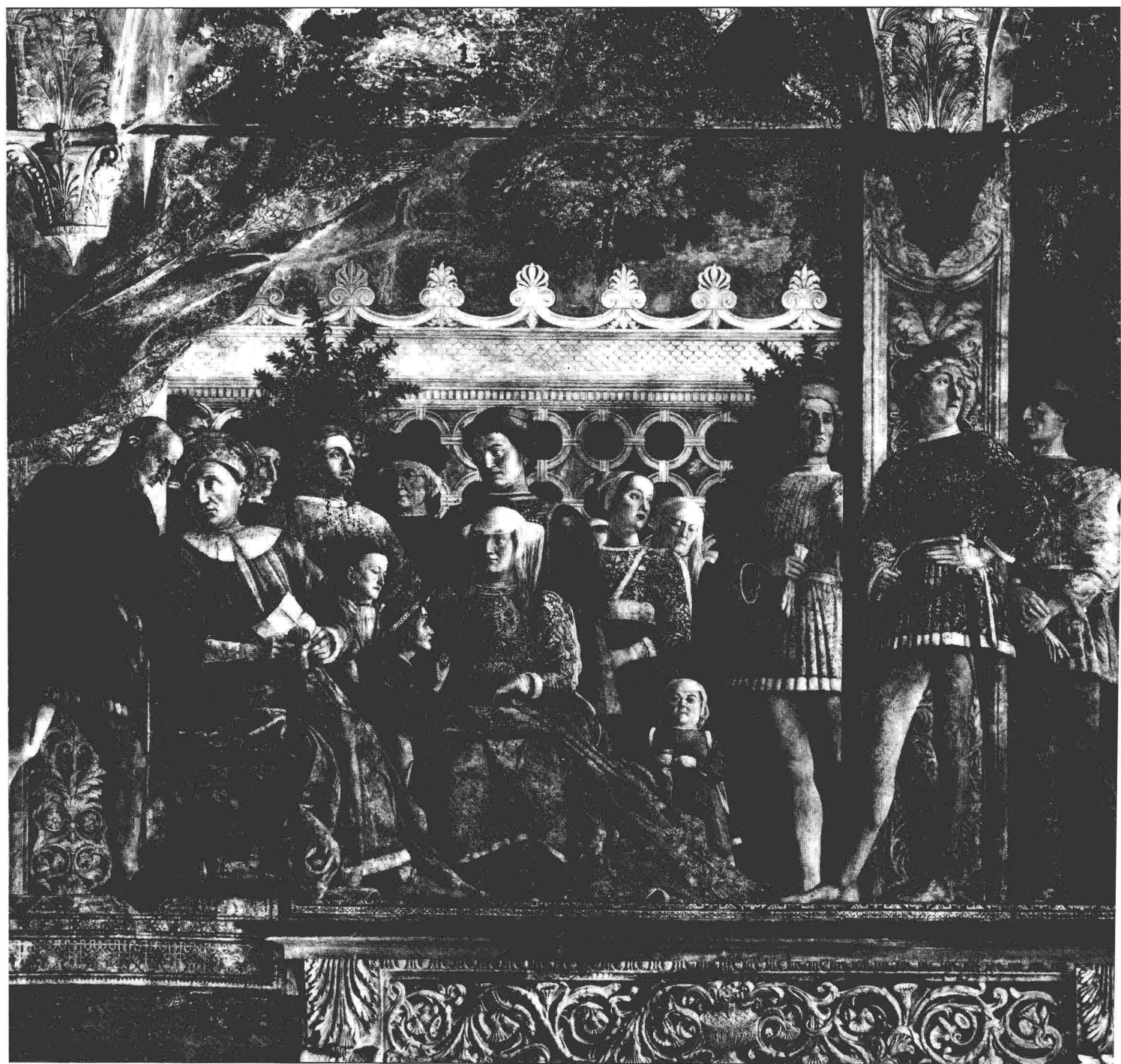
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**A HISTORY OF  
WESTERN SOCIETY**

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### About the Authors

**John P. McKay** Born in St. Louis, Missouri, John P. McKay received his B.A. from Wesleyan University (1961), his M.A. from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy (1962), and his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley (1968). He began teaching history at the University of Illinois in 1966 and became a professor there in 1976. John won the Herbert Baxter Adams Prize for his book *Pioneers for Profit: Foreign Entrepreneurship and Russian Industrialization, 1885-1913* (1970). He has also written *Tramways and Trolleys: The Rise of Urban Mass Transport in Europe* (1976) and has translated Jules Michelet's *The People* (1973). His research has been supported by fellowships from the Ford Foundation, the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and IREX. His articles and reviews have appeared in numerous journals, including *The American Historical Review*, *Business History Review*, *The Journal of Economic History*, and *Slavic Review*. He edits *Industrial Development and the Social Fabric: An International Series of Historical Monographs*.

