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Europe and Western Asia in the Middle Ages

800–1450

Court workshop of Duke Ludwig I of Liegnitz and Brieg, 1364–1398. Tempera colors, colored washes and ink on parchment/Liszt Collection/Quint & Lox akg-images

Hedwig of Silesia

Noblewomen in medieval Europe played a wide variety of roles. Hedwig of Silesia (a territory now located mostly in Poland) conducted diplomatic

negotiations, ruled her husband's territory when he was away, founded monasteries, and worked to expand Christianity in eastern Europe.

By the fifteenth century scholars in the growing cities of northern Italy had begun to think that they were living in a new era, one in which the glories of ancient Greece and Rome were being reborn. What separated their time from classical antiquity, in their opinion, was a long period of darkness and barbarism, to which a seventeenth-century professor gave the name "Middle Ages." In this conceptualization, the history of Europe was divided into three periods — ancient, medieval, and modern — an organization that is still in use today. Later, the history of other parts of the world was sometimes fit into this three-period schema as well, with discussions of the "classical" period in Maya history, of "medieval" India and China, and of "modern" everywhere.

Today historians often question whether labels of past time periods for one culture work on a global scale, and some scholars are uncertain about whether "Middle Ages" is a just term even for European history. They assert that the Middle Ages was not simply a period of stagnation between two high points but rather a time of enormous intellectual energy and creative vitality. While agrarian life continued to dominate Europe, political structures that would influence later European history began to form, and Christianity continued to spread. People at the time did not know that they were living in an era that would later be labeled "middle" or sometimes even "dark," and we can wonder whether they would have shared this negative view of their own times.

CHAPTER PREVIEW

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Political Developments

How did medieval rulers restore order and centralize political power?

In 800 Charlemagne, the most powerful of the Carolingians, was crowned Holy Roman emperor. After his death his empire was divided among his grandsons, and their kingdoms were weakened by nobles vying for power. In addition, beginning around 800 western Europe was invaded by several different groups. Local nobles were the strongest power, and common people turned to them for protection. By the eleventh century, however, rulers in some parts of Europe had reasserted authority and were slowly building centralized states.

Invasions and Migrations

The Vikings were pagan Germanic peoples from Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. They began to make overseas expeditions, which they themselves called *vikings*, and the word came to be used for people who went on such voyages as well. Viking voyages and attacks began around 800, and by the mid-tenth century the Vikings had brought large sections of continental Europe and Britain under their sway. In the east they sailed the rivers of Russia as far as the Black Sea. In the west they established permanent settlements in Iceland and short-lived ones in Greenland and Newfoundland in Canada (Map 14.1).

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Mapping the Past

MAP 14.1 Invasions and Migrations of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries This map shows the Viking, Magyar, and Muslim invasions and migrations in the ninth and tenth centuries. Compare it with Map 8.2 on the barbarian migrations of late antiquity to answer the following questions.

ANALYZING THE MAP What similarities do you see in the patterns of migration in these two periods? What significant differences?

CONNECTIONS How did the Vikings' expertise in shipbuilding and sailing make their migrations different from those of earlier Germanic tribes? How did this set them apart from the Magyar and Muslim invaders of the ninth century?

Against Viking ships navigated by experienced and fearless sailors, the Carolingian Empire, with no navy, was helpless. At first the Vikings attacked and sailed off laden with booty. Later, on returning, they settled down and colonized the areas they had conquered, often marrying local women and adopting the local languages and some of the customs.

Along with the Vikings, groups of central European steppe peoples

known as Magyars (MAG-yahrz) also raided villages in the late ninth century. Moving westward, small bands of Magyars on horseback reached far into Europe. They subdued northern Italy, compelled Bavaria and Saxony to pay tribute, and penetrated into the Rhineland and Burgundy. Western Europeans thought of them as returning Huns, so the Magyars came to be known as Hungarians.

From North Africa, the Muslims also began new encroachments in the ninth century. They already ruled most of Spain and now conquered Sicily, driving northward into central Italy and the south coast of France.

From the perspective of those living in what had been Charlemagne's empire, Viking, Magyar, and Muslim attacks contributed to increasing disorder and violence. Italian, French, and English sources often describe this period as one of terror and chaos. People in other parts of Europe might have had a different opinion. In Muslim Spain and Sicily scholars worked in thriving cities, and new crops such as cotton and sugar enhanced ordinary people's lives. In eastern Europe the Magyars settled in an area that is now Hungary, becoming a strong kingdom. A Viking point of view might be the most positive, for by 1100 descendants of the Vikings not only ruled their homelands in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark but also ruled northern France (a province known as Normandy, or land of the Northmen), England, Sicily, Iceland, and Russia, with an outpost in Greenland and occasional voyages to North America.

"Feudalism" and Manorialism

The large-scale division of Charlemagne's empire into three parts in the ninth century led to a decentralization of power at the local level in western and central Europe. Civil wars weakened the power and prestige of kings, who could do little about regional violence. Likewise, the invasions of the ninth century, especially those of the Vikings, weakened royal authority. The Frankish kings were unable to halt the invaders, and the local aristocracy had to assume responsibility for defense. Thus, in the ninth and tenth centuries, aristocratic families increased their authority in their local territories, and distant and weak kings could not interfere. Common people turned for protection to the strongest power, the local nobles.

The most powerful nobles were those who gained warriors' allegiance, often symbolized in an oath-swearing ceremony of homage and fealty that grew out of earlier Germanic oaths of loyalty. In this ceremony a warrior (knight) swore his loyalty as a **vassal** to the more powerful individual, who became his lord. In return for the vassal's loyalty, aid, and military assistance, the lord promised him protection and material support. This

support might be a place in the lord's household but was more likely land of the vassal's own, called a **fief** (*feudum* in Latin). The fief, which might contain forests, churches, and towns, technically still belonged to the lord, and the vassal had only the use of it. Earlier legal scholars and historians identified these personal ties of loyalty cemented by grants of land as a political and social system they termed **feudalism**. More recently, increasing numbers of medieval historians have found the idea of "feudalism" problematic, because the word was a later invention and the system was so varied and changed over time. They still point to the personal relationship between lords and vassals as the key way that political authority was organized and note that the church also received and granted land. In the Byzantine Empire as well, nobles, monasteries, and church officials held the most land.

vassal A knight who has sworn loyalty to a particular lord.

fief A portion of land, the use of which was given by a lord to a vassal in exchange for the latter's oath of loyalty.

feudalism A medieval European political system that defines the military obligations and relations between a lord and his vassals and involves the granting of fiefs.

Peasants living on a fief produced the food and other goods necessary to maintain the nobles and churchmen, under a system of **manorialism**, in which they exchanged their work for the lord's protection. They received land to farm, but were tied to the land by various payments and services. Most significantly, a peasant lost his or her freedom and became a **serf**, part of the lord's permanent labor force. Unlike slaves, serfs were personally free, but they were bound to the land and unable to leave it without the lord's permission.

manorialism The economic system that governed rural life in medieval Europe, in which the landed estates of a lord were worked by the peasants under the lord's jurisdiction in exchange for his protection.

serf A peasant who lost his or her freedom and became permanently bound to the landed estate of a lord.

Archivio de la Corona de Aragon, Barcelona, Spain/Mithra-Index/Bridgeman Images

The Countess of Bearn Swears Homage to King Alfonso II of Aragon In this illustration from a late-twelfth-century manuscript, the Countess of Bearn, the ruler of a territory in the Pyrenees, swears homage to King Alfonso II of Aragon, the king of one of the Christian kingdoms in the Iberian Peninsula. Noblewomen sometimes inherited fiefs from their fathers if there were no sons, and were required to swear loyalty and provide troops.

By around 1000 the majority of western Europeans were serfs. In eastern Europe the transition was slower but longer lasting. Western European peasants began to escape from serfdom in the later Middle Ages, at the very point that serfs were more firmly tied to the land in eastern Europe, especially in eastern Germany, Poland, and Russia.

The Restoration of Order

The eleventh century witnessed the beginnings of political stability in much of Europe. Foreign invasions gradually declined, and in some parts of Europe lords in control of large territories built up their power even further, becoming kings over growing and slowly centralizing states. In a

process similar to that occurring at the same time in the West African kingdom of Ghana (see “African Kingdoms and Empires” in Chapter 10), rulers expanded their territories and extended their authority by developing larger bureaucracies, armies, judicial systems, and other institutions to maintain control, as well as taxation systems to pay for them. These new institutions and practices laid the foundations for modern national states. Political developments in England, France, Germany, and Hungary provide good examples of the beginnings of the national state in the central Middle Ages.

The Viking Canute (kah-NOOT) (r. 1016–1035) made England the center of his empire, while promoting a policy of assimilation and reconciliation between Anglo-Saxons and Vikings. At the same time, England was divided into local shires, or counties, each under the jurisdiction of a sheriff appointed by the king. When Canute’s heir Edward died childless, there were three claimants to the throne. One of these, Duke William of Normandy, crossed the channel and won the English throne by defeating and killing his Anglo-Saxon rival, Harold II, at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. Later dubbed “the Conqueror,” William (r. 1066–1087) limited the power of the nobles and church officials and built a unified monarchy. He retained the Anglo-Saxon institution of sheriff, but named Normans to the posts.

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In 1128 William's granddaughter Matilda married a powerful French noble, Geoffrey of Anjou. Their son, who became Henry II of England, inherited provinces in northwestern France from his father. When Henry married the great heiress Eleanor of Aquitaine in 1152, he claimed lordship over Aquitaine and other provinces in southwestern France as well. The histories of England and France were thus closely intertwined in the Middle Ages.

In the early twelfth century France consisted of a number of nearly independent provinces, each governed by its local ruler. The work of unifying and enlarging France began under Philip II (r. 1180–1223), also known as Philip Augustus. By the end of his reign Philip was effectively master of northern France, and by 1300 most of the provinces of modern France had been added to the royal domain.

In central Europe the German king Otto I (r. 936–973) defeated many other lords to build up his power, based on an alliance with and control of the church. Under Otto I and his successors, a loose confederation stretching from the North Sea to the Mediterranean developed. In this confederation, later called the Holy Roman Empire, the emperor shared power with princes, dukes, counts, city officials, archbishops, and bishops. Frederick Barbarossa (r. 1152–1190) of the house of Hohenstaufen (HOH-en-shtow-fen) tried valiantly to make the Holy Roman Empire a united state. When he tried to enforce his authority over the cities of northern Italy, however, they formed a league against him in alliance with the pope and defeated him. Germany did not become a unified state.

In eastern Europe, the Hungarians formed a tribal federation and then under Stephen I (r. 1000–1038) created a more centralized kingdom. Stephen became a devout Christian, defeated pagan rivals militarily, and received his crown from the pope as a symbol of their alliance. He further consolidated his power through war, diplomacy, and strategic marriages, and set up an administrative system based on counties. In the middle of the thirteenth century Hungary was invaded by the Mongols (see "Chinggis Khan and the Mongol Empire" in Chapter 12), which led the kings to construct stone castles to defend against further attacks and develop new military tactics.

Law and Justice

Throughout Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the law was a hodgepodge of customs, feudal rights, and provincial practices. Rulers wanted to blend these elements into a uniform system of rules acceptable

and applicable to all their peoples, though their success in doing so varied.

The French king Louis IX (r. 1226–1270) was famous for his concern for justice. Each French province, even after being made part of the kingdom of France, retained its unique laws and procedures. But Louis IX created a royal judicial system, establishing the Parlement of Paris, a kind of supreme court that heard appeals from lower courts.

Under Henry II (r. 1154–1189), England developed and extended a common law — a law common to and accepted by the entire country — which was unique in medieval Europe. Henry's son John (r. 1199–1216), however, met with serious disappointment after taking the throne. A combination of royal debt, increased taxation, and military failures fed popular discontent. A rebellion begun by northern barons grew, and in 1215 the barons forced him to attach his seal to the Magna Carta — the "Great Charter," which became the cornerstone of English justice and law. The Magna Carta was simply meant to assert traditional rights enjoyed by nobles, but in time it came to signify the broader principle that everyone, including the king and the government, must obey the law. In 1222 King Andrew II of Hungary was similarly forced by his nobles to agree to the "Golden Bull," affirming their freedom from taxation and right to disobey him if they thought he was acting against the law.

