

# THE WESTERN HERITAGE

*Brief Edition*



VOLUME II: SINCE 1648

*Second Edition*

Donald Kagan ■ Steven Ozment ■ Frank M. Turner

SECOND EDITION

# The Western Heritage

## Brief Edition

Volume II: Since 1648



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Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey 07458

## Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The Library of Congress has catalogued the one volume edition as follows:

Kagan, Donald.

The Western heritage / Donald Kagan, Steven Ozment, Frank M. Turner : with the assistance of A. Daniel Frankforter. — Brief ed., 2nd ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-13-081400-8

I. Civilization, Western. I. Ozment, Steven E. II. Turner, Frank M. (Frank Miller), (date). III. Frankforter, A. Daniel. IV. Title.

[CB245.K28 1999]

909'.09821—dc21

98-34067

CIP

Acquisitions Editor: *Todd Armstrong*  
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Cover Design Director: *Jayne Conte*

Cover Art: Clausen, Sir George, R.A. (1852–1944), "Schoolgirls, Haverstock Hill, 1880." Oil on canvas, 20½ × 30¾ in. (52 × 77.2 cm.) B1985.10.1. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

This book was set 10/12 Trump Mediaeval by The Composing Room of Michigan, Inc., and was printed by R.R. Donnelley and Sons Company. The cover was printed by Phoenix Color Corp.

© 1999, 1996 by Prentice-Hall, Inc.  
Simon & Schuster/A Viacom Company  
Upper Saddle River, New Jersey 07458

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Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

ISBN 0-13-081411-3

Prentice-Hall International (UK) Limited, *London*  
Prentice-Hall of Australia Pty. Limited, *Sydney*  
Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., *Toronto*  
Prentice-Hall Hispanoamericana, S.A., *Mexico*  
Prentice-Hall of India Private Limited, *New Delhi*  
Prentice-Hall of Japan, Inc., *Tokyo*  
Pearson Education Asia Pte. Ltd., *Singapore*  
Editora Prentice-Hall do Brasil, Ltda., *Rio de Janeiro*

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# Preface

The heritage of Western civilization has perhaps never been the focus of so much interest and controversy as it is today. Many commentators criticize it, many praise it, but for all it is a subject of intense discussion. *The Western Heritage, Second Edition*, helps teachers introduce students to the subject of that discussion. It presents an overview of Western civilization, including its strengths, its weaknesses, and the controversies surrounding it.

On campus after campus, every aspect of Western civilization has become an object of scrutiny and debate. Many participants in this debate fail to recognize that such self-criticism is characteristic of Western civilization and an important part of its heritage. We welcome the debate and hope that this book can help raise its quality.

The collapse of communism has left the people of half of Europe struggling to reorganize their political institutions and their social and economic lives. The choices they are making and the future they are forging will reflect in large measure their understanding of their heritage. To follow and participate in that process we too need to understand that heritage.

This brief second edition of *The Western Heritage* is designed to meet the needs of those who want a succinct overview of Western civilization for quarter and semester courses and those who plan to supplement their courses with extensive outside readings. Although this version of *The Western Heritage* is indeed shorter than the full version, it covers all the same topics with the same overall organization. Our colleague Dan Frankforter has skillfully reworked and revised the entire text for brevity, ensuring that it retains a consistent voice and a coherent narrative.

## Goals of the Text

Since *The Western Heritage* first appeared, we have sought to provide our readers with a work that does justice to the richness and variety of Western civilization. Our primary goal has been to present a strong, clear, narrative account of the key developments in Western history. We have also chosen to call attention to certain critical themes:

- The development of political freedom, constitutional government, and concern for the rule of law and individual rights;
- The shifting relations among religion, society, and the state;
- The development of science and technology and their expanding impact on thought, social institutions, and everyday life;
- The major religious and intellectual currents that have shaped Western culture.

We believe that these themes have been fundamental in Western civilization, shaping the past and exerting a continuing influence on the present.