**Bennett D. Hill** A native of Philadelphia, Bennett D. Hill earned an A.B. at Princeton (1956) and advanced degrees from Harvard (A.M., 1958) and Princeton (Ph.D., 1963). He taught history at the University of Illinois at Urbana, where he was department chairman from 1978 to 1981. He has published *English Cistercian Monasteries and Their Patrons in the Twelfth Century* (1968) and *Church and State in the Middle Ages* (1970); and articles in *Analecta Cisterciensia*, *The New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, *The American Benedictine Review*, and *The Dictionary of the Middle Ages*. His reviews have appeared in *The American Historical Review*, *Speculum*, *The Historian*, *The Catholic Historical Review*, and *Library Journal*. He has been a fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies and has served on committees for the National Endowment for the Humanities. Now a Benedictine monk at St. Anselm's Abbey, Washington, D.C., he is also a Lecturer at the University of Maryland at College Park.

**John Buckler** Born in Louisville, Ky., John Buckler received his B.A. from the University of Louisville in 1967. Harvard University awarded him the Ph.D. in 1973. From 1984 to 1986 he was the Alexander von Humboldt Fellow at Institut für Alte Geschichte, University of Munich. He is currently an associate professor at the University of Illinois, and is serving on the Subcommittee on Cartography of the American Philological Association. In 1980 Harvard University Press published his *The Theban Hegemony, 371-362 B.C.* His articles have appeared in journals both here and abroad, like the *American Journal of Ancient History*, *Classical Philology*, *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, *Classical Quarterly*, *Wiener Studien*, and *Symbolae Osloenses*.

## PREFACE

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*A HISTORY OF WESTERN SOCIETY* grew out of the authors' desire to infuse new life into the study of Western civilization. We knew full well that historians were using imaginative questions and innovative research to open up vast new areas of historical interest and knowledge. We also recognized that these advances had dramatically affected the subject of European economic, intellectual, and, especially, social history, while new research and fresh interpretations were also revitalizing the study of the traditional mainstream of political, diplomatic, and religious development. Despite history's vitality as a discipline, however, it seemed to us that both the broad public and the intelligentsia were generally losing interest in the past. The mathematical economist of our acquaintance who smugly quipped "What's new in history?"—confident that the answer was nothing and that historians were as dead as the events they examine—was not alone.

It was our conviction, based on considerable experience introducing large numbers of students to the broad sweep of Western civilization, that a book reflecting current trends could excite readers and inspire a renewed interest in history and our Western heritage. Our strategy was twofold. First, we made social history the core element of our work. Not only did we incorporate recent research by social historians, but also we sought to re-create the life of ordinary people in appealing human terms. At the same time we were determined to give the great economic, political, intellectual, and cultural developments the attention they unquestionably deserve. We wanted to give individual readers and instructors a balanced, integrated perspective, so that they could pursue on their own or in the classroom those themes and questions that they found particularly exciting and significant. In an effort to realize fully the potential of our fresh yet balanced approach, we made many changes, large and small, in the second edition.

In preparing the third edition we have worked hard to keep our book up-to-date and to make it still more effective. First, every chapter has been carefully revised to incorporate recent scholarship. Many of our revisions relate to the ongoing explosion in social history, and once again important findings on such sub-

jects as class relations, population, women, and the family have been integrated into the text. New scholarship also led to substantial revisions on many other questions, such as the Neolithic agricultural revolution, political and economic growth in ancient Greece, the rise and spread of Christianity, the Germanic nobility, medieval feudalism, the origins of the Renaissance, Louis XIV and the French nobility, eighteenth-century absolutism, the French Revolution and Napoleon, nationalism, life in the postwar era, and events of the recent past. We believe that the incorporation of newer interpretations of the main political developments in the medieval, early modern, and French revolutionary periods is a particularly noteworthy change in this edition. Better integration of political and social development contributes to this improvement.

Second, we have carefully examined each chapter for organization and clarity. Chapters 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, and 15 have been thoroughly reorganized, while Chapters 17, 18, 21, and 23 have been reordered to a lesser extent. The result of these changes is a more logical presentation of material and a clearer chronological sequence. Similarly, the reorganization of Chapters 30 and 31 and the addition of Chapter 32 have permitted a more complete discussion of changes since World War Two and an innovative interpretation of this complicated era. We have also taken special care to explain terms and concepts as soon as they are introduced.

Third, we have added or expanded material on previously neglected topics to help keep our work fresh and appealing. Coverage of religious developments, with special emphasis on their popular and social aspects, now extends from ancient to modern times and includes several new sections. The reader will also find new material on many other topics, notably the Minoans, Greek and Roman wars, medieval Germany, the Hanseatic League, the African slave trade, Hume and d'Holbach, the pre-revolutionary French elite, Mill, and events since the late 1960s.

Finally, the illustrative component of our work has been completely revised. There are many new illustrations, including a tripling of the color plates that let both great art and earlier times come alive. Twenty new maps containing social as well as political material have also been added, while maps from the second edition have been re-edited and placed in

a more effective format. As in earlier editions, all illustrations have been carefully selected to complement the text, and all carry captions that enhance their value. Artwork remains an integral part of our book, for the past can speak in pictures as well as words.

Distinctive features from earlier editions remain in the third. To help guide the reader toward historical understanding we have posed specific historical questions at the beginning of each chapter. These questions are then answered in the course of the chapter, each of which concludes with a concise summary of the chapter's findings. The timelines added in the second edition have proved useful, and still more are found in this edition.