Statements of legal principles such as the Magna Carta or the Golden Bull were not how most people experienced the law in medieval Europe. Instead they were involved in actual cases. Judges determined guilt or innocence in a number of ways. In some cases, they ordered a trial by ordeal, in which the accused might be tied hand and foot and dropped in a lake or river. People believed that water was a pure substance and would reject anything foul or unclean. Thus a person who sank was considered innocent, while a person who floated was found guilty. Trials by ordeal were relatively rare, and courts increasingly favored more rational procedures, in which judges heard testimony, sought witnesses, and read written evidence if it was available. Violent crimes were often punished by public execution. Executioners were feared figures, but they were also well-paid public officials and were a necessary part of the legal structure.

The Christian Church

How did the Christian Church enhance its power and create new institutions and religious practices?

Kings and emperors were not the only rulers consolidating their power in the eleventh and twelfth centuries; the papacy did as well, although the popes' efforts were sometimes challenged by medieval kings and emperors. Despite such challenges, monasteries continued to be important places for learning and devotion, and new religious orders were founded. Christianity expanded into Europe's northern and eastern regions, and Christian rulers expanded their holdings in Muslim Spain.

Córdoba Mosque and Cathedral The huge arches of the Great Mosque at Córdoba dwarf the cathedral built in its center after the city was conquered by Christian armies in 1236. During the reconquista (see "The Expansion of Western and Eastern Christianity"), Christian kings often transformed mosques into churches, often by simply adding Christian elements such as crosses and altars to existing structures.

Papal Reforms

During the ninth and tenth centuries the Western Christian (Roman) Church came under the control of kings and feudal lords, who chose

church officials in their territories, granting them fiefs that provided an income and expecting loyalty and service in return. Church offices were sometimes sold outright — a practice called *simony* (SIGH-moh-nee). Although the Western Church encouraged clerical celibacy, many priests were married or living with women. Wealthy families from the city of Rome often chose popes from among their members; thus popes paid more attention to their families' political fortunes or their own pleasures than to the church's institutional or spiritual health. Not surprisingly, clergy at all levels who had bought their positions or had been granted them for political reasons provided little spiritual guidance and were rarely models of high moral standards.

Beginning in the eleventh century a series of popes began to assert their power and also reformed the church. In 1054 the pope sent a delegation to the patriarch of Constantinople demanding that he recognize the pope as the head of the entire Christian Church. The patriarch refused, each side declared the other heretics, and the outcome was a schism between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches that deepened over the centuries and continues today.

Many popes believed that secular or lay control over the church was largely responsible for the lack of moral leadership, so they proclaimed the church independent from secular rulers. The Lateran Council of 1059 decreed that the authority and power to elect the pope rested solely in the college of cardinals, a special group of priests from the major churches in and around Rome.

Pope Gregory VII (pontificate 1073–1085) vigorously championed reform and the expansion of papal power. He ordered all priests to give up their wives and children or face dismissal, invalidated the ordination of church officials who had purchased their offices, and placed nuns under firmer control of male authorities. He believed that the pope was the vicar of God on earth and that papal orders were the orders of God. He emphasized the political authority of the papacy, ordering that any church official selected or appointed by a layperson should be deposed, and any layperson who appointed a church official should be excommunicated — cut off from the sacraments and the Christian community. European rulers protested this restriction of their power, and the strongest reaction came from Henry IV, the ruler of Germany who later became the Holy Roman emperor. The pope and the emperor used threats and diplomacy against each other, and neither was the clear victor.

Monastic Life

Although they were in theory cut off from the world (see "Christian

Monasticism" in Chapter 8), monasteries and convents were deeply affected by issues of money, rank, and power. During the ninth and tenth centuries many monasteries fell under the control and domination of local feudal lords. Powerful laymen appointed themselves or their relatives as abbots, took the lands and goods of monasteries, and spent monastic revenues.

Medieval monasteries also provided noble boys with education and opportunities for ecclesiastical careers. Although a few men who rose in the ranks of church officials were of humble origins, most were from high-status families. Social class also defined the kinds of religious life open to women. Kings and nobles usually established convents for their female relatives and other elite women, and the position of abbess, or head of a convent, became the most powerful position a woman could hold in medieval society. (See "Individuals in Society: Hildegard of Bingen," page 383.)

Routines within individual monasteries varied widely from house to house and from region to region. In every monastery, however, daily life centered on the liturgy or Divine Office, psalms, and other prayers, which monks and nuns said seven times a day and once during the night. Praying was looked on as a vital service. Prayers were said for peace, rain, good harvests, the civil authorities, the monks' and nuns' families, and their benefactors. Monastic patrons in turn lavished gifts on the monasteries, which often became very wealthy, controlling large tracts of land and the peasants who farmed them. The combination of lay control and wealth created problems for monasteries as monks and nuns concentrated on worldly issues and spiritual observance and intellectual activity declined.

In the thirteenth century the growth of cities provided a new challenge for the church. Many urban people thought that the church did not meet their spiritual needs. They turned instead to **heresy** — that is, to an idea, belief, or action that ran counter to doctrines that church leaders defined as correct. Various beliefs judged to be heresies had emerged in Christianity since its earliest centuries, and heretics were subject to punishment. In this period, heresies often called on the church to give up its wealth and power. Combating heresy became a principal task of new religious orders, most prominently the Dominicans and Franciscans, who preached and ministered to city dwellers; the Dominicans also staffed the papal Inquisition, a special court designed to root out heresy.

heresy An idea, belief, or action counter to doctrines that church leaders defined as correct; heretics could be punished by the church.

Hildegard of Bingen

Private Collection/Bridgeman Images

Inspired by heavenly fire, Hildegard begins to dictate her visions to her scribe. The original of this elaborately illustrated copy of *Scivias* disappeared from Hildegard's convent during World War II, but fortunately a facsimile had already been made.

THE TENTH CHILD OF A LESSER NOBLE FAMILY, HILDEGARD (1098–1179) was turned over to the care of an abbey in the Rhineland when she was eight years old. There she learned Latin and received a good education. She spent most of her life in various women's religious communities, two of which she founded herself. When she was a child, she began having mystical visions, often of light in the sky, but told few people about them. In middle age, however, her visions became more dramatic: "And it came to pass … when I was 42 years and 7 months old, that the

heavens were opened and a blinding light of exceptional brilliance flowed through my entire brain. And so it kindled my whole heart and breast like a flame, not burning but warming … and suddenly I understood of the meaning of expositions of the books."* She wanted the church to approve of her visions and wrote first to Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, who answered her briefly and dismissively, and then to Pope Eugenius, who encouraged her to write them down. Her first work was *Scivias* (Know the Ways of the Lord), a record of her mystical visions that incorporates extensive theological learning.

Obviously possessed of leadership and administrative talents, Hildegard left her abbey in 1147 to found the convent of Rupertsberg near Bingen. There she produced *Physica* (On the Physical Elements) and *Causa et Curae* (Causes and Cures), scientific works on the curative properties of natural elements; poems; a religious play; and several more works of mysticism. She carried on a huge correspondence with scholars, prelates, and ordinary people. When she was over fifty, she left her community to preach to audiences of clergy and laity, and she was the only woman of her time whose opinions on religious matters were considered authoritative by the church.

Hildegard's visions have been explored by theologians and also by neurologists, who judge that they may have originated in migraine headaches, as she reports many of the same phenomena that migraine sufferers do: auras of light around objects, areas of blindness, feelings of intense doubt and intense euphoria. The interpretations that she develops come from her theological insight and learning, however, not from her illness. That same insight also emerges in her music, which is what she is best known for today. Eighty of her compositions survive — a huge number for a medieval composer — most of them written to be sung by the nuns in her convent, so they have strong lines for female voices. Many of her songs and chants have been recorded recently by various artists and are available on compact disk, as downloads, and on several websites.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Why do you think Hildegard might have kept her visions secret at first? Why do you think she eventually sought church approval for them?
2. In what ways were Hildegard's accomplishments extraordinary given women's general status in the Middle Ages?

*From *Scivias*, trans. Mother Columba Hart and Jane Bishop, *The Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1990).

Popular Religion

Religious practices varied widely from country to country and even from province to province. But everywhere, religion permeated everyday life.

For Christians, the village church was the center of community life, with the parish priest in charge of a host of activities. People gathered at the church for services on Sundays and holy days, breaking the painful routine of work. The feasts that accompanied celebrations were commonly held in the churchyard. In everyday life people engaged in rituals and used language heavy with religious symbolism. Everyone participated in village processions to honor the saints and ask their protection. The entire calendar was designed with reference to Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, events in the life of Jesus and his disciples.

The Christian calendar was also filled with saints' days. Veneration of the saints had been an important tool of Christian conversion since late antiquity (see "Christian Missionaries and Conversion" in Chapter 8), and the cult of the saints was a central feature of popular culture in the Middle Ages. People believed that the saints possessed supernatural powers that enabled them to perform miracles, and each saint became the special property of the locality in which his or her relics — remains or possessions — rested. In return for the saint's healing powers and support, peasants would offer prayers, loyalty, and gifts. The Virgin Mary, Christ's mother, became the most important saint, with churches built and special hymns, prayers, and ceremonies created in her honor.

Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, Italy/Scala/Art Resource, NY

Statue of Saint Anne, the Virgin Mary, and the Christ Child Nearly every church had at least one image of the Virgin Mary, the most important figure of Christian devotion in medieval Europe. In this thirteenth-century wooden sculpture, she is shown holding the infant Jesus and is herself sitting on the lap of her mother, Anne. Statues such as this reinforced people's sense that the heavenly family was much like theirs, with grandparents who sometimes played important roles.

Most people in medieval Europe were Christian, but there were small Jewish communities scattered through many parts of Europe, as well as Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula, Sicily, other Mediterranean islands, and southeastern Europe. Increasing suspicion and hostility marked relations among believers in different religions throughout the Middle Ages, but there were also important similarities in the ways that each group understood and experienced their faiths. In all three traditions, every major

life transition was marked by a ceremony that involved religious officials or spiritual elements. In all three faiths, death was marked by religious rituals, and the living had obligations to the dead, including prayers and special mourning periods.

The Expansion of Western and Eastern Christianity

The eleventh and twelfth centuries saw an expansion of Christianity into Scandinavia, the Baltic lands, eastern Europe, and Spain through wars, the establishment of new bishoprics, and the migration of Christian colonists. More and more Europeans began to think of themselves as belonging to a realm of Christianity that was political as well as religious, a realm they called Christendom.

Christian influences entered Scandinavia and the Baltic lands primarily through the creation of dioceses (church districts headed by bishops). This took place in Denmark and Norway in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and then in Sweden and Finland. In all of these areas, Christian missionaries preached, baptized, and built churches. Royal power advanced institutional Christianity, and traditional Norse religions practiced by the Vikings were outlawed. In central and eastern Europe the German emperor Otto I (see "The Restoration of Order") planted a string of dioceses along his northern and eastern frontiers, hoping to pacify the newly conquered Slavs. German nobles built castles, ruthlessly crushed revolts by Slavic peoples, and encouraged German-speaking settlers to move east.

The expansion of Christianity in much of eastern Europe was organized by the Eastern Orthodox Church. King Rastislav of Moravia (r. 846–870) — now part of the Czech Republic — first sent envoys to Rome, but when the pope refused to send missionaries, he turned to the Byzantine emperor Michael III (r. 842–867), who sent the brothers Cyril (826–869) and Methodius (815–885). They invented a Slavic alphabet using Greek characters, later called the Cyrillic alphabet, and translated the Bible into Old Church Slavonic, the first Slavic literary language. Slightly later the rulers of Bulgaria weighed the benefits of Roman and Eastern Christianity, and decided for Eastern Christianity when the Byzantine patriarch agreed the Bulgarian Church could be independent and use Bulgarian as its official language.