**Balanced and Flexible Presentation.** History has many facets, no one of which alone can account for its development. Any attempt to tell the story of the West from a single overarching perspective, no matter how timely, is bound to neglect or suppress some important part of that story. Our goal in this text has been to present Western civilization fairly, accurately, and in a way that does justice to its great variety. We have designed the text to accommodate many approaches to a course in Western civilization, allowing teachers to stress what is most important to them.

We do not believe that a history of the West should be limited to politics and international relations, but we share the conviction that political events have shaped the Western experience in fundamental and powerful ways. Recent events in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have strengthened that belief. We have also been told repeatedly by teachers that no matter what their own specialties, they believe that a political narrative best equips students to begin building an understanding of the past.

*The Western Heritage*, brief second edition, also provides a rich account of the social history of the West, with strong coverage of family life, the roles of women, and the place of the family in relation to broader economic, political, and social developments. This coverage reflects the explosive growth in social historical research in the last quarter century.

Finally, no other brief survey text presents so full an account of the religious and intellectual development of the West. People may be political and social beings, but they are also reasoning and spiritual beings. What they think and believe are among the most important things we can know about them. Their ideas about God, society, law, gender, human nature, and the physical world have changed over the centuries and continue to change. We cannot fully grasp our own approach to the world without understanding the intellectual currents of the past and their influence on our thoughts and conceptual categories.

**Clarity and Accessibility.** Good narrative history requires clear, vigorous prose. A survey text especially must engage students if it hopes to keep them reading. Throughout this brief second edition of *The Western Heritage*, we have sought to make our presentation fully accessible to students without compromising on vocabulary or conceptual level.

**Recent Scholarship.** This edition of *The Western Heritage*, like all others, reflects our determination to incorporate the most recent developments in historical scholarship and the expanding concerns of professional historians.

## Features of the Brief Second Edition

*The Western Heritage*, brief edition, has several distinctive features designed to make it accessible to students and reinforce key concepts. Each chapter includes:

- An opening *outline*;
- A *key topics* list that gives a succinct overview of the chapter;
- *Introductory* and *concluding* sections;
- One or more *timelines* that help students build a chronological framework;
- *Chapter review questions* that help students review the material in the chapter and relate it to broader themes. These too can be used for class discussion and essay topics;
- A *suggested readings* list that directs students to more detailed sources on particular topics.

**Maps and Illustrations.** The abundant *maps* throughout the text are carefully cued to the narrative. *Photographs* and other illustrations enrich the text and help draw students in to it. *Color inserts* provide examples of fine art from the paleolithic age to the twentieth century.

**Political Transformations.** This new map feature concentrates on six highly significant moments of political transformation in the history of the West. These features provide a brief overview of the transformation illustrated by a map and illustrations. The features will provide opportunities for study not only by individual students, but also for class discussion. The topics for this feature are:

- Greek Colonization from Spain to the Black Sea
- Muslim Conquests and Domination of the Mediterranean to about 750
- Voyages of Discovery and the Colonial Claims of Spain and Portugal
- The Congress of Vienna Redraws the Map of Europe

- The Mandate System: 1919 to World War II
- Decolonization in Asia and Africa

## Ancillary Instructional Materials

*The Western Heritage*, brief second edition, comes with an extensive package of ancillary materials.

An **Instructor's Manual** with Test Items prepared by Perry M. Rogers. This includes chapter summaries, key points and vital concepts, identification questions, multiple-choice questions, essay questions, and suggested films.

**Map Transparencies** in full color. These include all the maps in the brief edition as well as many others.

A **Study Guide** prepared by Anthony M. Brescia and updated by James Barbieri that includes commentary, identifications, map exercises, short-answer exercises, and essay questions.

A **Computerized Test Bank** consisting of more than 1500 multiple-choice and essay questions from the Instructor's Manual for IBM compatible and Macintosh systems.

The Hammond **Historical Atlas of the World**, available with the text at a special discounted price. Please contact your local Prentice Hall sales representative for details.

## Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the scholars and teachers whose thoughtful and often detailed comments have helped shape *The Western Heritage*. Our special thanks to the professors who reviewed the second brief edition: Paul DeVendittis, Nassau Community College; Eugene Larson, Pierce College; Dalton McMann, Mayville State University; Terry Reynolds, Michigan Tech University; Robin Sturgis, York Technical College; and David Valone, Quinnipiac College.