We have also tried to suggest how historians actually work and think. We have quoted extensively from a wide variety of primary sources and have demonstrated in our use of these quotations how historians sift and weigh evidence. We want the reader to realize that history is neither a list of cut-and-dried facts nor a senseless jumble of conflicting opinions. It is our further hope that the primary quotations, so carefully fitted into their historical context, will give the reader a sense that even in the earliest and most remote periods of human experience history has been shaped by individual men and women, some of them great aristocrats, others ordinary folk.

Each chapter concludes with carefully selected suggestions for further reading. These suggestions are briefly described in order to help readers know where to turn to continue thinking and learning about the Western world. The chapter bibliographies have been revised and expanded in order to keep them current with the vast and complex new work being done in many fields.

Western civilization courses differ widely in chronological structure from one campus to another. To accommodate the various divisions of historical time into intervals that fit a two-quarter, three-quarter, or two-semester period, *A History of Western Society* is being published in three versions, each set embracing the complete work:

One-volume hardcover edition, *A HISTORY OF WESTERN SOCIETY*; two-volume paperback, *A HISTORY OF WESTERN SOCIETY Volume I: From Antiquity to the Enlightenment* (Chapters 1–17), *Volume II: From Absolutism to the Present* (Chapters 16–32); three-volume paperback, *A HISTORY OF WESTERN*



book, often without even knowing it. N. Frederick Nash, Rare Book Librarian, gave freely of his time and made many helpful suggestions for illustrations. The World Heritage Museum at the University continued to allow us complete access to its sizable holdings. James Dengate kindly supplied information on objects from the museum's collection. Caroline Buckler took many excellent photographs of the museum's objects and generously helped us at crucial moments in production. Such wide-ranging expertise was a great asset for which we are very appreciative. Bennett Hill wishes to express his sincere appreciation to Ramón de la Fuente of Washington, D.C., for his support, encouragement, and research assistance in the preparation of this third edition. John Buckler extends his thanks to Elke Bernlocher.

Each of us has benefited from the generous criticism of his co-authors, although each of us assumes responsibility for what he has written. John Buckler has written the first six chapters; Bennett Hill has continued the narrative through Chapter 16; and John McKay has written Chapters 17 through 32. Finally, we continue to welcome from our readers comments and suggestions for improvements, for they have helped us greatly in this ongoing endeavor.

JOHN P. MCKAY  
BENNETT D. HILL  
JOHN BUCKLER

SOCIETY *Volume A: From Antiquity to the Reformation* (Chapters 1–13), *Volume B: From the Renaissance to 1815* (Chapters 12–21), *Volume C: From the Revolutionary Era to the Present* (Chapters 21–32).

Note that overlapping chapters in both the two- and the three-volume sets permit still wider flexibility in matching the appropriate volume with the opening and closing dates of a course term. Furthermore for courses beginning with the Renaissance rather than antiquity or the medieval period, the reader can begin study with Volume B.

Learning and teaching ancillaries, including a *Study Guide*, *Computerized Study Guide*, *Instructor's Manual*, *Test Items*, *Computerized Test Items*, and *Map Transparencies*, also contribute to the usefulness of the text. The excellent *Study Guide* has been revised by Professor James Schmiechen of Central Michigan University. Professor Schmiechen has been a tower of strength ever since he critiqued our initial prospectus, and he has continued to give us many valuable suggestions and his warmly appreciated support. His *Study Guide* contains chapter summaries, chapter outlines, review questions, extensive multiple-choice exercises, self-check lists of important concepts and events, and a variety of study aids and suggestions. One innovation in the *Study Guide* that has proved useful to the student is the step-by-step Reading with Understanding exercises, which take the reader by ostensive example through reading and studying activities like underlining, summarizing, identifying main points, classifying information according to sequence, and making historical comparisons. To enable both students and instructors to use the *Study Guide* with the greatest possible flexibility, the guide is available in two volumes, with considerable overlapping of chapters. Instructors and students who use only Volumes A and B of the text have all the pertinent study materials in a single volume, *Study Guide, Volume 1* (Chapters 1–21); likewise, those who use only Volumes B and C of the text also have all the necessary materials in one volume, *Study Guide, Volume 2* (Chapters 12–32). The multiple-choice sections of the *Study Guide* are also available in a computerized version that provides the student with tutorial instruction.

The *Instructor's Manual*, prepared by Professor Philip Adler of East Carolina University, contains learning objectives, chapter synopses, suggestions for lectures and discussion, paper and class activity

topics, and lists of audio-visual resources. The accompanying *Test Items*, also by Professor Adler, offers more than 1100 multiple-choice and essay questions and approximately 500 identification terms. The test items are available to adopters on computer tape and disk. In addition, a set of forty color map transparencies is available on adoption.