In the tenth century other missionaries spread Christianity, the Cyrillic alphabet, and Byzantine art and architecture to what is now Russia. Vladimir I (r. 980–1015), the ruler of the largest state in the area, Kievan Rus, converted to Orthodox Christianity, in part to marry the daughter of the Byzantine emperor. He ordered a mass baptism for the residents of

Kiev in a local river, just as western European kings had for their subjects several centuries earlier (see “Christian Missionaries and Conversion” in Chapter 8).

The Iberian Peninsula was another area of Christian expansion. In about 950 Caliph Abd al-Rahman III (912–961) of the Umayyad Dynasty of Córdoba ruled most of the peninsula. Christian Spain consisted of a number of small kingdoms. In the eleventh century divisions and civil wars in the caliphate of Córdoba allowed Christian armies to conquer an increasingly large part of the Iberian Peninsula. By 1248 Christians held all of the peninsula save for the small state of Granada in the south.

Fourteenth-century clerical writers would call the movement to expel the Muslims the **reconquista** (ray-kon-KEES-tah) (reconquest) — a sacred and patriotic crusade to wrest the country from “alien” Muslim hands. This religious idea became part of Spanish political culture and of the national psychology. Rulers of the Christian kingdoms of Spain increasingly passed legislation discriminating against Muslims and Jews living under Christian rule, and they attempted to exclude anyone from the nobility who could not prove “purity of blood” — that is, that they had no Muslim or Jewish ancestors.

reconquista A fourteenth-century term used to describe the long Christian crusade to wrest Spain back from the Muslims; clerics believed it was a sacred and patriotic mission.

Spain was not the only place in Europe where “blood” became a way of understanding differences among people and a basis for discriminatory laws. When Germans moved into eastern Europe and English forces took over much of Ireland, they increasingly barred local people from access to legal courts and denied them positions in monasteries or craft guilds. They banned intermarriage between ethnic groups in an attempt to maintain ethnic purity, even though everyone was Christian.

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The Reconquista, ca. 750–1492

The Crusades

What were the causes, course, and consequences of the Crusades?

The expansion of Christianity in the Middle Ages was not limited to Europe but extended to the eastern Mediterranean in what were later termed the **Crusades**. Occurring from the late eleventh to the late thirteenth century, the Crusades were wars sponsored by the papacy to recover the holy city of Jerusalem from the Muslims.

Crusades Holy wars sponsored by the papacy for the recovery of the holy city of Jerusalem from the Muslims.

Background and Motives

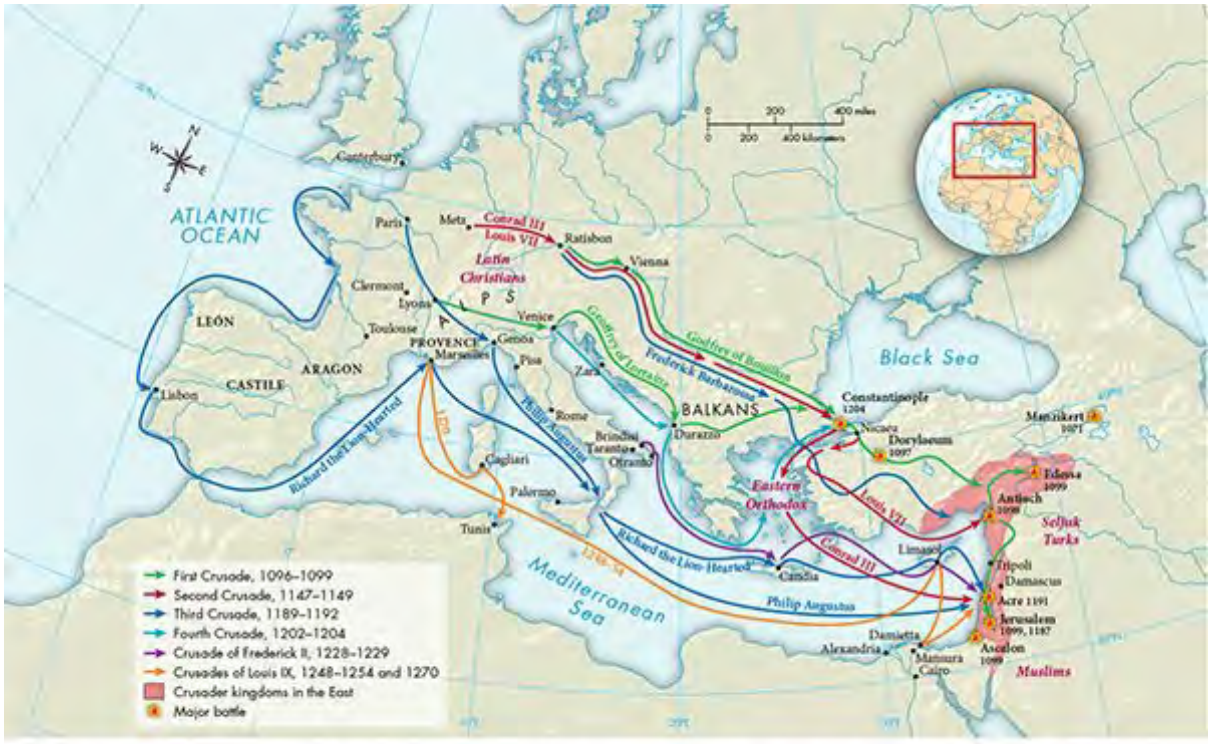
In the eleventh century the papacy had strong reasons for wanting to launch an expedition against Muslims in the East. Such an expedition would strengthen the pope's claim to be the leader of Christian society in the West and would bolster his claims to superiority over the patriarch of the Eastern Orthodox Church (see "The Western Church and the Eastern Church" in Chapter 8).

Popes and other church officials gained support for war in defense of Christianity by promising spiritual benefits to those who joined a campaign or died fighting. Preachers communicated these ideas widely and told stories about warrior-saints who slew hundreds of enemies.

Religious zeal led increasing numbers of people to go on pilgrimages to holy places, including Jerusalem. The Arab Muslims who had ruled Jerusalem and the surrounding territory for centuries generally allowed Christian pilgrims to travel freely, but in the late eleventh century the Seljuk Turks took over Palestine, defeating both Arabic and Byzantine armies and pillaging in Christian and Muslim parts of Asia Minor. They harassed pilgrims and looted churches, and the emperor at Constantinople appealed to the West for support. The emperor's appeal fit well with papal aims, and in 1095 Pope Urban II called for a great Christian holy war. Urban urged Christian knights who had been fighting one another to direct their energies against those he claimed were the true enemies of God, the Muslims.

The Course of the Crusades

Thousands of people of all classes responded to Urban's call, joining what became known as the First Crusade. The First Crusade was successful, mostly because of the dynamic enthusiasm of the participants, who had little more than religious zeal. They knew little of the geography or climate of the Middle East and could never agree on a leader. Adding to these disadvantages, supply lines were never set up, starvation and disease wracked the army, and the Turks slaughtered hundreds of noncombatants. Nevertheless, the army pressed on, besieging and taking several cities, including Antioch. After three years on the road, and a monthlong siege, the Crusaders took Jerusalem in July 1099 (Map 14.2). (See "Thinking Like a Historian: Christian and Muslim Views of the Crusades," page 386.)



Wiesner-Hanks et al., *A History of World Societies*, 11e, © 2018 Bedford/St. Martin's

MAP 14.2 The Crusades, 1096–1270 The Crusaders took many different sea and land routes on their way to Jerusalem, often crossing the lands of the Byzantine Empire, which led to conflict with Eastern Christians. The Crusader kingdoms in the East lasted only briefly.

With Jerusalem taken, some Crusaders regarded their mission as accomplished and set off for home. Others stayed, setting up institutions to rule local territories and the Muslim population. Four small "Crusader states" — Jerusalem, Edessa, Tripoli, and Antioch — were established, and castles and fortified towns were built in these states to defend against Muslim reconquest. Reinforcements arrived in the form of pilgrims and fighters from Europe, so that there was constant coming and going by land

and more often by sea after the Crusaders conquered port cities. Most Crusaders were men, but some women came along as well, assisting in the besieging of towns and castles by providing water to fighting men or foraging for food, working as washerwomen, and providing sexual services.

Between 1096 and 1270 the crusading ideal was expressed in eight papally approved expeditions, though none after the First Crusade accomplished very much. The Muslim states in the Middle East were politically fragmented when the Crusaders first came, and it took them about a century to reorganize. They did so dramatically under Saladin (Salah al-Din), who unified Egypt and Syria. In 1187 the Muslims retook Jerusalem, but the Christians held on to port towns, and Saladin allowed pilgrims safe passage to Jerusalem. From that point on, the Crusader states were more important economically than politically or religiously, giving Italian and French merchants direct access to Eastern products.

After the Muslims retook Jerusalem, the crusading movement faced other setbacks. During the Fourth Crusade (1202–1204), Crusaders stopped in Constantinople, and when they were not welcomed, they sacked the city. The Byzantine Empire splintered into three parts and soon consisted of little more than the city of Constantinople. Moreover, the assault of one Christian people on another made the split between the churches permanent and discredited the entire crusading movement in the eyes of many Christians.

In the late thirteenth century Turkish armies, after gradually conquering all other Muslim rulers, turned against the Crusader states. In 1291 the Christians' last stronghold, the port of Acre, fell. Knights then needed a new battlefield for military actions, which some found in Spain, where the rulers of Aragon and Castile continued fighting Muslims until 1492.

THINKING LIKE A HISTORIAN

Christian and Muslim Views of the Crusades

Both Christians and Muslims wrote accounts of the Crusades as they happened, which circulated among those who could read and served as the basis for later histories and visual depictions. How do Christian and Muslim views differ, and how are they similar?

1 **Peter Tudebode on the fall of Antioch, 1098.** Peter Tudebode was a French priest who accompanied the First Crusade and later wrote an account of it.

There was a Turkish emir [high-ranking army officer], Firuz, who became very friendly with Bohemond [a Norman noble, one of the leaders of the First Crusade]. Often through mutual messengers Bohemond suggested that Firuz admit him to Antioch; and, in turn, the Norman offered him the Christian religion along with great wealth from many possessions. Firuz, in accepting these provisions, replied: "I pledge freely the delivery of three towers of which I am a custodian."… The knights took to the plain and the footmen to the mountain, and all night they maneuvered and marched until almost daybreak, when they came to the towers which Firuz guarded. Bohemond immediately dismounted and addressed the group: "Go in dare-devil spirit and great *elan*, and mount the ladder into Antioch, which shall soon be in our hands if God so wills." They then went to a ladder, which was raised and lashed to the walls of the city, and almost sixty of our men scaled the ladder and divided their forces in the towers guarded by Firuz…. [W]e crashed down the gate, and poured into Antioch…. At sunup the crusaders who were outside Antioch in their tents, upon hearing piercing shrieks arising from the city, raced out and saw the banner of Bohemond flying high on the hill. Thereupon they rushed forth and each one speedily came to his assigned gate and entered Antioch, killing Turks and Saracens whom they found…. Yaghi Siyan, commander of Antioch, in great fear of the Franks, took to heel along with many of his retainers…. All of the streets of Antioch were choked with corpses so that the stench of rotting bodies was unendurable, and no one could walk the streets without tripping over a cadaver.

2 **Ibn al-Athir on the fall of Antioch, early thirteenth century.** Ali Ibn al-Athir (1160–1223), a Kurdish scholar and historian who lived in Mosul (today's Iraq), wrote a history of the First Crusade that relied on Arab sources.

Yaghi Siyan, the ruler of Antioch, showed unparalleled courage and wisdom, strength and judgment. If all the Franks who died had survived they would have overrun all the lands of Islam. He protected the families of the Christians in Antioch and would not allow a hair of their heads to be touched. After the siege had been going on for a long time the Franks made a deal with … an armor-maker called Ruzbih whom they bribed with a fortune in money and lands. He

worked in the tower that stood over the riverbed, where the river flowed out of the city into the valley. The Franks sealed their pact with the armor-maker, God damn him! and made their way to the watergate. They opened it and entered the city. Another gang of them climbed the tower with their ropes. At dawn, when more than 500 of them were in the city and the defenders were worn out after the night watch, they sounded their trumpets…. Panic seized Yaghi Siyan and he opened the city gates and fled in terror, with an escort of thirty pages…. This was of great help to the Franks, [who] entered the city by the gates and sacked it, slaughtering all the Muslims they found there….