We would also like to thank the many dedicated people at Prentice Hall who helped produce the second brief edition. Our acquisitions editor, Todd Armstrong, and our development editor, Susan Alkana, deftly shepherded us through the preparation of the second edition. Sheryl Adams, marketing manager, demonstrated an appreciation for historical scholarship as well as the history textbook market in her creative and informed marketing strategies. Holly Jo Brown, editorial assistant, took care of a myriad of details. Finally, Barbara DeVries, our production editor, managed the many aspects of guiding the project from manuscript to bound book and lent good-humored advice.

D.K.  
S.O.  
F.M.T.

# Introduction to Volume II

## ◇ 1. The Birth of Civilization

Human beings are the products of a process of physical and social evolution spanning millions of years. Most of what is known about their prehistory derives from the study of fossilized bones. But about one million years ago the predecessors of the modern human species began to engage in cultural activities that have left an archaeological record. They started by manufacturing stone tools and eventually produced sculptures and cave paintings.

For most of the million years of the paleolithic (or Old Stone) age, people lived as nomads, supporting themselves by hunting and gathering. About 10,000 years ago they developed farming techniques and shifted from food-harvesting to food-producing. Villages appeared, and in places where agricultural resources were abundant, communities developed the elaborate culture known as civilization. Civilized societies are easily distinguished from simple cultures. Civilized societies develop urban settlements, social stratification, state organization, and technologies, such as writing, that enable them to leave detailed evidence of their activities.

The West's first civilizations arose about 3000 B.C.E. in Mesopotamia and Egypt. The rivers that watered these lands contributed to unique environments capable of supporting the growth of unusually large human communities. The Tigris, the Euphrates, and the Nile flood annually. The silt they drop keeps the fields fertile enough to sustain dense populations.

There were similarities between the Sumerian civilization that sprang up north of the Persian Gulf and the Egyptian civilization that sprawled along the Nile. Farming in both regions required irrigation. The development, maintenance, and protection of irrigation systems encouraged the growth of governments able to mobilize large numbers of people for building projects and for wars. Egypt's terrain protected it from invasion and speeded its unification under one ruler. On the plains of Sumer, however, independent city-states struggled for supremacy. Mesopotamian history is the story of the rise and fall of successive empires. 地带 .



In the seventeenth century B.C.E., Egypt's isolation ended when its defenses were breached by invaders called the Hyksos. Egypt's rulers reacted by conquering parts of Palestine and Syria to create a protective buffer for their homeland. In the fourteenth century B.C.E., several other nations joined Egypt in staking claims to portions of the Middle East. But by 1200 B.C.E., they had all yielded to a new power, Assyria. The Assyrian empire collapsed suddenly in the seventh century B.C.E. and was succeeded by an even larger domain ruled by the Persians.

A tiny state called Israel sprang up between Egypt and Syria in the tenth century B.C.E. It could not compete militarily with the great empires of the Middle East. But the religious traditions of its people survived the fall of their nation to have tremendous impact on the subsequent development of the Western world. The three great religions of the West (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) are all rooted in the history of ancient Israel.

## ◁ 2. The Rise of Greek Civilization

About 2000 B.C.E. a wave of migration from central Europe brought new peoples into the Mediterranean world. The Hittites, Medes, and Persians, who settled in Asia Minor and Iran, absorbed and perpetuated the cultures of ancient Mesopotamia. The Greeks, who established themselves on the shores of the Aegean, felt the influence of Egypt and the East, but, as their society evolved, they departed significantly from the course the older civilizations had set. Unique Greek ideas, values, and institutions spread far beyond the Aegean. They were adapted by the Romans. They survived the fall of Rome's empire, and they still contribute to the Western way of life.

The Aegean world was home to two distinct Greek civilizations. The powerful Hellenic (or Classical) civilization, which flowered in the fifth century B.C.E., was preceded by a lesser known Bronze Age culture named for the ancient citadel at Mycenae. This Mycenaean civilization flourished during the second millennium B.C.E. under the influence of an older non-Greek civilization based on the island of Crete. The Minoans of Crete and the Mycenaeans were maritime peoples who traded extensively with Egypt and other Middle Eastern states. Both their cultures were strongly affected by contacts with the East.