It is a pleasure to thank the many instructors who have read and critiqued the manuscript through its development: James W. Alexander, University of Georgia; Susan D. Amussen, Connecticut College; Jack M. Balcer, Ohio State University; Ronald M. Berger, State University College at Oneonta, New York; Charles R. Berry, Wright State University; Shirley J. Black, Texas A & M University; John W. Bohnstedt, California State University at Fresno; Paul Bookbinder, University of Massachusetts—Boston, Harbor Campus; Jerry H. Brookshire, Middle Tennessee State University; Thomas S. Burns, Emory University; Robert Clouse, Indiana State University; Norman H. Cooke, Rhode Island College; Charles E. Daniel, University of Rhode Island; Gary S. Cross, Pennsylvania State University; Lawrence G. Duggan, University of Delaware; J. Rufus Fears, Indiana University; John B. Freed, Illinois State University; James Friguglietti, Eastern Montana College; Charles L. Geddes, University of Denver; James Gump, University of San Diego; Charles D. Hamilton, San Diego State University; Barbara Hanawalt, Indiana University; Thomas J. Heston, West Chester State College; Edward J. Kealey, College of the Holy Cross; Isabel F. Knight, Pennsylvania State University; Charles A. Le Guin, Portland State University; Richard Lyman, Simmons College; Rhoda McFadden, Montgomery County Community College; Christian D. Nokkentved, University of Illinois at Chicago; John E. Roberts, Jr., Lincoln Land Community College; William J. Roosen, Northern Arizona University; Lawrence Silverman, University of Colorado; Armstrong Starkey, Adelphi University; Robert E. Stebins, Eastern Kentucky University; Bailey S. Stone, University of Houston; C. Mary Taney, Glassboro State College; Allen M. Ward, University of Connecticut; and Donald Wilcox, University of New Hampshire.

Many of our colleagues at the University of Illinois kindly provided information and stimulation for our

## INTRODUCTION

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### THE ORIGINS OF MODERN WESTERN SOCIETY

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*THE ORIGINS* of modern western society lie in the ancient and medieval past. Scholars trace the roots of Western culture to Mesopotamia in the Middle East, the area bound by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The civilizations that successively flourished there between roughly 7000 and 500 B.C.—Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Hittite—each made notable achievements. These achievements became the legacies that were absorbed and utilized by later cultures, Hebraic, Greek, and Roman. The Middle Ages built on the Greek and Roman past. Similarly, the European intellectual and religious movements often called the Renaissance and the Reformation derive from the medieval past. History, the study of change over time, reveals that each age has re-interpreted the cultural legacy of its predecessors in the effort to meet its own demands. The modern world exists as the product of all that has gone before.

## THE ANCIENT WORLD

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The ancient world provided several cultural elements that the modern world has inherited. First came the beliefs of the Hebrews (Jewish forebears) in one God and in a chosen people with whom God had made a covenant. The book known as the Scriptures, or “sacred writings,” embodied Hebraic law, history, and culture. Second, Greek architectural, philosophical, and scientific ideas have exercised a profound influence on Western thought. Rome subsequently gave the West language and law. The Latin language became the instrument of verbal and written communication for over a thousand years; Roman concepts of law and government molded Western ideas of political organization. Finally, Christianity, the spiritual faith and ecclesiastical organization that derived from the Palestinian Jew, Jesus of Nazareth (ca 3 B.C.–A.D. 29), also conditioned Western religious, social, and moral values and systems.

## THE HEBREWS

The Hebrews probably originated in northern Mesopotamia. Nomads who tended flocks of sheep, they were forced by drought to follow their patriarch Abraham into the Nile Delta in Egypt. The Egyptians enslaved them and put them to work on various agricultural and building projects. In the crucial event in early Jewish history, the lawgiver Moses, in response to God's command, led the Hebrews out of Egypt into the promised land (Palestine) in the thirteenth century B.C. At that time, the Hebrews consisted of twelve disunited tribes made up of families. They all believed themselves descendants of a common ancestor, Abraham. The family was their primary social institution, and most families engaged in agricultural or pastoral pursuits. Under the pressure of a series of wars for the control of Palestine, the twelve independent Hebrew tribes were united into a centralized political force under one king. Kings Saul, David, and especially Solomon (ca 965–925 B.C.) built the Hebrew nation with its religious center at Jerusalem, the symbol of Jewish unity.

The Hebrews developed their religious ideas in the Scriptures, also known as the Old Testament. In their migrations, the Jews had come in contact with many peoples, such as the Mesopotamians and the Egyptians, who had many gods. The Jews, however, were monotheistic: their God was the one and only God, he had created all things, his presence filled the universe, and he took a strong personal interest in the individual. During the Exodus from Egypt, God had made a covenant with the Jews. He promised to protect them as his chosen people and to give them the land; in return, they must worship only him and obey the Ten Commandments that he had given Moses. The Ten Commandments comprise an ethical code of behavior, forbidding the Jews to steal, lie, murder, or commit adultery. This covenant was to prove a constant force in Jewish life. The Old Testament also contains detailed legal proscriptions, books of history, concepts of social and familial structure, wisdom literature, and prophecies of a Messiah to come. Parts of the Old Testament show the Hebraic debt to other cultures. For example, the Books of Proverbs and Sirach reflect strong Egyptian influences. The Jews developed an emotionally satisfying religion whose ideals shaped not only later

faiths, such as Christianity and Islam, but also the modern world.