It was the discord between the Muslim princes … that enabled the Franks to overrun the country.

3 **Fulcher of Chartres on the fall of Jerusalem to the Crusaders, 1099.** Fulcher was a chaplain to military leaders on the First Crusade and over several decades wrote a long and influential chronicle.

Soon thereafter the Franks gloriously entered the city at noon on the day known as Dies Veneris, the day in which Christ redeemed the whole world on the Cross. [That is, a Friday.] Amid the sound of trumpets and with everything in an uproar they attacked boldly, shouting "God help us!" At once they raised a banner in the city on the top of the wall…. They ran with the greatest exultation as fast as they could into the city and joined their companions in pursuing and slaying their wicked enemies without cessation…. If you had been there your feet would have been stained to the ankles in the blood of the slain. What shall I say? None of them were left alive. Neither women nor children were spared. How astonishing it would have seemed to you to see our squires and footmen, after they discovered the trickery of the Saracens, split open the bellies of those they had just slain in order to extract from the intestines the bezants [gold coins minted in Byzantium] which the Saracens had gulped down their loathsome throats while still alive! … After this great slaughter they entered the houses of the citizens, seizing whatever they found in them. This was done in such a way that whoever first entered a house, whether he was rich or poor, was not challenged by any other Frank. In this way many poor people became wealthy.

4 **Al-Isfahani on Saladin's retaking of Jerusalem, 1187.** Imad ad-Din al-Isfahani (1125–1187) was a Persian scholar who served as secretary to Saladin and accompanied him on many of his military campaigns.

Saladin marched forward to take the reins of Jerusalem…. [T]he Franks despaired of finding any relief from their situation and decided all to give their lives (in defense of Jerusalem)…. The Sultan mounted catapults, and by this means milked the udders of slaughter…. [I]n every heart on either side burned the fire of longing, faces were exposed to the blade's kiss, hearts were tormented with longing for combat…. Every onslaught was energetic and achieved its object, the goal was reached, the enemy wounded…. The city became Muslim and the infidel belt around it was cut…. By striking coincidence the date of the

conquest of Jerusalem was the anniversary of the Prophet's ascension to heaven. Great joy reigned for the brilliant victory won, and words of prayer and invocation to God were on every tongue…. Ibn Barzun [Balian of Ibelin, one of the Crusader leaders] came out to secure a treaty with the Sultan, and asked for an amnesty for his people…. [A]n amount was fixed for which they were to ransom themselves and their possessions … ten dinar for every man, five for a woman, and two for a boy or girl…. Every man who paid left his house in safety, and the rest were to be enslaved…. The Franks began selling their possessions and taking their precious things out of safe-keeping…. They scavenged in their own churches and stripped them of their ornaments of gold and silver…. Then I said to the Sultan, "These are things of great riches; do not allow these rascals to keep this in their grasp." But he replied, "If we interpret the treaty to their disadvantage they will accuse us of breaking faith." So they carried away the most precious and lightest [objects] and shook from their hands the dust of their heritage.

5 **Capture of Antioch.** This illustration comes from a 1280 version of William of Tyre's *A History of Deeds Beyond the Sea*, the most widely read account of the Crusades, which drew extensively on earlier histories.

From the *Estoire d'Outremer* (vellum) by William of Tyre [ca. 1130–1185]/ Bibliothèque Municipale de Lyon, France/Bridgeman Images

ANALYZING THE EVIDENCE

1. How do Sources 1 and 2 differ in how they portray Yaghi Siyan and the man who opened the towers of Antioch to Christian forces? How do these and other differences influence the story?
2. In Sources 3 and 4, how is the course of the two battles for Jerusalem different? How is the aftermath different?
3. How does the artist who painted Source 5 convey his ideas about why the battle ended as it did?

4. How do these accounts balance the various aims — religious devotion, military glory, economic gain — of the two sides?

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Using the sources above, along with what you have learned in class and in this chapter, write a short essay that analyzes Christian and Muslim views of the Crusades. How did they differ, and how were they similar? How did the Crusades help shape the understanding that Christians and Muslims had of each other?

Sources: (1) Peter Tudebode, *Historia de Hierosolymitano Itinere*, trans. and ed. John H. Hill and Laurita L. Hill (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1974), pp. 56–57; (2) Francesco Gabrieli, trans. and ed., *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, pp. 3–5. Translation © 1969 by Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. Published by the University of California Press. Used by permission of the University of California Press and by permission of Taylor & Francis Books UK; (3) Fulcher of Chartres, *A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem, 1095–1127*, trans. Frances Rita Ryan and ed. Harold S. Fink (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1969), pp. 121–122; (4) Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, pp. 147, 150, 154, 155, 156, 157–158, 162.

Consequences of the Crusades

The Crusades testified to the religious enthusiasm of the High Middle Ages and the influence of the papacy, gave kings and the pope opportunities to expand their bureaucracies, and provided an outlet for nobles' dreams of glory. The Crusades also introduced some Europeans to Eastern luxury goods. They were also a boon to Italian merchants, who profited from outfitting military expeditions as well as from the opening of new trade routes and the establishment of trading communities in the Crusader states.

Despite these advantages, the Crusades had some seriously negative sociopolitical consequences. For one thing, they proved to be a disaster for Jewish-Christian relations. Inspired by the ideology of holy war, Christian armies on their way to Jerusalem on the First Crusade joined with local mobs to attack Jewish families and communities. Later Crusades brought similar violence, enhanced by accusations that Jews engaged in the ritual murder of Christians to use their blood in religious rites.

Legal restrictions on Jews gradually increased throughout Europe. Jews were forbidden to have Christian servants or employees, to hold public office, to appear in public on Christian holy days, or to enter Christian parts of town without a badge marking them as Jews. They were prohibited from engaging in any trade with Christians except money-lending and were banished from England and France.

The long-term cultural legacy of the Crusades may have been more powerful than their short-term impact. The ideal of a sacred mission to conquer or convert Muslim peoples entered some Europeans' consciousness and was later used in other situations. When in 1492 Christopher Columbus sailed west, he used the language of the Crusades in his diaries, and he hoped to establish a Christian base in India from which a new crusade against Islam could be launched (see "Causes of European Expansion" in Chapter 16). Muslims later looked back on the Crusades as expansionist and imperialist, the beginning of a long trajectory of Western attempts to limit or destroy Islam.

The Life of the People

How did the lives of common people, nobles, and townspeople differ, and what new commercial developments increased wealth?

In the late ninth century medieval intellectuals described Christian society as composed of those who pray (the monks), those who fight (the nobles), and those who work (the peasants). This three-category model does not fully describe medieval society — there were degrees of wealth and status within each group. Also, the model does not take townspeople and the emerging commercial classes into consideration, and it completely excludes those who were not Christian, such as Jews, Muslims, and pagans. Furthermore, those who used the model, generally bishops and other church officials, ignored the fact that each of these groups was made up of both women and men. Despite — or perhaps because of — these limitations, the model of the three categories was a powerful mental construct. Therefore, we can use it to organize our investigation of life in the Middle Ages, broadening it to include groups and issues that medieval authors did not. (See “Christian Monasticism” in Chapter 8 for a discussion of the life of monks and nuns — “those who pray.”)

The Life and Work of Peasants

The men and women who worked the land in medieval Europe made up probably more than 90 percent of the population, as they did in China, India, and other parts of the world where agriculture predominated. The evolution of localized systems of authority into more centralized states had relatively little impact on the daily lives of these peasants except when it involved warfare.

Medieval theologians lumped everyone who worked the land into the category of “those who work,” but in fact there were many levels of peasants, ranging from slaves to free and sometimes very rich farmers. In western Europe most peasants were serfs, required to stay in the village and perform labor on the lord’s land. Serfs were also often obliged to pay fees on common occurrences, such as marriage or inheritance of property.

Serfdom was a hereditary condition. A person born a serf was likely to die a serf, though many serfs did secure their freedom, and the economic revival that began in the eleventh century (see “Towns, Cities, and the Growth of Commercial Interests”) allowed some to buy their freedom. Further opportunities for increased personal freedom came when lords organized groups of villagers to migrate to sparsely settled frontier areas or

to cut down forests or fill in swamps so that there was more land available for farming. Those who took on this extra work often gained a reduction in traditional manorial obligations and an improvement of their social and legal conditions.

Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Bonn, Germany/Bridgeman Images

Agricultural Work In this scene from a German manuscript written about 1190, men and women of different ages are sowing seeds and harvesting grain. All residents of a village, including children, engaged in agricultural tasks.

In the Middle Ages most European peasants, free and unfree, lived in family groups in small villages that were part of a manor, the estate of a lord (see “ ‘Feudalism’ and Manorialism”). The manor was the basic unit of medieval rural organization and the center of rural life. Within the manors of western and central Europe, villages were made up of small houses for individual families, a church, and perhaps the large house of the lord, surrounded by land farmed by the villagers. Peasant households consisted of one married couple, their children, and perhaps one or two other relatives, such as a grandparent or unmarried aunt. In southern and eastern Europe, extended families were more likely to live in the same household or very near one another. Between one-third and one-half of children died before age five, though many people lived into their sixties.

The peasants’ work was typically divided according to gender. Men and boys were responsible for clearing new land, plowing, and caring for large animals; women and girls were responsible for the care of small animals, spinning, and food preparation. Both sexes harvested and planted crops used for food, worked in the vineyards, and harvested and prepared crops needed by the textile industry — flax and plants used for dyeing cloth. Beginning in the eleventh century water mills and windmills aided

in some tasks, especially grinding grain, and an increasing use of horses rather than oxen speeded up plowing.

Baking Bread In this fourteenth-century French manuscript, women bake bread in a large oven, using a long wooden paddle to insert the loaves, just as modern pizza bakers do. Medieval families cooked in pots and on spits over fires in their own homes, but rarely had ovens because of the danger of fire. Instead they bought their bread, just as they did beer or ale, another staple of the medieval diet.

The mainstay of the diet for peasants everywhere — and for all other classes — was bread. Peasants also ate vegetables; animals were too valuable to be used for food on a regular basis, but weaker animals were often slaughtered in the fall, and their meat was preserved with salt and eaten on great feast days such as Christmas and Easter. Ale was the universal drink of common people, and it provided needed calories and some relief from the difficult and monotonous labor that filled people's lives.

The Life and Work of Nobles

The nobility, though a small fraction of the total population, influenced all aspects of medieval culture. Nobles generally paid few taxes, and they had power over the people living on their lands. They maintained order, resolved disputes, and protected their dependents from attacks. They appointed officials who oversaw agricultural production. The liberty and privileges of the noble were inheritable, perpetuated by blood and not by wealth alone.

The nobles' primary obligation was warfare, just as it was for nobles among the Mexica (see "The Aztec Empire" in Chapter 11) and samurai in Japan (see "The Samurai and the Kamakura Shogunate" in Chapter 13). Nobles were also obliged to attend the lord's court on important occasions.

Originally, most knights focused solely on military skills, but around 1200 a different ideal of knighthood emerged, usually termed **chivalry**. Chivalry was a code of conduct in which fighting to defend the Christian faith and protecting one's countrymen was declared to have a sacred purpose. Other qualities gradually became part of chivalry: bravery, generosity, honor, graciousness, mercy, and eventually gallantry toward women, which came to be called "courtly love." (See "Analyzing the Evidence: Courtly Love Poetry," above.) The chivalric ideal — and it was an ideal, not a standard pattern of behavior — created a new standard of masculinity for nobles, in which loyalty and honor remained the most important qualities, but graceful dancing and intelligent conversation were not considered unmanly.

chivalry A code of conduct that was supposed to govern the behavior of a knight.

Noblewomen played a large and important role in the functioning of the estate. They were responsible for managing the household's "inner economy" — cooking, brewing, spinning, weaving, and caring for yard animals. When the lord was away for long periods, his wife became the sole manager of the family properties. Often the responsibilities of the estate fell permanently to her if she became a widow.