Although the Mycenaean kingdoms were never politically unified, by the fourteenth century B.C.E. they had replaced the Minoans as the dominant power in the Aegean. Their era drew to an end about 1200 B.C.E. As the various centers of Mycenaean power began to fall, literacy disappeared from the Aegean world and a Dark Age descended.

The confusion that followed the collapse of the Mycenaean states disrupted trade and reduced cultural contacts between the Aegean and the Middle East. The Greeks, faced with the laborious task of reinventing their civilization, looked inward for inspiration.

In the eighth century B.C.E., signs of the emergence of a new Greek civi-

lization appeared. Oral traditions dating back to the Mycenaean era were collected in two epic poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, attributed to a poet named Homer. The Greek resettlement of the Aegean stabilized, and some Greeks began to emigrate, planting colonies on the coast of the Black Sea, in southern Italy, in eastern Sicily, and in the south of France.

Wherever Greeks went, the *polis*, a new form of social organization, appeared. The *polis* was a city-state, but much more than a political organization. It employed religion, art, education, and politics to encourage its residents to become what it regarded as model citizens. Most *poleis* were small and had to compete fiercely for survival. At the time, military technology was changing in ways that increased the importance of infantry. A *polis*'s need to build the greatest possible infantry gave large numbers of men an opportunity to barter their military service for a voice in government. Most *poleis* eventually became self-governing polities.

Athens and Sparta were the two most important mainland states, but they were quite different communities. Sparta militarized its citizens in order to control a large enslaved population. Athens committed itself to economic developments that created serious social tensions, but led ultimately to the founding of the world's first democracy.

Athenian faith in democracy was quickly intensified, for no sooner had Athens' democratic experiment begun than it weathered a dramatic test. The Persian emperor invaded the Aegean. Despite unfavorable odds, the Athenians and Spartans fended off the Persian armies. Their victory ratified their institutions and increased their enthusiasm for their way of life. An abundance of self-confidence nurtured the rapid blossoming of Classical civilization that took place in the fifth century B.C.E.

### ◁ 3. Classical and Hellenistic Greece

Two Persian emperors, Darius and Xerxes, tried to conquer the Aegean. Despite the vast resources at their command, they failed, and the Greeks secured their independence. The Greeks were, however, uncertain what use to make of their freedom. Greece had never been a unified country, and its scattered *poleis* had often been at each other's throats. The crises created by the Persian invasions had persuaded most of the *poleis* to cooperate in mounting a common defense. The realistic fear that Persia might still return led some of them, particularly the Ionian Greek settlements on the Aegean islands and on the coast of Asia Minor, to conclude that they had to continue to stand on guard together.

Sparta had Greece's most respected army, so the Greeks who wanted to take part in a defensive league for the Aegean appealed first to Sparta to organize it. Sparta, however, had no navy and was suspicious of foreign entanglements that might compel it to send its soldiers far from home.

Sparta's reluctance became Athens' opportunity. Athens had a navy that had been crucial to the defense of Greece during the Persian Wars, and Athens was eager to join other states in a military alliance. In 477 B.C.E., the interested

parties formed the Delian League. Although the league began as a federation of free states, Athens used its resources to build what was, for all intents and purposes, an Athenian empire.

As Athens' power grew, the city became the center for the development of Hellenic civilization. Construction began on the famous temples of the Acropolis, and within the span of a few generations a remarkable number of the West's greatest artists and thinkers clustered in Athens. Athens' achievements were magnificent, but, from the modern perspective, Hellenic societies had some serious moral deficiencies. They were supported by slave labor, and in most of them the lives of women, even from citizen families, were severely restricted.