## THE GREEKS

While ancient Middle Eastern peoples such as the Hebrews interpreted the origins, nature, and end of man in religious or theological terms, the Greeks treated these issues in terms of reason. In the fifth century B.C., small independent city-states (poleis) dotted the Greek peninsula. Athens, especially, created a brilliant culture that greatly influenced Western civilization. Athens developed a magnificent architecture whose grace, beauty, and quiet intensity still speak to humankind. In their comedies and tragedies, the Athenians Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides were the first playwrights to treat eternal problems of the human condition. Athens also experimented with the political system we call democracy. All free adult males participated directly in the making of laws and in the government of the polis. Since a large part of the population—women and slaves—were not allowed to share in the activity of the Assembly, and since aristocrats held most important offices in the polis, Athenian democracy must not be confused with modern democratic practices. The modern form of democracy, moreover, is representative rather than direct: citizens express their views and wishes through elected representatives. Nevertheless, in their noble experiment in which the people were the government, and in their view that the state existed for the good of the citizen, Athenians served to create a powerful political ideal.

Classical Greece of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. also witnessed an incredible flowering of philosophical ideas. The Greeks were not the first people to speculate about the origins and nature of man and the universe. The outstanding achievement of the Greeks, rather, was their interest in treating these questions in rational instead of religious terms. Hippocrates, the “father of medicine,” taught that natural means—not magical or religious ones—could be found to fight disease. He based his opinions on observation and experimentation. Hippocrates also insisted that medicine was a branch of knowledge separate from philosophy. This distinction between natural science and philosophy was supported by the sophists, who traveled the Greek world teaching



young men that human beings were the proper subject for study. They laid great emphasis on logic and the meaning of words and criticized traditional beliefs, religion, even the laws of the polis.

Building on the approach of the sophists, Socrates (ca 470–399 B.C.) spent his life questioning and investigating. Socrates held that human beings and their environments represent the essential subject for philosophical inquiry. He taught that excellence could be learned and, by seeking excellence through knowledge, human beings could find the highest good and ultimately true happiness. Socrates' pupil, Plato (427–347 B.C.), continued his teacher's work. Plato wrote down his thoughts, which survive in the form of dialogues. He founded a school, the Academy, where he developed the theory that visible, tangible things are unreal, archetypes of "ideas" or "forms" that are constant and indestructible. In *The Republic*, the first literary description of a utopian society, Plato discusses the nature of justice in the ideal state. In *The Symposium*, he treats the nature and end of love.

Aristotle (384–322 B.C.), Plato's student, continued the philosophical tradition in the next generation. The range of his subjects of investigation is vast. He explores the nature of government in *Politics*, ideas of matter and motion in *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, outer space in *On the Heavens*, conduct in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and language and literature in *Rhetoric*. In all his works, Aristotle emphasizes the importance of the direct observation of nature; he insists that theory must follow fact. Aristotle had one of the most inquiring and original minds that Western civilization has ever produced, and his ideas later profoundly shaped both Muslim and Roman Catholic theology. The Greeks originated medicine, science, philosophy, and other branches of knowledge. They asked penetrating questions and came up with immortal responses.

These phenomenal intellectual advances took place against a background of constant warfare. The long and bitter struggle between the cities of Athens and Sparta called the Peloponnesian War (459–404 B.C.), described in the historian Thucydides' classic, *The Histories*, ended in Athens' defeat. Shortly afterward, Sparta, Athens, and Thebes contested for hegemony in Greece, but no single state was strong enough to dominate the others. Taking advantage of

the situation, Philip II (359–336 B.C.) of Macedon, a small kingdom comprising part of modern Greece and Yugoslavia, defeated a combined Theban-Athenian army in 338 B.C. Unable to resolve their domestic quarrels, the Greeks lost their freedom to the Macedonian invader.

In 323 B.C. Philip's son, Alexander of Macedonia, died at the ripe age of 32. During the twelve short years of his reign, Alexander had conquered an empire stretching from Macedonia in the present-day Balkans across the Middle East into Asia as far as India. Because none of the generals who succeeded him could hold together such a vast territory, it disintegrated into separate kingdoms. Scholars label the period dating from ca 800 B.C. to 323 B.C., in which the polis predominated, the Hellenic Age. The time span from Alexander's death in 323 B.C. to the collapse of Egypt to Rome in 30 B.C., which was characterized by independent kingdoms, is commonly called the Hellenistic Age.

The Hellenistic period witnessed two profoundly significant developments: the diffusion of Greek culture through Asia Minor, and the further advance of science, medicine, and philosophy. As Alexander advanced eastward, he established cities and military colonies in strategic spots. Militarily, these helped to secure his supply line and control the countryside. Culturally, as Greek immigrants poured into the East, they served as powerful instruments in the spread of Hellenism. Though the Greeks were a minority in the East, the dominant language, laws, and institutions became Greek. Thus, a uniform culture spread throughout the East. Greek culture linked the East and the West, and this cultural bond later helped Roman efforts to impose unity on the Roman world.