ANALYZING THE EVIDENCE

Courtly Love Poetry

Whether female or male, troubadour poets celebrated *fin'amor*, a Provençal word for the pure or perfect love a knight was supposed to feel for his lady, which has in English come to be called "courtly love." In courtly love poetry, the writer praises his or her love object, idealizing the beloved and promising loyalty and great deeds. Most of these songs are written by, or from the perspective of, a male lover who is socially beneath his female beloved; her higher status makes her unattainable, so the lover's devotion can remain chaste and pure, rewarded by her handkerchief, or perhaps a kiss, but nothing more.

Scholars generally agree that poetry praising pure and perfect love originated in the Muslim culture of the Iberian Peninsula, where heterosexual romantic love had long been the subject of poems and songs. Spanish Muslim poets sang at the courts of Christian nobles, and Provençal poets picked up their romantic themes. Other aspects of courtly love are hotly debated. Was it simply a literary convention, or did it shape actual behavior? Did it celebrate adultery, or was true courtly love pure (and unrequited)? How should we interpret medieval physicians' reports of people (mostly young men) becoming gravely ill from "lovesickness"? Were there actually "courts of love" in which women judged lovers based on a system of rules? Did courtly love lead to greater respect for women or toward greater misogyny, as desire for a beloved so often ended in frustration?

It is very difficult to know whether courtly love literature influenced the treatment of real women to any great extent, but it did introduce a new ideal of heterosexual romance into Western literature. Courtly love ideals still shape romantic conventions, and often appear in movies, songs, and novels that explore love between people of different social groups.

The following poem was written by Arnaut Daniel, a thirteenth-century troubadour praised by poets from Dante in the thirteenth century to Ezra Pound in the twentieth. Not much is known about him, but his surviving songs capture courtly love conventions perfectly.

I only know the grief that comes to me,
to my love-ridden heart, out of over-loving,
since my will is so firm and whole
that it never parted or grew distant from her
whom I craved at first sight, and afterwards:
and now, in her absence, I tell her burning words;
then, when I see her, I don't know, so much I have to, what to say.

To the sight of other women I am blind, deaf to hearing them
since her only I see, and hear and heed,
and in that I am surely not a false slanderer,
since heart desires her more than mouth may say;
wherever I may roam through fields and valleys, plains and mountains
I shan't find in a single person all those qualities

which God wanted to select and place in her.

I have been in many a good court,
but here by her I find much more to praise:
measure and wit and other good virtues,
beauty and youth, worthy deeds and fair disport;
so well kindness taught and instructed her
that it has rooted every ill manner out of her:
I don't think she lacks anything good.

No joy would be brief or short
coming from her whom I endear to guess [my intentions],
otherwise she won't know them from me,
if my heart cannot reveal itself without words,
since even the Rhone [River], when rain swells it,
has no such rush that my heart doesn't stir
a stronger one, weary of love, when I behold her.

Joy and merriment from another woman seems false and ill to me,
since no worthy one can compare with her,
and her company is above the others'.
Ah me, if I don't have her, alas, so badly she has taken me!
But this grief is amusement, laughter and joy,
since in thinking of her, of her am I gluttonous and greedy:
ah me, God, could I ever enjoy her otherwise!

And never, I swear, I have liked game or ball so much,
or anything has given my heart so much joy
as did the one thing that no false slanderer
made public, which is a treasure for me only.
Do I tell too much? Not I, unless she is displeased:
beautiful one, by God, speech and voice
I'd lose ere I say something to annoy you.

And I pray my song does not displease you
since, if you like the music and lyrics,
little cares Arnaut whether the unpleasant ones like them as well.

[Far fewer poems by female trobairitz have survived than by male troubadours, but those that have survived express strong physical and emotional feelings. The following song was written in the twelfth century by the Countess of Dia. She

was purportedly the wife of a Provençal nobleman, though biographies of both troubadours and trobairitz were often made up to fit the conventions of courtly love, so we don't know for sure. The words to at least four of her songs have survived, one of them with the melody, which is very rare.]

I've suffered great distress
From a knight whom I once owned.
Now, for all time, be it known:
I loved him — yes, to excess. His jilting I've regretted,
Yet his love I never really returned. Now for my sin I can only burn:
Dressed, or in my bed.

O if I had that knight to caress
Naked all night in my arms,
He'd be ravished by the charm
Of using, for cushion, my breast. His love I more deeply prize
Than Floris did Blancheor's
Take that love, my core, My sense, my life, my eyes!

Lovely lover, gracious, kind,
When will I overcome your fight?
O if I could lie with you one night!
Feel those loving lips on mine! Listen, one thing sets me afire:
Here in my husband's place I want you,
If you'll just keep your promise true: Give me everything I desire.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Both of these songs focus on a beloved who does not return the lover's affection. What similarities and differences do you see in them?
2. How does courtly love reinforce other aspects of medieval society? What aspects of medieval society does it contradict?
3. Can you find examples from current popular music that parallel the sentiments expressed in these two songs?

Sources: First poem used by permission of Leonardo Malcovati, editor and translator of *Prosody in England and Elsewhere: A Comparative Approach* (London: Gival Press, 2006) and online at http://www.trobar.org/troubadours/arnaut_daniel/arnaut_daniel_17.php; three verses from lyrics by the Countess of Dia, often called Beatritz, the Sappho of the Rhone, in *Lyrics of the Middle Ages: An Anthology*, edited and translated by James J. Wilhelm. Reproduced with permission of GARLAND PUBLISHING, INCORPORATED, in the format Republish in a book via Copyright Clearance Center.

Towns, Cities, and the Growth of Commercial Interests

Most people continued to live in villages in the Middle Ages, but the rise of towns and the growth of a new business and commercial class were central to Europe's recovery after the disorders of the tenth century. Several factors contributed to this growth: a rise in population; increased agricultural output, which provided an adequate food supply for new town dwellers; and enough peace and political stability to allow merchants to transport and sell goods. In 1100 the largest cities in Europe were most likely Constantinople and Córdoba, each with several hundred thousand residents; only Kaifeng in China was larger. London and Paris were much smaller: Paris had perhaps 50,000 residents and London 20,000.

Towns in western and eastern Europe were generally enclosed by walls, as were towns in China and India. Most towns were first established as trading centers, with a marketplace in the middle, and they were likely to have a mint for coining money and a court for settling disputes. Residents bargained with lords to make the town politically independent, which gave them the right to hold legal courts, select leaders, and set taxes.

Townspeople also tried to acquire liberties, above all personal freedom, for themselves. It gradually developed that an individual who lived in a town for a year and a day, and was accepted by the townspeople, was free of servile obligations and status. Thus serfs who fled their manors for towns and were able to find work and avoid recapture became free of personal labor obligations. In this way the growth of towns contributed to a slow decline of serfdom in western Europe.

Merchants constituted the most powerful group in most towns, and they were often organized into merchant guilds, which prohibited nonmembers from trading, pooled members' risks, monopolized city offices, and controlled the economy of the town. Towns became centers of production as well, and artisans in particular trades formed their own **craft guilds**. Members of the craft guilds determined the quality, quantity, and price of the goods produced and the number of apprentices and journeymen affiliated with the guild. Formal membership in guilds was generally limited to men, but women often worked in guild shops without official membership.

craft guilds Associations of artisans organized to regulate the quality, quantity, and price of the goods produced as well as the number of affiliated apprentices and journeymen.

Artisans generally made and sold products in their own homes, with production taking place on the ground floor. The family lived above the business on the second or third floor. As the business and the family expanded, additional stories were added.

Most medieval towns and cities developed with little planning or attention to sanitation. Horses and oxen, the chief means of transportation and power, dropped tons of dung on the streets every year. It was universal practice in the early towns to dump household waste, both animal and human, into the road in front of one's house. Despite such unpleasant aspects of urban life, people wanted to get into medieval towns because they represented opportunities for economic advancement, social mobility, and improvement in legal status.

The Expansion of Trade and the Commercial Revolution

The growth of towns went hand in hand with a revival of trade as artisans and craftsmen manufactured goods for local and foreign consumption. As in the city-states of East Africa (see "The East African City-States" in Chapter 10), most trade centered in towns and was controlled by merchants. They began to pool their money to finance trading expeditions, sharing the profits and also sharing the risks.

Italian cities, especially Venice, led the West in trade in general and completely dominated trade with Asia and North Africa, becoming much larger urban communities in the process. Merchants from Florence and Milan were also important traders, and they developed new methods of accounting and record keeping that facilitated the movement of goods and money. The towns of Bruges, Ghent, and Ypres in Flanders were leaders in long-distance trade and built up a vast industry in the manufacture of cloth, aided by ready access to wool from England. The availability of raw wool also encouraged the development of cloth manufacture within England itself.

In much of northern Europe, the Hanseatic League (known as the Hansa for short), a mercantile association of towns formed to achieve mutual security and exclusive trading rights, controlled trade. During the thirteenth century perhaps two hundred cities from Holland to Poland joined the league. In cities such as Bruges and London, Hanseatic merchants secured special concessions exempting them from all tolls and allowing them to trade at local fairs. Hanseatic merchants also established foreign trading centers.

The Hanseatic League, 1300–1400

These developments, which began in the eleventh century, added up to what historians of Europe have called the **commercial revolution**, a direct parallel to the economic revolution going on in Song Dynasty China at the same time (see "The Medieval Chinese Economic Revolution" in Chapter 13). In giving the transformation this name, historians point not only to an increase in the sheer volume of trade and in the complexity and sophistication of business procedures but also to the new attitude toward business and making money. Some even detect a "capitalist spirit" in which making a profit was regarded as a good thing in itself.

commercial revolution The transformation of the economic structure of Europe, beginning in the eleventh century, from a rural, manorial society to a more complex mercantile society.

The commercial revolution created a great deal of new wealth, which did not escape the attention of kings and other rulers. Wealth could be taxed, and through taxation kings could create strong and centralized states. Through the activities of merchants, Europeans again saw products from Africa and Asia in city marketplaces, as they had in Roman times. The commercial revolution also provided the opportunity for thousands of serfs in western Europe to improve their social position.

Learning and Culture

What were the primary educational and cultural developments in medieval Europe?

The towns that became centers of trade and production in the High Middle Ages also developed into cultural and intellectual centers. Trade brought in new ideas as well as merchandise, and in many cities a new type of educational institution — the university — emerged. As universities appeared, so did other cultural advancements, such as new forms of architecture and literature.

Universities and Scholasticism

Since the time of the Carolingian Empire, monasteries and cathedral schools had offered the only formal instruction available. In the eleventh century in Bologna and other Italian cities, wealthy businessmen established municipal schools; in the twelfth century municipal schools in Italy and cathedral schools in France and Spain developed into much larger universities, a transformation parallel to the opening of madrasas in Muslim cities (see "Education and Intellectual Life" in Chapter 9).

The growth of the University of Bologna coincided with a revival of interest in Roman law. The study of Roman law as embodied in Justinian's Code (see "Justinian's Code of Law" in Chapter 8) had never completely died out in the West, but in the eleventh century the discovery of a complete manuscript of the code in a library in northern Italy led scholars to study and teach Roman law intently.

At the Italian city of Salerno, interest in medicine had persisted for centuries. Greek and Muslim physicians there had studied the use of herbs as cures and had experimented with surgery. The twelfth century ushered in a new interest in Greek medical texts and in the work of Arab and Greek doctors. Ideas from this medical literature spread throughout Europe from Salerno and became the basis of training for physicians at other medieval universities. University training gave physicians high social status and allowed them to charge high fees, although their diagnoses and treatments were based on classical theories, not on interactions with patients.

Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France/Bridgeman Images

Lecture at the University of Paris Students with somewhat dour expressions take notes while the professor lectures from a book, in this illustration from a history of France made about 1400.

Although medicine and law were important academic disciplines in the Middle Ages, theology was "the queen of sciences." Paris became the place to study theology, and in the first decades of the twelfth century students from all over Europe crowded into the cathedral school of Notre Dame in that city.

University professors were known as "schoolmen" or **Scholastics**. They developed a method of thinking, reasoning, and writing in which questions were raised and authorities cited on both sides of a question. The goal of the Scholastic method was to arrive at definitive answers and to provide a rational explanation for what was believed on faith.

