

# The Making of Europe



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## I. The Growth of the Christian Church

### A. What Was the Church?

1. After the legalization of Christianity by the Emperor Constantine the words Christian church originally applied to the officials who ministered to Christians.
2. Rome provided the bureaucracy for the church's organization.
3. The church assimilated many diverse peoples.
4. In the early Middle Ages, the church was led by creative, literate thinkers.

### B. The Church and the Roman Emperors

1. Constantine legalized Christianity in A.D. 312.
2. He embarked on an extensive church-building project.
3. Theodosius made Christianity the religion of the state.
4. The Arian Heresy challenged the foundation of the church.
5. The Council of Nicaea was held in A.D. 325 to combat the Arians.
6. The council produced the Nicene Creed—the doctrine that Christ was of the same substance as God.
7. The Nicene Creed became Christian orthodoxy.
8. Bishop Ambrose formulated the theory that the church was separate from and superior to the state.

### C. Inspired Leadership

1. Leadership in the early church was creative and inspirational.
2. Many talented Romans, such as Ambrose, became leaders in the early church.
3. The church adopted Rome's diocesan system.
4. Bishops presided over the various dioceses.
5. The Bishop of Rome became the Patriarch of the West.

6. Other patriarchs presided over their “sees” at Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Constantinople.
- D. Missionary Activity
    1. Early medieval Christianity conducted extensive missionary work.
    2. Martin of Tours brought Christianity to Gaul.
    3. St. Patrick took Christianity to Ireland.
    4. Pope Gregory I sent Augustine to convert the Britons.
    5. The Roman brand of Christianity won out over its Celtic rival at the Synod of Whitby in 664.
  - E. Conversion and Assimilation
    1. Germanic assimilation into Christianity was slow as the moral code of Christianity made little sense to Germanic warriors who valued physical strength and battlefield courage.
    2. Priests used manuals called penitentials to teach people Christian virtues. The rite of private confession was part of this process.
    3. In many areas the Church practiced assimilation of local cultures, seeking to turn pagan temples into churches and to substitute Christian festivals for pagan festivals that occurred at about the same time of year.
- II. Christian Attitudes toward Classical Culture
- A. Adjustment
    1. The early Christians were hostile to pagan culture.
    2. Saint Jerome incorporated pagan thought into Christianity.
    3. Despite Jesus’s treatment of women more or less as equals to men, Christianity absorbed the classical world’s disdain for women. The Church came to consider sex and sexual desire to be evil.
  - B. Synthesis: Saint Augustine
    1. Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354–430) had a tremendous impact on early Christianity.
    2. He was the most important leader of early medieval Christianity.
      - a. His Confessions delineated the pre-Christian struggles of the author.
      - b. His City of God established the historical/philosophical base of a new Christian worldview.
- III. Christian Monasticism
- A. Western Monasticism
    1. St. Anthony, an ascetic monk who disdained communal, urban existence, personified the early eremitical life in the Egyptian desert.
    2. The former Roman Senator Cassiodorus began the connection between monasticism and scholarship and learning in Italy after 540 A.D.
  - B. The Rule of Saint Benedict
    1. St. Benedict of Nursia developed the guide for all Christian monastic life.
    2. The Rule of St. Benedict was influenced by earlier monastic codes.
    3. Benedict’s rule outlined a life of discipline and moderation.
    4. Monks made a vow of stability, conversion of manners, and obedience.

5. Benedictine monasticism succeeded because of its emphasis on the balanced life and because it suited the social circumstances of the early Middle Ages.

C. Eastern Monasticism

1. St. Basil composed a set of regulations called The Long Rules that were for communities of economically self-sufficient monks and nuns.
2. Monasteries spread throughout the Byzantine Empire. Financial assistance from the Emperor Justinian (527–565) helped.
3. Orthodox monasticism came to differ from Western monasticism.
  - a. St. Benedict's rules came to dominate in the West, but in Greek Orthodoxy each monastery had its own rules.
  - b. While Western monks generally stayed at one monastery, Orthodox monks frequently moved from one to another.
  - c. In the West monasteries provided education, while those in the Orthodox world generally did not.