Hellenistic scientific progress likewise had enormous consequences. Aristarchus of Samos (ca 310–230 B.C.) rejected Aristotle's idea that the earth is the center of the universe, and using only the naked eye, advanced the heliocentric theory that the earth and other planets revolve around the sun. The Alexandrian mathematician Euclid (ca 300 B.C.) compiled a textbook, *Principles of Geometry*, which has been studied by school boys and girls for centuries and has proved basic to education in the West. Archimedes of Syracuse studied the principles of mechanics governing instruments such as the lever and invented numerous practical devices, including the catapult and

Archimedian screw. Hellenistic physicians dissected the human body, enabling better knowledge of anatomy and improvements in surgery. The mathematician Eratosthenes (285–ca 204 B.C.), who directed the library of Alexandria—the greatest seat of learning in the Hellenistic world—calculated the earth’s circumference geometrically at 24,675 miles; it is actually 24,860 miles. In philosophy Hellenistic thinkers continued the rational approach of the Greeks. Stoicism, so called from the building where its earliest proponents taught (the *Stoa*), represents the greatest philosophical development of the Hellenistic period. Stressing the efficacy of inner strength, or patience, in facing life’s difficulties, the Stoics originated the concept of natural law. Since all men are brothers and all good men live in harmony with nature (reason) and the universe, one law—the natural law—governs all. The Stoics advocated a universal state government: not a political state but an ethical one based on individual behavior. These ideas strongly attracted the Romans, who used the ideal of a universal state as a rationale for extending their empire over peoples of diverse political laws and institutions.

## ROME

The city of Rome, situated near the center of the boot-shaped peninsula of Italy, conquered all of what it considered the civilized world. Rome’s great achievement, however, rested in its ability not only to conquer peoples but to incorporate them into the Roman way of life. Rome created a world state that embraced the entire Mediterranean basin. It bequeathed to the Middle Ages and the modern world three great legacies: Roman law, the Latin language, and flexible administrative practices.

According to tradition, Rome was founded in the mid-eighth century B.C. Obscure Etruscans from the north and waves of Greek immigrants from the south influenced its early history. In 509 B.C. Rome expelled the Etruscan king, Tarquin the Proud, and founded a republic. Scholars customarily divide Roman history into two stages: the Republic (ca 509–31 B.C.), during which Rome grew from a small city-state to an empire, and the Empire, the period when the old republican constitution fell to a consti-

tutional monarchy. Between 509 and 290 B.C. Rome subdued all of Italy, and between 282 and 146 B.C. slowly acquired an overseas empire. The dominant feature of the social history of the early Republic was the clash between patrician aristocrats and plebeian commoners.

While the Greeks speculated about the ideal state, the Romans pragmatically developed methods of governing themselves and their empire. Their real genius lay in government and law. Because the Romans continually faced concrete challenges, change was a constant feature of their political life. The senate acted as the most important institution of the Republic. Composed of aristocratic elders, it initially served to advise the other governing group, the magistrates. As the senate’s prestige increased, its advice came to have the force of law. Roman law, called the *ius civilis* or “civil law,” consisted of statutes, customs, and forms of procedure. The goal of the *ius civilis* was to protect citizens’ lives, property, and reputations. As Rome expanded, first throughout Italy, then the Mediterranean basin, legal devices had to be found to deal with disputes among foreigners or between foreigners and Romans. Sometimes, magistrates adopted parts of other (foreign) legal systems. On other occasions, they used the law of equity: with no precedent to guide them, they made decisions on the basis of what seemed fair to all parties. Thus with flexibility the keynote in dealing with specific cases and circumstances, a new body of law, the *ius gentium* or “law of the peoples,” evolved. This law was applicable to both Romans and foreigners.

Law was not the only facet of Hellenistic culture to influence the Romans. Indeed, Hellenistic thought and lifestyles so thoroughly permeated Roman life that the poet Horace (68–8 B.C.) could write “Captive Greece captured her rough conquerors and introduced the arts into rustic Latium.” The Roman conquest of the Hellenistic East led to the wholesale confiscation of Greek sculpture and paintings to adorn Roman temples. Greek literary and historical classics were translated into Latin; Greek philosophy was studied in the Roman schools; Greek plays were adapted to the Roman stage; educated people learned Greek as a matter of course. Public baths based on the Greek model—with exercise rooms, swimming pools, reading rooms, and snack bars—served not only as centers for recreation and exercise but as

centers of Roman public life. Rome assimilated the Greek achievement, and Hellenism became an enduring feature of Roman life.

With territorial conquests Rome also acquired serious problems, which surfaced by the late second century B.C. Characteristically, the Romans responded practically with a system of provincial administration that placed at the head of local, provincial governments appointed state officials, who were formally incorporated into the Republic's constitution. The Romans devised an efficient system of tax collecting as well. Overseas warfare required armies of huge numbers of men for long periods of time. A few officers gained fabulous wealth, but most soldiers did not and returned home to find their farms in ruins. Those with cash to invest bought up small farms, creating vast estates called *latifundia*. Since the law forbade landless men to serve in the army, most veterans migrated to Rome seeking work. Victorious armies had already sent tens of thousands of slaves to Rome, and veterans could not compete in the labor market with slaves. A huge unemployed urban proletariat resulted. Its demands for work and political reform were bitterly resisted by the aristocratic senate, and civil war characterized the first century B.C.