Scholastics Medieval professors who developed a method of thinking, reasoning, and writing in which questions were raised and authorities cited on both sides of a question.

One of the most famous Scholastics was Peter Abelard (1079–1142). Fascinated by logic, Abelard used a method of systematic doubting in his writing and teaching. Abelard was censured by a church council, but he was highly popular with students.

Thirteenth-century Scholastics devoted an enormous amount of time to collecting and organizing knowledge on all topics. These collections were published as summae (SOO-may), or reference books. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), a professor at the University of Paris, produced the most famous collection, the *Summa Theologica*, which deals with a vast number of theological questions.

Students lived in privately endowed residential colleges and were considered to be lower-level members of the clergy, so that any student accused of a crime was tried in church, rather than in city, courts. This clerical status, along with widely held ideas about women's lesser intellectual capabilities, meant that university education was restricted to men.

At all universities the standard method of teaching was the lecture. With this method the professor read a passage from the Bible, Justinian's Code, or one of Aristotle's treatises. He then explained and interpreted the passage. Examinations were given after three, four, or five years of study, when the student applied for a degree. If the candidate passed, he was awarded the first, or bachelor's, degree. Further study enabled the graduate to try for the master's and doctor's degrees. Degrees were technically licenses to teach. Most students, however, did not become teachers. They staffed the expanding royal and papal administrations.

Cathedrals and a New Architectural Style

Religious devotion was expressed through rituals and institutions, but people also wanted permanent visible representations of their piety, and both church and city leaders wanted physical symbols of their wealth and power. These aims found their outlet in the building of tens of thousands of churches, chapels, abbeys, and, most spectacularly, cathedrals.

David R. Frazier/Science Source

Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, Begun 1163 This view offers a fine example of the twin towers (left), the spire, the great rose window over the south portal (center), and the flying buttresses that support the walls and the vaults. Like hundreds of other churches in medieval Europe, it was dedicated to the Virgin Mary. With a spire rising more than 300 feet, Notre Dame was the tallest building in Europe at the time of its construction.

In the tenth and eleventh centuries cathedrals were built in a style that resembled ancient Roman architecture, with massive walls, rounded stone arches, and small windows — features later labeled Romanesque. In the twelfth century a new artistic and architectural style spread out from central France. It was dubbed **Gothic** by later Renaissance architects. The basic features of Gothic architecture — pointed arches, high ceilings, and exterior supports called flying buttresses that carried much of the weight of the roof — allowed unprecedented interior light. Stained-glass windows were cut into the stone. Between 1180 and 1270 in France alone, eighty cathedrals, about five hundred abbey churches, and tens of thousands of parish churches were constructed in this new style. They are testimony to the deep religious faith and piety of medieval people and also to the civic pride of urban residents, for towns competed with one another to build the largest and most splendid cathedral. Through its statuary, paintings, and stained-glass windows, the cathedral was designed to teach the people the doctrines of Christian faith through visual images, though these also often showed scenes from the lives of the artisans and merchants who paid for them.

Gothic The term for the architectural and artistic style that began in Europe in the twelfth century and featured pointed arches, high ceilings, and flying buttresses.

Vernacular Literature and Drama

Latin was the language used in university education, scholarly writing, and works of literature. By the High Middle Ages, however, no one spoke Latin as his or her first language. The barbarian invasions, the mixture of peoples, and the usual changes in language that occurred over time resulted in a variety of local dialects that blended words and linguistic forms in various ways.

In the High Middle Ages, some authors departed from tradition and began to write in their local dialect, that is, in the everyday language of their region, which linguistic historians call the vernacular. This new **vernacular literature** gradually transformed some local dialects into literary languages, such as French, German, Italian, and English, while other local dialects, such as Breton and Bavarian, remained means of oral communication.

vernacular literature Literature written in the everyday language of a region rather than Latin; this included French, German, Italian, and English.

Stories and songs in the vernacular were composed and performed at the courts of nobles and rulers. In southern Europe, especially in Provence in southern France, poets who called themselves troubadours wrote and sang lyric verses celebrating love, desire, beauty, and gallantry. Troubadours included a few women, with their poetry often chiding knights who did not live up to the ideal. (See "Analyzing the Evidence: Courtly Love Poetry," page 390.) The songs of the troubadours were widely imitated in Italy, England, and Germany, so they spurred the development of vernacular literature there as well. Drama, derived from the church's liturgy, also emerged as a distinct art form. Actors performed plays based on biblical themes and on the lives of the saints; these dramas were presented in the towns, first in churches and then at the marketplace. By combining comical farce based on ordinary life with serious religious scenes, plays gave ordinary people an opportunity to identify with religious figures and think about their faith.

Beginning in the fourteenth century a variety of evidence attests to the

increasing literacy of laypeople. Wills and inventories reveal that many people, not just nobles, possessed books — mainly devotional texts, but also romances, manuals on manners and etiquette, histories, and sometimes legal and philosophical texts. The spread of literacy represents a response to the needs of an increasingly complex society.

Crises of the Later Middle Ages

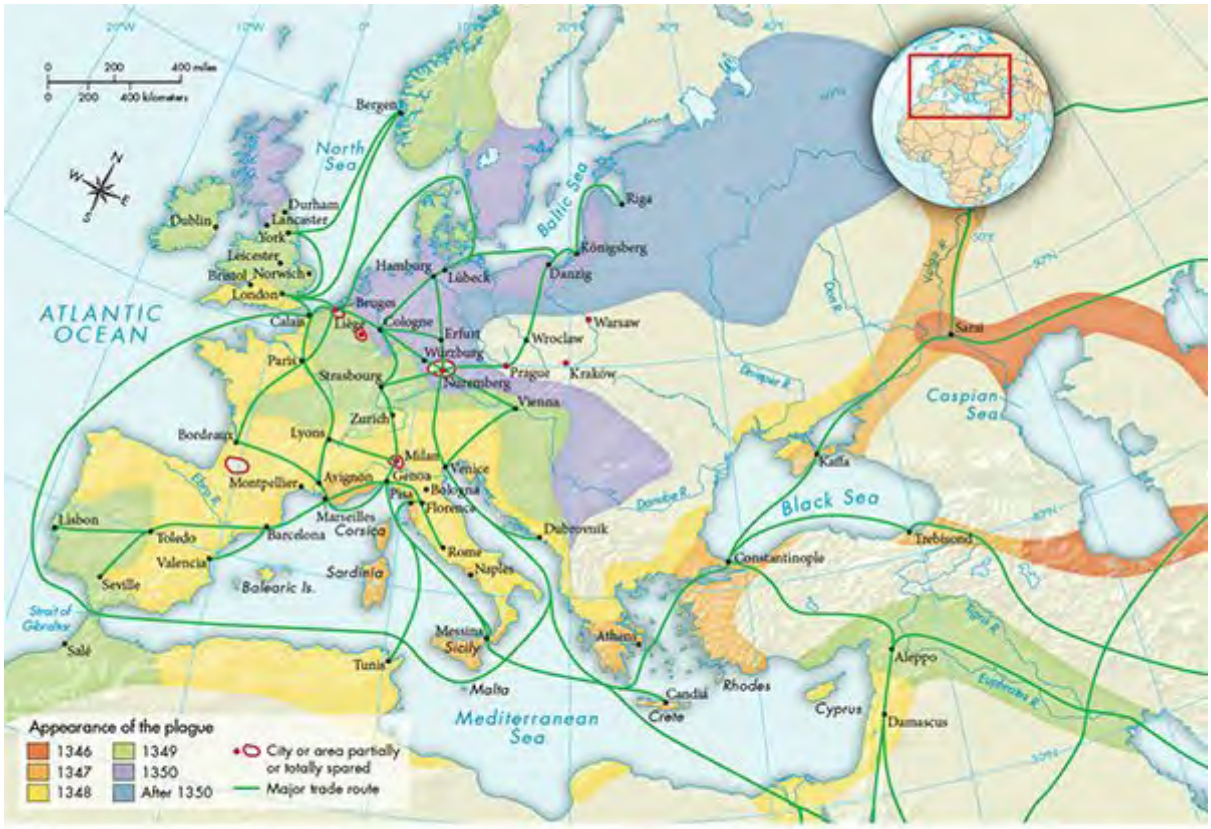
Why have the later Middle Ages been seen as a time of calamity and crisis?

Between 1300 and 1450 Europeans experienced a series of shocks: climate change, economic decline, plague, war, social upheaval, and increased crime and violence. Death and preoccupation with death made the fourteenth century one of the most wrenching periods of history in Europe and western Asia.

The Great Famine and the Black Death

In the first half of the fourteenth century the Northern Hemisphere experienced a series of climate changes, especially the beginning of a period of colder and wetter weather that historical geographers label the "little ice age." Its effects were dramatic and disastrous. Population had steadily increased in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but with colder weather, poor harvests led to scarcity and starvation. The costs of grain, livestock, and dairy products rose sharply. Almost all of northern Europe suffered a terrible famine between 1315 and 1322, with dire social consequences: peasants were forced to sell or mortgage their lands for money to buy food, and the number of homeless people greatly increased, as did petty crime. An undernourished population was dealt a further blow in 1347 in the form of a virulent new disease, later called the **Black Death** (Map 14.3). The symptoms of this disease were first described in 1331 in southwestern China, then part of the Mongol Empire (see "The Spread of Disease, Goods, and Ideas" in Chapter 12). From there it spread across Central Asia by way of Mongol armies and merchant caravans, arriving in the ports of the Black Sea by the 1340s. It then spread to Constantinople and Alexandria, and within a year it was in Mecca, Damascus, Tunis, Genoa, and Venice. From Italy it traveled farther in all directions, in several waves.

Black Death The plague that first struck Europe in 1347, killing perhaps one-third of the population.



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MAP 14.3 The Course of the Black Death in Fourteenth-Century Europe The plague followed trade routes as it spread into and across Europe. A few cities that took strict quarantine measures were spared.

DNA evidence taken from the tooth sockets of skeletons in mass graves in England, France, and the Netherlands indicates that the disease that spread in the fourteenth century was the bubonic plague, caused by a variant of the bacillus *Yersinia pestis*, the same bacillus that had caused the Justinian Plague in the sixth century (see "The Byzantine Empire" in Chapter 8). The disease normally afflicts rats. Fleas living on the infected rats drink their blood and pass the bacteria that cause the plague on to the next rat they bite. Usually the disease is limited to rats and other rodents, but at certain points in history the fleas have jumped from their rodent hosts to humans and other animals. The disease had dreadful effects on the body, including growths in the armpit, groin, or neck; black spots or blotches caused by bleeding under the skin; and violent coughing and spitting blood, which were followed by death in two or three days.

At the time, most people believed that the Black Death was caused by poisons or by "corrupted air" that carried the disease from place to place. They sought to keep poisons from entering the body by smelling or ingesting strong-smelling herbs, and they tried to remove the poisons through bloodletting. They also prayed and did penance. Anxiety and fears

about the plague caused people to look for scapegoats, and they found them in the Jews, who they believed had poisoned the wells of Christian communities and thereby infected the drinking water. This charge led to the murder of thousands of Jews across Europe.

Private Collection/The Bridgeman Art Library

Procession of Flagellants In this manuscript illumination from 1349, shirtless flagellants, men and women who whipped and scourged themselves as penance for their and society's sins, walk through the Flemish city of Tournai, which had just been struck by the plague. Many people believed that the Black Death was God's punishment for humanity's wickedness.

Historians estimate that across Europe the plague killed about one-third of the population, with some places suffering even higher losses. Of a total English population of perhaps 4.2 million, probably 1.4 million died of the Black Death in its several visits. In Italy densely populated cities endured incredible losses. Florence lost between one-half and two-thirds of its population when the plague visited in 1348. The disease recurred intermittently in the 1360s and 1370s and reappeared many times, as late as the early 1700s in Europe.

In the short term the economic effects of the plague were severe because the death of many peasants disrupted food production. But in the long term the dramatic decline in population eased pressure on the land, and wages and per capita wealth rose for those who survived. The psychological consequences of the plague were profound. (See "Global

Viewpoints: Italian and English Views of the Plague," page 398.) Some people sought release in wild living, while others turned to the severest forms of asceticism and frenzied religious fervor.