The Greek cities that were alarmed by Athens' expansion turned to Sparta, and the Aegean world divided into mutually suspicious camps. In 460 B.C.E. fighting erupted, and a tragic civil war, the Peloponnesian War, began. Sparta's strength was its infantry and Athens' its navy. That meant that neither could deliver the other a decisive blow, and it caused their war to drag on for a long time. In 404 B.C.E. Persia tipped the balance by giving aid to Sparta, and Athens had to surrender unconditionally.

Once again Sparta had an opportunity to lead Greece, and again Sparta proved unequal to the challenge. In 371 B.C.E., the city of Thebes dealt Sparta a defeat that ended the era of Spartan hegemony. But Thebes, too, failed to impose order on the Greeks, and the *poleis* fell to quarrelling among themselves.

In 349 B.C.E. Philip of Macedon, king of the Greek mainland's northernmost state, intervened in the affairs of his neighbors. By 338 B.C.E. he had induced the Greeks to unite under his leadership by promising to lead them against their ancient enemy, Persia. Philip was assassinated in 336 B.C.E. before he could begin the war, but his son, Alexander the Great, won great fame by realizing his father's dream.

Alexander conquered the Persian empire in four years. He then pushed on to India before his troops persuaded him to turn back. Alexander's empire broke up at his death in 323 B.C.E. But short-lived as it was, it changed the course of Western civilization. Greek culture spread, absorbed ideas from foreign nations, and acquired a cosmopolitan aspect. It ceased to be purely Greek, that is Hellenic, and became "Greek-like," or *Hellenistic*. Great empires replaced the *poleis*, and new peoples (most notably the Romans) joined the Greeks in carrying civilization to new lands.

## ◇ 4. Rome: From Republic to Empire

Alexander the Great may have hoped that the Greeks would someday unite all the civilized peoples of the West under one government. But it was a small Italian city, attracting little attention in his day, that accomplished this feat. Rome brought together all the people who lived on the shores of the Mediterranean

and then spread a Hellenistic civilization to new lands and peoples in northern Europe. The West had never seen—and has never again seen—an empire as large, stable, peaceful, and long-lasting as the one Rome created.

The Romans spoke Latin, one of the family of *Italic* languages that migrating peoples brought to northern Italy about 1000 B.C.E. Legend claimed that the city of Rome was founded about two hundred years later. Rome commanded a site on the Tiber river, which divided Latin from Etruscan territory. Little is known about the origin of the Romans' Etruscan neighbors, but their brilliant civilization in northern Italy had a powerful influence on early Rome. Rome's last kings were Etruscan.

In 509 B.C.E. a revolt led by Rome's aristocratic class, the *patricians*, overthrew the monarchy, which was the city's first form of government. The Republic established by the patricians conquered the lands that, by the time of the birth of Christ, had become the Roman Empire.

The Roman Republic faced a series of problems that required frequent reinvention of itself. Rome's commoners, the *plebeians*, fought to share authority with patricians, and shifting alliances among wealthy families from both classes forced numerous political compromises. Republican government was inefficient, but it took a healthy pragmatic approach to the challenges of government. Roman law was the best devised by the ancient world, and it endures as one of Rome's lasting legacies.

The need to defend Rome's strategic location led the Republic to engage in virtually continuous warfare with its neighbors. The Romans believed that their wars were defensive, and they preferred to resolve them by turning opponents into allies, not subjects. Each alliance, however, dragged Rome into new conflicts, and each victory expanded its sphere of influence. By 202 B.C.E. Rome had dominated the western Mediterranean and had begun to involve itself in the affairs of the Greek states that had succeeded Alexander's empire.

The wealth generated by the Republic's conquests was monopolized by a few Roman families, who used it to fight among themselves for control of the government. Reforms were proposed to devise a kind of republic that could handle the responsibilities of empire, but none succeeded. Politicians instigated wars of conquest in order to build armies with which to intimidate their opponents, and this led finally, in 49 B.C.E., to a great civil war.

Julius Caesar, the victor, probably contemplated replacing the failing Republic with a form of monarchy, but the affection Romans felt for their traditional form of government made this difficult. Caesar was assassinated in 44 B.C.E. by men who believed that he was a threat to the Republic. His removal, however, did nothing to solve the problems that had allowed him to come to power in the first place. His heirs simply divided his armies and used them to revive the civil war.