Out of the violence and disorder emerged Julius Caesar (100–44 B.C.), a victorious general, shrewd politician, and highly popular figure. He took practical steps to end the civil war, such as expanding citizenship and sending large numbers of the urban poor to found colonies in Gaul, Spain, and North Africa. These settlements spread Roman culture. Fearful that Caesar's popularity and ambition would turn Rome into a monarchy, a group of aristocratic conspirators assassinated him in 44 B.C. Civil war was renewed. Ultimately, in 31 B.C. Caesar's adopted son Octavian, known as Augustus, defeated his rivals and became master of Rome.

The reign of Augustus (31 B.C.–A.D. 14) marked the end of the Republic and the beginning of what historians call the Empire. Augustus continued Caesar's work. By fashioning a means of cooperation in government among the people, magistrates, senate, and army, Augustus established a constitutional monarchy that replaced the Republic. His own power derived from the various magistracies he held and the power granted him by the senate. Thus, as

commander of the Roman army, he held the title of *imperator*, which later came to mean "emperor" in the modern sense of sovereign power. Augustus ended domestic turmoil and secured the provinces. He founded new colonies, mainly in the western Mediterranean basin, which promoted the spread of Greco-Roman culture and the Latin language to the West. Colonists with *latifundia* exercised authority in their regions as representatives of Rome. (Later, after the Empire disintegrated, they continued to exercise local power.) Augustus extended Roman citizenship to all freemen. A system of Roman roads and sea lanes united the empire. For two hundred years the Mediterranean world experienced the *pax Romana*—a period of peace, order, harmony, and flourishing culture.

In the third century this harmony collapsed. Rival generals backed by their troops contested the imperial throne. In the disorder caused by the civil war that ensued, the frontiers were left unmanned, and Germanic invaders poured across the borders. Throughout the Empire, civil war and barbarian invasions devastated towns and farms, causing severe economic depression. The emperors Diocletian (A.D. 285–305) and Constantine (A.D. 306–337) tried to halt the general disintegration by reorganizing the Empire, expanding the state of bureaucracy, and imposing heavier taxation. For administrative purposes, Diocletian divided the Empire into a western half and an eastern half. Constantine established the new capital city of Constantinople in Byzantium. The two parts drifted further apart in the fourth century, when the division became permanent. Diocletian's unrealistic attempt to curb inflation by arbitrarily freezing wages and prices failed. In the early fifth century the borders collapsed entirely, and various Germanic tribes completely overran the western provinces. In 410 and again in 455, Rome itself was sacked by the barbarians.

After the Roman Empire's decline, the rich legacy of Greco-Roman culture was absorbed by the medieval world and ultimately the modern world. The Latin language remained the basic medium of communication among educated people for the next thousand years; for almost two thousand years, Latin literature formed the core of all Western education. Roman roads, buildings, and aqueducts remained in use. Roman law left its mark on the legal and political

systems of most European countries. Rome had preserved the best of ancient culture for later times.

## CHRISTIANITY

The ancient world also left behind a powerful religious legacy, Christianity. Christianity derives from the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of the Galilean Jew, Jesus of Nazareth (ca 3 B.C.–A.D. 29). Thoroughly Jewish in his teaching, Jesus preached the coming of the kingdom of God, a “kingdom not of this world,” but one of eternal peace and happiness. He urged his followers and listeners to reform their lives according to the commandments, especially that stating, “You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, your whole mind, and your whole soul, and your neighbor as yourself.” Thus, the heart of Christian teaching is love of God and love of neighbor. Some Jews believed that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. Others, to whom Jesus represented a threat to ancient traditions, hated and feared him. Though Jesus did not preach rebellion against the Roman governors, the Roman prefect of Judea, Pontius Pilate, feared that the popular agitation surrounding Jesus could lead to revolt against Rome. When Jewish leaders subsequently delivered Jesus to the Roman authorities, to avert violence Pilate sentenced him to death by crucifixion—the usual method for common criminals. Jesus’ followers maintained that he rose from the dead three days later.

Those followers might have remained a small Jewish sect but for the preaching of the Hellenized Jew, Paul of Tarsus (ca A.D. 5–67). Paul taught that Jesus was the Son of God, that he brought a new law of love, and that Jesus’ message was to be proclaimed to all people, Greek and Jew, slave and free, male and female. He traveled between and wrote letters to the Christian communities at Corinth, Ephesus, Thessalonica, and other cities. As the Roman Empire declined, Christianity spread throughout the Roman world. Because it welcomed people of all social classes, offered a message of divine forgiveness and salvation, and taught that every individual has a role to play in the building of the kingdom of God, thereby fostering a deep sense of community in many of its followers, Christianity won thousands of adherents. Roman efforts to crush Christianity failed. The emperor Constantine legalized Christianity, and in

392 the emperor Theodosius made it the state religion of the Empire. Carried by settlers, missionaries, and merchants to Gaul, Spain, North Africa, and Britain, Christianity formed a fundamental element of Western civilization.