GLOBAL VIEWPOINTS

Italian and English Views of the Plague

Eyewitness commentators on the plague include the Italian writer Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375), who portrayed the course of the disease in Florence in the preface to his book of tales, *The Decameron*, and the English monastic chronicler Henry Knighton (d. 1396), who described the effects of the plague on English towns and villages in his four-volume chronicle of English history.

Giovanni Boccaccio

■ Against this pestilence no human wisdom or foresight was of any avail…. Men and women in great numbers abandoned their city, their houses, their farms, their relatives, and their possessions and sought other places, going at least as far away as the Florentine countryside — as if the wrath of God could not pursue them with this pestilence wherever they went but would only strike those it found within the walls of the city! … Almost no one cared for his neighbor, and relatives hardly ever visited one another — they stayed far apart. This disaster had struck such fear into the hearts of men and women that brother abandoned brother, uncle abandoned nephew, sister left brother, and very often wife abandoned husband, and — even worse, almost unbelievable — fathers and mothers neglected to tend and care for their children as if they were not their own…. So many corpses would arrive in front of a church every day and at every hour that the amount of holy ground for burials was certainly insufficient for the ancient custom of giving each body its individual place; when all the graves were full, huge trenches were dug in all the cemeteries of the churches and into them the new arrivals were dumped by the hundreds…. Oh how many great palaces, beautiful homes and noble dwellings, once filled with families, gentlemen, and ladies, were now emptied, down to the last servant!

Henry Knighton

■ Then that most grievous pestilence penetrated the coastal regions [of England] by way of Southampton, and came to Bristol, and people died as if the whole strength of the city were seized by sudden death. For there were few who lay in their beds more than three days or two and half days; then that savage death snatched them about the second day. In Leicester, in the little parish of St. Leonard, more than three hundred and eighty died; in the parish of Holy Cross, more than four hundred…. And

so in each parish, they died in great numbers…. At the same time, there was so great a lack of priests everywhere that many churches had no divine services…. One could hardly hire a chaplain to minister to the church for less than ten marks…. Meanwhile, the king ordered that in every county of the kingdom, reapers and other labourers should not receive more than they were accustomed to receive, under the penalty provided in the statute, and he renewed the statute at this time. The labourers, however, were so arrogant and hostile that they did not heed the king's command, but if anyone wished to hire them, he had to pay them what they wanted, and either lose his fruits and crops or satisfy the arrogant and greedy desire of the labourers as they wished…. Similarly, those who received day-work from their tenants throughout the year, as is usual from serfs, had to release them and to remit such service. They either had to excuse them entirely or had to fix them in a laxer manner at a small rent, lest very great and irreparable damage be done to the buildings and the land everywhere remain uncultivated.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How did the residents of Florence respond to the plague, as described by Boccaccio?
2. What were some of the effects of the plague in England, as described by Knighton?
3. How might the fact that Boccaccio was writing in an urban setting and Knighton was writing from a rural monastery that owned a large amount of land have shaped their perspectives?

Sources: Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, trans. Mark Musa and Peter Bondanella (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), pp. 7, 9, 12. Copyright © 1982 by Mark Musa and Peter Bondanella. Used by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.; Henry Knighton, *Chronicon Henrici Knighton*, in *The Portable Medieval Reader*, ed. James Bruce Ross and Mary Martin McLaughlin (New York: Viking, 1949), pp. 218, 220, 222.

The Hundred Years' War

While the plague ravaged populations in Asia, North Africa, and Europe, a long international war in western Europe added further death and destruction. England and France had engaged in sporadic military hostilities from the time of the Norman Conquest in 1066 (see "The Restoration of Order"), and in the middle of the fourteenth century these became more intense. From 1337 to 1453 the two countries intermittently fought one another in what was the longest war in European history, ultimately dubbed the Hundred Years' War, though it actually lasted 116 years.

The Hundred Years' War had a number of causes. Both England and France claimed the duchy of Aquitaine in southwestern France, and the English king Edward III argued that, as the grandson of an earlier French king, he should have rightfully inherited the French throne. Nobles in provinces on the borders of France who were worried about the growing power of the French king supported Edward, as did wealthy wool merchants and clothmakers in Flanders who depended on English wool. The governments of both England and France promised wealth and glory to those who fought, and each country portrayed the other as evil.

The war, fought almost entirely in France, consisted mainly of a series of random sieges and raids. During the war's early stages, England was successful, primarily through the use of longbows fired by well-trained foot soldiers against mounted knights and, after 1375, by early cannon. By 1419 the English had advanced to the walls of Paris. But the French cause was not lost. Though England scored the initial victories, France won the war.

The ultimate French success rests heavily on the actions of Joan, an obscure French peasant girl whose vision and military leadership revived French fortunes and led to victory. Born in 1412 to well-to-do peasants, Joan grew up in a pious household. During adolescence she began to hear voices, which she later said belonged to Saint Michael, Saint Catherine, and Saint Margaret. In 1428 these voices told her that the dauphin of France — Charles VII, who was uncrowned as king because of the English occupation — had to be crowned and the English expelled from France. Joan went to the French court and secured the support of the dauphin to travel, dressed as a knight, with the French army to the besieged city of Orléans.

At Orléans, Joan inspired and led French attacks, and the English retreated. As a result of her successes, Charles made Joan co-commander of the entire army, and she led it to a string of military victories in the

summer of 1429. Two months after the victory at Orléans, Charles VII was crowned king at Reims.

Joan and the French army continued their fight against the English. In 1430 England's allies, the Burgundians, captured Joan and sold her to the English, and the French did not intervene. The English wanted Joan eliminated for obvious political reasons, but the primary charge against her was heresy, and the trial was conducted by church authorities. She was interrogated about the angelic voices and about why she wore men's clothing. She apparently answered skillfully, but in 1431 she was condemned as a heretic and burned at the stake in the marketplace at Rouen. The French army continued its victories without her, and demands for an end to the war increased among the English, who were growing tired of the mounting loss of life and the flow of money into a seemingly bottomless pit. Slowly the French reconquered Normandy and finally ejected the English from Aquitaine. At the war's end in 1453, only the town of Calais remained in English hands.

The long war had a profound impact on the two countries. In England and France the war promoted nationalism. It led to technological experimentation, especially with gunpowder weaponry, whose firepower made the protective walls of stone castles obsolete. The war also stimulated the development of the English Parliament. Edward III's constant need for money to pay for the war compelled him to summon it many times, and its representatives slowly built up their powers.

Armor, Italy, ca. 1400 and later. Steel, brass, textile. Bashford Dean Memorial Collection. Gift of Helen Fahnestock, in memory of her father, Harris C. Fahnestock, 1929 [29.154.3]/The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York/Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Image source: Art Resource, NY

Suit of Armor This fifteenth-century suit of Italian armor protected its wearer, but its weight made movement difficult. Both English and French mounted knights wore full armor at the beginning of the Hundred Years' War, but by the end they wore only breastplates and helmets, which protected their vital organs but allowed greater mobility. This suit has been so well preserved that it was most likely never used in

battle; it may have been made for ceremonial purposes.

Challenges to the Christian Church

In times of crisis or disaster people of all faiths have sought the consolation of religion, but in the fourteenth century the official Western Christian Church offered little solace. While local clergy eased the suffering of many, a dispute over who was the legitimate pope weakened the church as an institution. In 1309 pressure by the French monarchy led the pope to move his permanent residence to Avignon in southern France. This marked the start of seven successive papacies in Avignon. Not surprising, all these popes were French — a matter of controversy among church followers outside France. Also, the popes largely concentrated on bureaucratic and financial matters to the exclusion of spiritual objectives.

In 1376 one of the French popes returned to Rome, and when he died there several years later Roman citizens demanded an Italian pope who would remain in Rome. The cardinals elected Urban VI, but soon regretted their decision. The cardinals slipped away from Rome and declared Urban's election invalid because it had come about under threats from the Roman mob. They elected a French cardinal who took the name Clement VII (pontificate 1378–1394) and set himself up at Avignon in opposition to Urban. There were thus two popes, a situation that was later termed the Great Schism.

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The Great Schism, 1378–1417

The powers of Europe aligned themselves with Urban or Clement

along strictly political lines. France recognized the Frenchman, Clement; England recognized Urban. The rest of Europe lined up behind one or the other. In all European countries the common people were thoroughly confused about which pope was legitimate. In the end the schism weakened the religious faith of many Christians and brought church leadership into serious disrepute.

A first attempt to heal the schism led to the installation of a third pope and a threefold split, but finally a church council meeting at Constance (1414–1418) successfully deposed the three schismatic popes and elected a new leader, who took the name Martin V (pontificate 1417–1431). In the later fifteenth century the papacy concentrated on building up its wealth and political power in Italy rather than on the concerns of the whole church. As a result, many people decided that they would need to rely on their own prayers and pious actions rather than on the institutional church for their salvation.

The primary challenge facing the Orthodox Church was the expansion of the Turks. In the fourteenth century the Ottoman Turks, who were Sunni Muslim, expanded their rule beyond Anatolia to conquer most of the Balkans, defeating Christian armies. (See Map 9.2 and "Analyzing the Evidence: The Battle of Nicopolis" at right.) They besieged Constantinople many times, and in 1453 were successful, ending the Byzantine Empire. Christianity was no longer the state religion, but the patriarchate of Constantinople actually became more powerful, as the patriarchs were given civil and religious authority over all Christians in the expanding Ottoman Empire. The official religion was Islam, but Christians and Jews were largely free to practice their own religion; they paid higher taxes, however, so there were advantages to converting. The Ottoman Empire was mixed in terms of religion, language, and ethnicity and became a haven for Muslims and Jews fleeing discrimination that resulted from the reconquista in the Iberian Peninsula (see "The Expansion of Western and Eastern Christianity").

ANALYZING THE EVIDENCE

The Battle of Nicopolis

Worcester Art Museum/Bridgeman Images

By the early 1390s the Ottomans had conquered most of the Balkans except for the area right around Constantinople and were moving toward Hungary. King Sigismund of Hungary sent a delegation to the king of France asking for help in "protecting Christianity," and the pope proclaimed a crusade against the Ottomans. France and England had just made one of the periodic truces during the Hundred Years' War, so French nobles responded enthusiastically to this opportunity to show off their prowess. Several thousand knights, foot soldiers, and archers — mostly Frenchmen but also some Germans, Poles, Spaniards, and others — traveled over land through the Holy Roman Empire, met up with Sigismund and his troops in Buda, and then marched down the Danube River into Turkish-held territory, pillaging and plundering as they went. The Venetians sent a naval fleet in support. The army besieged the fortress of Nicopolis, a key stronghold high on cliffs above the Danube, while the Turkish commander waited for Sultan Bayezid I and his forces to come to his aid. They did, and the Ottomans attacked the French/Hungarian army on September 25, 1396. The desire for glory, jealousies among the leaders, and a lack of planning among

the French/Hungarian forces led to a complete rout, and thousands of troops were killed or captured by the Ottomans, though King Sigismund escaped. Some of the captives were executed, in retaliation for an earlier French execution of Turkish prisoners, but the nobles among them were held for ransom, and a few made it back to France several years later. Because the battle was so significant, it became the stuff of legend on both sides, with wildly inflated numbers of troops reported in chronicles, and Sultan Bayezid later dubbed "the Thunderbolt."

Both European and Turkish artists also depicted the battle in woodcuts, prints, and manuscript illustrations. The watercolor shown here, by the Ottoman court painter Nakkas Osman, comes from the *Hunernama*, an illustrated history written by the court historian Seyyid Lokman in 1588. Although it was produced nearly two hundred years after the battle, this painting is regarded as more accurate than many others, which include gunpowder weaponry that would not have been available at the time and large siege machines that the French/Hungarian army never used. The painting depicts the fortress of Nicopolis on the high cliffs at the upper right, armored French cavalry and foot soldiers at the left, and Ottoman cavalry and footsoldiers in turbans and high hats in the middle, led by Sultan Bayezid, who is right in the center. At the lower right, an Ottoman soldier leads a French captive away.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How does the artist show that this was a total defeat?
2. How does the artist contrast the discipline of the Ottoman troops with the disorder of the French/Hungarian army?
3. This painting appeared in an official court history for a later Ottoman sultan. How might the position of Bayezid in the painting have appealed to later rulers? Can you think of other examples of paintings of battles that also show leaders in a prominent position?