In 31 B.C.E. Caesar's nephew, Octavius, the future emperor Augustus, emerged triumphant. In him Rome finally found a man who not only conquered, but also devised an ingenious strategy to rule. Behind the facade of the Republic, Octavius began the construction of a truly imperial government.

## ◇ 5. The Roman Empire

Octavius Augustus's victory in 31 B.C.E. ended an era of civil strife that had kept Rome in a state of upheaval for over a century. Rome's difficulties stemmed from the fact that its traditional form of government, the Republic, was adequate for a city-state, but not for an empire. By draping a monarchy in republican forms, Augustus persuaded the Romans to accept a government that was strong enough to stabilize an empire. The Roman monarchy soon became visible to its subjects, but it did not completely cast off all republican trappings.

Romans had compensation for reconciling themselves to the rule of emperors. For two centuries imperial government maintained peace and order throughout the Mediterranean world. The citizens of the empire enjoyed an era of steadily increasing prosperity that was not to be equalled for more than a millennium.

Augustus ardently promoted the development of Roman culture, and his generation produced some of the greatest literature in the Latin language. The Roman union of the Latin- and Greek-speaking worlds also promoted development of a universal Classical culture, which Rome spread throughout its domain. Wherever Rome went, cities sprang up and civilized institutions appeared. For almost two centuries the empire was generally peaceful, prosperous, and well run. But fatal flaws emerged as it aged.

The burdens of governing the empire and defending its lengthy frontiers fostered the growth of administrative bureaucracies and armies. Unfortunately, the Roman economy was unable to keep pace with the increasing costs of imperial government. By the third century C.E., serious problems had developed. High taxes were beginning to stifle civic spirit and private enterprise and to erode support for the state. In desperation emperors increasingly resorted to the use of force, and most succumbed to the temptation of trying to buy the loyalty of the armies on which their survival depended. Self-interested factions developed among the soldiers. Civil war returned. And in a period of fifty years spanning the middle of the third century C.E., twenty-five men claimed the title of emperor.

In the early fourth century C.E., the emperors Diocletian and Constantine took drastic steps to restore order. Their reforms increased the expenses of government, and people literally fled cities to avoid the empire's tax collectors. The state responded by enslaving workers and reducing peasants to the status of serfs. Separate imperial administrations were set up for the eastern and western halves of the empire, and the cultures of the Greek East and the Latin West began to diverge. By the fifth century, the changes that had taken place in the ancient world signaled the imminent arrival of the Middle Ages.

Despite spectacular failures, the era of Rome's fall was still a period of innovation and creativity. One of the most important developments within the late empire was the spread of the Christian religion and its emergence as the dominant faith in both the East and the West. Although Christianity rejected some aspects of Classical culture, it was powerfully influenced by that culture.

When Rome's secular institutions finally collapsed, it was largely thanks to the church that the ancient world's intellectual legacy survived.

## ◇ 6. The Early Middle Ages (476–1000): The Birth of Europe

The breakup of the Roman empire in the fifth century C.E. affected different regions differently. In the fourth century C.E. the empire had tried to enhance its capacity to defend itself by setting up separate governments for its western and eastern halves, the East was the stronger region in terms of economy, population, and urban centers. The eastern capital, Constantinople, was also well-situated to prevent marauding German tribes from entering its territory.

The Germans who migrated into the empire in the fifth century C.E. were confined largely to the domain of the western emperor. Their original intent was not to destroy the empire, but to take refuge within it. The first Germans to cross the Roman frontiers were Visigoths who were fleeing attack by the Huns of Mongolia. The emperors of Constantinople admitted them to the empire as *foederati* or special allies. Ill treatment by the Romans, however, soon caused them to turn against Rome, and in 410 they sacked the city of Rome itself. The eastern empire had enough wealth and vitality to ride out these crises, but the western frontiers collapsed, clearing the way for waves of Germans to enter Rome's European provinces unopposed.

Some German leaders tried to prop up the western empire, but it fragmented and its culture declined. The cities that had sustained civilization in the West shrank or disappeared, hobbling government and depriving scholars and artists of support.