## THE MIDDLE AGES

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Fourteenth-century writers coined the term “Middle Ages,” meaning a middle period of Gothic barbarism between two ages of enormous cultural brilliance—the Roman world of the first and second centuries, and their own age, the fourteenth century, which these writers thought had recaptured the true spirit of classical antiquity. Recent scholars have demonstrated that the thousand-year period between roughly the fourth and fourteenth centuries witnessed incredible developments: social, political, intellectual, economic, and religious. The men and women of the Middle Ages built on the cultural heritage of the Greco-Roman past and made phenomenal advances in their own right.

### THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

The time period that historians mark off as the early Middle Ages, extending from about the fifth to the tenth century, saw the emergence of a distinctly Western society and culture. The geographical center of that society shifted northward from the Mediterranean basin to western Europe. While a rich urban life and flourishing trade had characterized the ancient world, the Germanic invasions led to the decline of cities and the destruction of commerce. Early medieval society was rural and local, with the farm or latifundium serving as the characteristic social unit. Several ingredients went into the making of European culture. First, Europe became Christian. Christian missionary activity led to the slow, imperfect Christianization of the Germanic peoples who had overrun the Roman Empire. Christianity taught the barbarians a higher code of morality and behavior and served as the integrating principle of medieval society. Christian writers played a powerful role in the conservation of Greco-Roman thought. They used Latin as their medium of communication, thereby preserving it. They copied and transmitted classical



texts. Writers such as St. Augustine of Hippo (354–430) used Roman rhetoric and Roman history to defend Christian theology. In so doing, they assimilated classical culture to Christian teaching.

Second, as the Germanic tribes overran the Roman Empire, they intermarried with the old Gallo-Roman aristocracy. The elite class that emerged held the dominant political, social, and economic power in early—and later—medieval Europe. Germanic custom and tradition, such as ideals of military prowess and bravery in battle, became part of the mental furniture of Europeans.

Third, in the seventh and eighth centuries, Muslim military conquests carried Islam, the religion inspired by the prophet Mohammed (?570–632) across North Africa, the Mediterranean Sea, and Spain into southern France. The Arabs eventually translated many Greek texts. When, beginning in the ninth century, those texts were translated from Arabic into Latin, they came to play a role in the formation of European scientific, medical, and philosophical thought.

In the eighth century, also, the Carolingian dynasty, named after its most illustrious member, Charles the Great, or Charlemagne (768–814), gradually acquired a broad hegemony over much of what is today France, Germany, and northern Italy. Charlemagne's coronation by the pope at Rome in a ceremony filled with Latin anthems represented a fusion of classical, Christian, and Germanic elements. This Germanic warrior-king supported Christian missionary efforts and encouraged both classical and Christian scholarship. For the first time since the decay of the Roman Empire, Western Europe had achieved a degree of political unity. Similarly, the culture of Carolingian Europe blended Germanic, Christian, and Greco-Roman elements.

Its enormous size proved to be the undoing of the Carolingian empire, and Charlemagne's descendants could not govern it. Attacks by Viking (early Scandinavian), Muslim, and Magyar (early Hungarian) marauders led to the collapse of centralized power. The new invaders wreaked more destruction than had the Germans in the fifth and sixth centuries. Real authority passed into the hands of local strongmen. Political authority was completely decentralized. Scholars describe the society that emerged as feudal and manorial: a small group of military leaders held public political power. They gave such protection as

they could to the people living on their estates. They held courts. They coined money. And they negotiated with outside powers. The manor or local estate was the basic community unit. Serfs on the manor engaged in agriculture, which everywhere was the dominant form of economy. Since no feudal lord could exercise authority or provide peace over a very wide area, political instability, violence, and chronic disorder characterized Western society.

## THE HIGH AND LATER MIDDLE AGES

By the beginning of the eleventh century, the European world showed distinct signs of recovery, vitality, and creativity. Over the next two centuries that recovery and creativity manifested itself in every facet of culture—economic, social, political, intellectual, and artistic. A greater degree of peace paved the way for these achievements.

The Viking and Magyar invasions gradually ended. Warring knights supported ecclesiastical pressure against violence, and disorder declined. Improvements in farming technology, such as the use of the horse collar, led to an agricultural revolution. Old land was better utilized and new land brought under cultivation. Agricultural productivity increased tremendously. These factors led to considerable population growth.

Increased population contributed to some remarkable economic and social developments. A salient manifestation of the recovery of Europe and of the vitality of the High Middle Ages was the rise of towns and concurrent growth of a new commercial class. Surplus population and the search for new economic opportunities led to the expansion of old towns, such as Florence, Paris, London, and Cologne, and the foundation of completely new ones, such as Munich and Berlin. A new artisan and merchant class, frequently called the “middle class,” appeared. In medieval sociology, just three classes existed: the clergy, who prayed; the nobility, who fought; and the peasantry, who tilled the land. The middle class, engaging in manufacturing and trade, seeking freedom from the jurisdiction of feudal lords, and pursuing wealth with a fiercely competitive spirit, fit none of the standard categories. Townspeople represented a radical force for change.

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries witnessed an enormous increase in the volume of local and inter-