Peasant and Urban Revolts

The difficult conditions of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries spurred a wave of peasant and urban revolts across Europe. In 1358, when French taxation for the Hundred Years' War fell heavily on the poor, the frustrations of the French peasantry exploded in a massive uprising called the Jacquerie (zhah-kuh-REE). Adding to the anger over taxes was the toll taken by the plague and by the famine that had struck some areas. Artisans, small merchants, and parish priests joined the peasants, and residents of both urban and rural areas committed terrible destruction. For several weeks the nobles were on the defensive, until the upper class united to repress the revolt with merciless ferocity.

Taxes and other grievances also led to the 1381 English Peasants' Revolt, involving tens of thousands of people. The Black Death had dramatically reduced the supply of labor, and peasants had demanded higher wages and fewer manorial obligations. Parliament countered with a law freezing wages and binding workers to their manors. The atmosphere of discontent was further enhanced by popular preachers who proclaimed that great disparities between rich and poor went against Christ's teachings. Moreover, decades of aristocratic violence, much of it perpetrated against the weak peasantry, had bred hostility and bitterness.

In 1380 Parliament imposed a poll tax on all citizens to fund the Hundred Years' War. This tax imposed a greater burden on the poor than on wealthier citizens, and it sparked revolt. The boy-king Richard II (r. 1377–1399) met the leaders of the revolt, agreed to charters ensuring the peasants' freedom, tricked them with false promises, and then proceeded to crush the uprising with terrible ferocity. The nobility tried to use this defeat to restore the labor obligations of serfdom, but they were not successful, and the conversion to money rents continued. In Flanders, France, and England peasant revolts often blended with conflicts involving workers in cities. Unrest also occurred in Italian, Spanish, and German cities. In Florence in 1378 the *ciompi*, or poor propertyless wool workers, revolted and briefly shared government of the city with wealthier artisans and merchants. Rebellions and uprisings everywhere revealed deep peasant and worker frustration with the socioeconomic conditions of the time.

Chapter Summary

Invasions by Vikings, Magyars, and Muslims, along with civil wars, created instability in the ninth and tenth centuries. Local nobles became the strongest powers against external threats, establishing a form of decentralized government later known as feudalism. By the twelfth century rulers in some parts of Europe had reasserted authority and were beginning to develop new institutions of government and legal codes that enabled them to assert power over lesser lords and the general population. The papacy also consolidated its power, though these moves were sometimes challenged by kings and emperors. Monasteries continued to be important places for learning and devotion, and new religious orders were founded. A papal call to retake the holy city of Jerusalem led to the Crusades.

The vast majority of medieval Europeans were peasants who lived in small villages and worked their own and their lord's land. Nobles were a tiny fraction of the total population, but they exerted great power over all aspects of life. Medieval towns and cities grew initially as trading centers and then became centers of production.

Towns also developed into cultural and intellectual centers, as trade brought in new ideas as well as merchandise. Universities offered courses of study based on classical models, and townspeople built churches and cathedrals as symbols of their Christian faith and their civic pride. New types of vernacular literature arose in which poems, songs, and stories were written down in local dialects.

In the fourteenth century a worsening climate brought poor harvests, which contributed to an international economic depression and fostered disease. The Black Death caused enormous population losses and social, psychological, and economic consequences. Additional difficulties included the Hundred Years' War, a schism among rival popes that weakened the Western Christian Church, and peasant and worker frustrations that exploded into uprisings.

CONNECTIONS

The Middle Ages continues to fascinate us today. We go to medieval fairs; visit castle-themed hotels; watch movies about knights and their conquests; play video games in which we become warriors, trolls, or sorcerers; and read stories with themes of great quests set in the Middle Ages. Characters from other parts of the world often heighten the exoticism: a Muslim soldier joins the fight against a

common enemy, a Persian princess rescues the hero and his sidekick, a Buddhist monk teaches martial arts techniques. These characters from outside Europe are fictional, but they also represent aspects of reality because medieval Europe was not isolated, and political and social structures similar to those in western and eastern Europe developed elsewhere.

In reality few of us would probably want to live in the real Middle Ages, when most people worked in the fields all day and even wealthy lords lived in damp and drafty castles. We do not really want to return to a time when one-third to one-half of all children died before age five and alcohol was the only real pain reliever. But the contemporary appeal of the Middle Ages is an interesting phenomenon, particularly because it stands in such sharp contrast to the attitude of educated Europeans who lived in the centuries immediately afterward. They were the ones who dubbed the period “middle.” They saw their own era as the one to be celebrated, and the Middle Ages as best forgotten.

CHAPTER 14 Review and Explore

Identify Key Terms

Identify and explain the significance of each item below.

vassal (p. 376)
fief (p. 376)
feudalism (p. 376)
manorialism (p. 377)
serf (p. 378)
heresy (p. 381)
reconquista (p. 384)
Crusades (p. 384)
chivalry (p. 390)
craft guilds (p. 392)
commercial revolution (p. 392)
Scholastics (p. 393)
Gothic (p. 395)
vernacular literature (p. 395)
Black Death (p. 396)

Review the Main Ideas

Answer the focus questions from each section of the chapter.

1. How did medieval rulers restore order and centralize political power? (p. 376)
2. How did the Christian Church enhance its power and create new institutions and religious practices? (p. 379)
3. What were the causes, course, and consequences of the Crusades? (p. 384)
4. How did the lives of common people, nobles, and townspeople differ, and what new commercial developments increased wealth? (p. 388)
5. What were the primary educational and cultural developments in medieval Europe? (p. 393)
6. Why have the later Middle Ages been seen as a time of calamity and crisis? (p. 395)

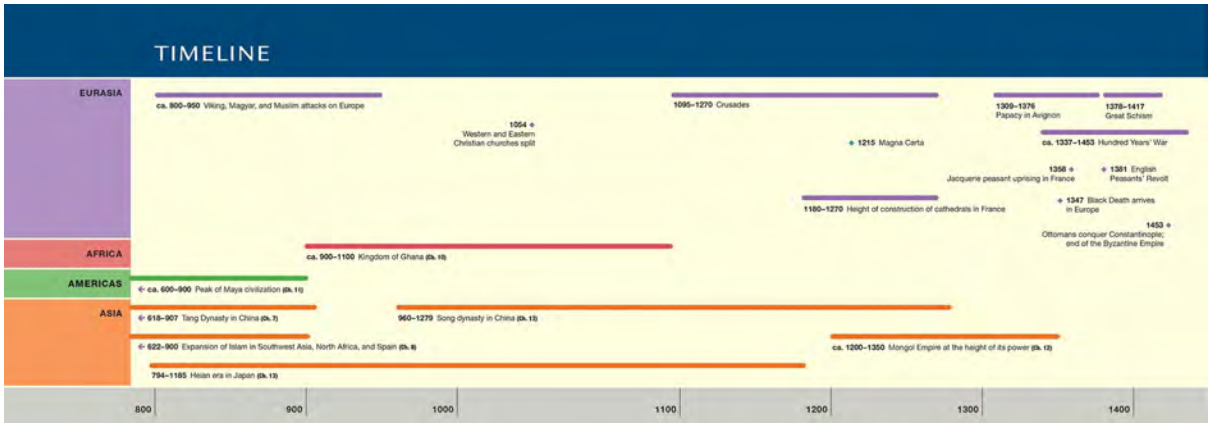
Make Comparisons and Connections

Analyze the larger developments and continuities within and across chapters.

1. What similarities and differences do you see between the institutions and

laws established by medieval European rulers discussed in this chapter and those of the Roman (Chapter 6), Byzantine (Chapter 8), and Chinese (Chapter 13) emperors?

2. What factors over the centuries enabled the Christian Church (Chapters 6, 8, 14) to become the most powerful and wealthy institution in Europe, and what problems did this create?
3. How would you compare the role of trade in economic development in the Islamic world (Chapter 9), Africa (Chapter 10), Southeast Asia (Chapter 12), China (Chapter 13), and Europe in the period from 800 to 1400?



Suggested Resources

Books

Allmand, Christopher. *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War, ca. 1300 – 1450*, rev. ed. 2005. Designed for students; examines the war from political, military, social, and economic perspectives and compares the way England and France reacted to the conflict.

Bartlett, Robert. *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change, 950 – 1350*. 1993. A broad survey of many of the developments traced in this chapter.

Bennett, Judith M. *A Medieval Life: Cecelia Penifader of Brigstock, c. 1297 – 1344*. 1998. An excellent brief introduction to all aspects of medieval village life from the perspective of one woman; designed for students.

Epstein, Steven A. *An Economic and Social History of Later Medieval Europe, 1000 – 1500*. 2009. Examines the most important themes in European social and economic history, with a wide geographic sweep.

Glick, Leonard B. *Abraham's Heirs: Jews and Christians in Medieval Europe*. 1999. Provides information on many aspects of Jewish life and Jewish-Christian relations.

Herlihy, David. *The Black Death and the Transformation of the West*, 2d ed. 1997. A fine treatment of the causes and cultural consequences of the disease that remains the best starting point for study of the great epidemic.

Herrin, Judith. *Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire*. 2008.

Portrays the Byzantine Empire as tradition based yet dynamic and discusses its significance for today; written for a general audience.
Janin, Hunt. *The University in Medieval Life, 1179 – 1499*. 2008. An overview of medieval universities designed for general readers.
Kaeuper, Richard W. *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe*. 2006. Examines the role chivalry played in promoting violent disorder.
Madden, Thomas. *The New Concise History of the Crusades*. 2005. A highly readable brief survey by the pre-eminent American scholar of the Crusades.
Shahar, Shulamit. *The Fourth Estate: A History of Women in the Middle Ages*, 2d ed. 2003. Analyzes attitudes toward women and provides information on the lives of a variety of women, including nuns, peasants, noblewomen, and townswomen.
Shinners, John. *Medieval Popular Religion, 1000 – 1500*, 2d ed. 2006. An excellent collection of a wide variety of sources that provide evidence about the beliefs and practices of ordinary Christians.
Spufford, Peter. *Power and Profit: The Merchant in Medieval Europe*. 2003. A comprehensive history of medieval commerce, designed for general readers; includes many illustrations.
Winroth, Anders. *The Age of the Vikings*. 2014. An insightful look at all aspects of Viking society: raiding, trade, religion, art, poetry, and life at home in early medieval Scandinavia.

Documentaries

Battle Castle (Parallax, 2012). A six-part interactive documentary, first shown on Canadian television, that examines sieges and battles involving six formidable castles in Syria, France, Spain, Wales, Poland, and England. Reflects high production values and excellent scholarship, and is accompanied by a website and a computer game.

Terry Jones' Medieval Lives (BBC, 2004). An award-winning eight-part documentary series that focuses on the real experiences of certain kinds of medieval people often portrayed stereotypically, including the peasant, the damsel, the minstrel, the knight, and the outlaw.

Feature Films

Braveheart (Mel Gibson, 1995). Loosely based on the story of the thirteenth-century Scottish nobleman William Wallace, this historical epic regularly shows up on lists of best medieval films (for its battle scenes) and worst medieval films (for its historical inaccuracy).

The Lion in Winter (Anthony Harvey, 1968) (Andrey Konchalovskiy, 2003). Two award-winning film versions of the same play, centering on the intense and hostile relationships among Henry II, his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine, and their sons. The 1968 version stars Katharine Hepburn and Peter O'Toole, and the 2003 version stars Glenn Close and Patrick Stewart.

Monty Python and the Holy Grail (Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones, 1975). A

spoof of the King Arthur legend and a send-up of popular views of the Middle Ages. The basis for Eric Idle's 2005 Tony Award–winning musical *Spamalot*.

Websites

Medievalists.net. This medieval-oriented blog provides news, articles, videos, reviews, and general information about the Middle Ages and medieval society. **www.medievalists.net**