The most durable of the empire's institutions was one of its youngest, the Christian church. As Rome's governmental officials disappeared, the subjects of the former empire turned for leadership to the Christian clergy, their only remaining authority figures. Simultaneously, the church's monasteries succeeded Rome's cities and aristocratic classes as the guardians of Rome's intellectual heritage. Monasteries were communities of persons who withdrew from the secular world to pursue lives of prayer. Literacy was essential to their clerical professions. Consequently, monasteries maintained schools and libraries. Because these, unlike secular schools, were never dependent on state support, they were able to survive the disintegration of the Roman empire.

By the sixth century C.E., the Germans were settling down and organizing new governments to replace the vanishing Roman administrative system. The first of them to make notable progress toward the organization of a new European state was the tribe of the Franks. The kings of their Merovingian dynasty pulled together much of the land now known as France, but their authority declined when they began to squander their resources fighting among themselves. In the eighth century the Carolingians, another line of Frankish kings, took

their place. Charlemagne, the greatest of the Carolingians, united much of Europe and reclaimed the imperial title. He also sponsored a modest renaissance dedicated to the promotion of literacy.

During Charlemagne's reign the West halted its cultural decline and began slowly to rebuild. But its recovery was interrupted by a second wave of invasions. During the eighth and ninth centuries, bands of Vikings and Magyars crisscrossed Europe and the Muslims renewed their attacks.

Centralized monarchies, such as the Carolingians tried to build, could not respond effectively to scattered, simultaneous attacks on their lands. Thus people came to rely more on local warlords for protection. This led to the development of *feudalism*, a decentralized form of government led by a military aristocracy. The economic system that supported feudalism during the Middle Ages was called *manorialism*. A *manor* was a community of peasant farmers who were tied to the land and who bartered a portion of their labor for the protection provided by a local warrior.

The dramatic events associated with the fall of the western Roman empire had little effect on the East, but there, too, a medieval transformation took place. The eastern Roman empire developed a Greek Christian, or *Byzantine*, culture. It maintained continuity with its Classical past and a high level of civilization, but it came under strong eastern influences. A line of Roman emperors continued in Constantinople for another thousand years, but it was far less concerned with developments in Christian Europe than with the rise in the East of yet another empire that staked a claim to Rome's legacy.

The Muslim empire was built by people united in their allegiance to the religion of Islam, a faith that appeared early in the seventh century C.E. in response to the preaching of the Prophet Muhammad. Islam united the Arab peoples and sent them forth to conquer lands already civilized by the Byzantine and Persian empires. Unlike the Germans, the Arabs rapidly assimilated the civilizations of the peoples they subdued and evolved a unique, dynamic culture. By the eighth century, Muslim armies had conquered Spain and were threatening France and Italy.

## ◇ 7. The High Middle Ages (1000–1300): The Ascendancy of the Church and the Rise of States

Following the fall of the Roman empire, three medieval cultures sprang up around the Mediterranean: Latin Christian in western Europe, Byzantine Christian in Asia Minor, and Islamic in lands stretching from Syria, across Africa, to Spain. Of these three, Europe was most adversely affected by Rome's collapse. For four centuries, successive waves of invasions set back its development and thrust it into the defensive. That finally began to change in the tenth century. Europe's frontiers stabilized. It began to organize itself internally and to engage its neighbors militarily, commercially, and intellectually. Europe entered the era of the High Middle Ages, one of the most creative periods in its history.

The feudal system, which developed in the wake of Charlemagne's em-

pire, marshalled Europe's defenses and provided the stability needed for the revival of Europe's economy and culture. Feudal oaths of allegiance among the members of the warrior class also created bonds that, if properly exploited, could lead to the restoration of centralized monarchical government. During the High Middle Ages the contours of some modern European nations began to emerge and their ethnic cultures began to consolidate. The most successful were states where long-lived royal dynasties provided centers around which a sense of national identity could coalesce.

England and France made rapid progress toward nationhood; Germany and Italy did not. Everywhere, disputes about overlapping jurisdictions affected the process of nation-building.

In 1066 the duke of Normandy, a district in northern France, conquered England. As a conqueror, he was able to impose the government he wanted on England and to construct one of Europe's most powerful monarchies. The kings of England, however, did not surrender the continental territories they held as vassals of the king of France. Indeed, they increased their French holdings, until, by the late twelfth century, the king of England ruled more of France than did the king of France. In the long run, this worked to the advantage of the French monarchy and to the disadvantage of England's kings. The French people rallied behind the Capetian dynasty in its struggle with the Plantagenet kings of England. Expensive reverses in war for England caused the English people to lose confidence in some of their kings and to impose limits on royal authority.

In the tenth century Germany, under the Saxon dynasty, made rapid progress toward consolidation as a nation. But the German kings embarked on a fatal policy. Otto I laid claim to the imperial title and, consequently, to Italy, the seat of the old empire. The popes of the High Middle Ages saw themselves as international leaders whose credibility would suffer if Germany succeeded in annexing Italy. They also viewed expansion attempts by German kings as a threat to the independence of the church. The struggles that ensued between the papacy and a succession of German dynasties resulted in the political fragmentation of both countries. The popes succeeded in defending their independence, but at the cost of secularizing the image of the papacy and diminishing regard for its spiritual authority.

## ◇ 8. The High Middle Ages (1000–1300): People, Towns, and Universities

In the tenth century Europe entered an era of rapid development. A warming climate and improved farming techniques increased the food supply. Population began to grow. New lands were brought under cultivation, and urban life was reborn. The trickle of trade that had existed in the early Middle Ages grew to major proportions, and increasing resources permitted civilization to flourish in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as it had not done in the West since the days of the Roman empire.



Each class in European society contributed to the advances made during the High Middle Ages. Europe's economy remained heavily dependent on the productivity of peasant farmers. Medieval farmers developed new tools and methods of farming and brought under the plow almost all land that could be profitably cultivated, but they rarely produced large surpluses and famines were common. As Europe returned to a monetary economy, the dues serfs paid in labor were transmuted into rents and some of the inefficient and degrading aspects of serfdom disappeared.

Aristocratic families dealt with their growing numbers in a different way. The sons for whom they had no estates created a pool of surplus soldiers eager for opportunities to make their fortunes in foreign lands. The crusading movement, which began at the end of the eleventh century, helped Europe to expand on three fronts: Spain, Sicily, and eastern Germany. For a short time, European crusaders occupied parts of Syria and Palestine and even ruled in Constantinople. Crusaders worked in tandem with traders to increase Europe's contacts with the outside world. The result was a flood of foreign goods and ideas that reshaped European life.

The clearest sign of the resulting changes was the emergence of a new "middle" class that inserted itself between the peasantry and the feudal nobility. This class consisted of the *artisans and merchants* who resided in the towns that were being reborn across Europe. They greatly increased the contribution that commerce and industry made to the European economy, and took the lead in the revival of European arts and letters. Literacy was useful for businessmen, and education flourished in the urban environment. Expanded contacts with Muslim and Byzantine peoples made available to Europe all that survived of ancient literature. In the process of assimilating it, Europeans invented new kinds of schools called *universities*. The first were chartered in the twelfth century, and by 1300 Europe had twenty of them.

The twelfth century witnessed a true renaissance of learning and art. Scholars processed masses of information, organizing and synthesizing it, and pushing back the frontiers of knowledge. Original thought returned to the West.

These intellectual developments were accompanied by a new artistic vision. Architects abandoned the fortress-like Romanesque style of the early Middle Ages, and in the mid-twelfth century embarked on bold experiments in engineering and aesthetics that led to designs that later generations described as *Gothic*. Delicate, soaring lines and subtle organization of light and space made the Gothic style a perfect vehicle for the symbolic expression of transcendent Christian faith. Gothic architecture continues to this day to influence the design of Christian churches.

## ◇ 9. The Late Middle Ages (1300–1527): Centuries of Crisis

During the fourteenth century Europe witnessed events that signaled the transition from the medieval to the early modern phases in its civilization. Although there were constructive developments, there was so much social