IV. The Migration of the Germanic Peoples

A. The Idea of the Barbarian

1. The Greeks and the Romans invented the idea of the barbarian. For the Romans these were peoples living outside the Empire's frontiers, peoples “without history.”
2. Formation of “barbarian” ethnic groups.
  1. Some Germanic peoples' identities were shaped by a militarily successful family.
  2. Central Asian steppe peoples such as the Huns and the Avars were loose confederations of steppe warriors.
  3. The Alamanni and the Slavs were loosely organized, short-lived bands of peoples who lacked central leadership.

B. Celts and Germans.

1. Both Celts and Germans practiced three field crop rotation and used the wheeled plow.
2. The Celts were accomplished iron workers, as were the Germans.
3. The Germans consisted of a number of different groups, none numbering more than 100,000.
4. German migrations and pressure on the Rhine-Danube frontier of the Roman Empire may have been due simply to constant warfare, or to the opportunities for service and work for pay around Roman camps.

C. Romanization and Barbarization

1. Germanic tribes had various relationships with the Roman Empire.
  - . Laeti were refugees or prisoners of war settled in Gaul or Italy under the rule of a Roman prefect.
  - a. Foederati were free barbarian units stationed near major provincial cities.
  - b. When the Huns arrived in the West in 376 A.D. entire peoples or gentes began entering the empire.
2. At the Battle of Adrianople, 378 A.D., one of these gentes, the Visigoths, defeated the Roman Emperor Valens.

3. The movements of Germanic peoples on the continent stopped around 600 A.D.
4. The Germanic peoples founded a number of kingdoms.
5. The kingdom established by the Franks in the sixth century proved the strongest and most enduring.

#### V. Germanic Society

##### A. Kinship, Custom, and Class

1. Members of a German folk or tribe believed that they were all descended from a common ancestor.
2. Each tribe had its own laws and customs, passed down by word of mouth.
3. The war chieftain led the tribe.
4. The comitatus (warband) that fought with the chief gradually became a warrior nobility.

##### B. Law

1. In the late sixth century German kings, encouraged by Christian missionaries, began to have their laws written down.
2. Germanic law was a system of fines paid by the perpetrator to the victim's family, and was designed to control violence, not achieve justice.

##### C. German Life

1. The Germanic tribes lived in small villages.
2. Warfare was endemic in this kind of society.
3. Males engaged in animal husbandry and women grew grain.
4. Widows inherited their husbands' rights, and some royal women exercised considerable political control.

##### D. Anglo-Saxon England

1. The Anglo-Saxons achieved a model Germanic state.
2. After Roman withdrawal from Britannium, Germanic invaders (Angles, Saxons, and Jutes) drove the native (Celtic) Britons west to Wales and Brittany and north to Scotland.
3. The legends of King Arthur and his court represent the Celtic resistance to the Anglo-Saxons.
4. By the seventh and eighth centuries, there were seven Germanic kingdoms known as the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy.
5. They were united under Alfred the Great in the ninth century.

#### VI. The Byzantine East (ca 400–788)

##### A. Byzantium endured assaults by the Germanic tribes, the Persians, the nomadic Huns, Bulgars, and Avars, and the Arabs. How did it survive?

1. Strong military leadership.
2. The strong fortifications of Constantinople.

##### B. Byzantine East and Germanic West

1. The Byzantine (Orthodox) Church and the Roman (Catholic) Church grew apart.
2. In Byzantium the Emperor had more power over the church than did secular rulers in the West.
3. Orthodox theologians insisted more on the harmony between Christianity and classical culture.

4. Arab expansion in the seventh and eighth centuries further separated the two churches.
  5. In 1054 there was a final break.
  6. Byzantium was a buffer state between East and West.
  7. Byzantine missionaries converted the Balkans and Russia to Christianity.
- C. The Law Code of Justinian
1. The Legal Code of Justinian was a significant contribution to the early Middle Ages.
  2. The corpus juris civilis, consisting of the Code, the Digest, and the Institutes, is the foundation of European law.
- D. Byzantine Intellectual Life
1. Byzantine intellectual life was a stimulant for the West.
  2. The Byzantines kept learning alive in the East.
  3. They passed Greco-Roman culture on to the Arabs.
  4. Byzantine medicine was far more advanced than that of the medieval West. It was based largely on the classical and Hellenistic physicians' writings.

## VII. The Arabs and Islam

- A. The Arabs
1. In Muhammad's time, Arabia was inhabited by various tribes, most of them Bedouins.
  2. Arabs had no political unity beyond the bonds of tribe.
  3. Most tribes had certain religious rules in common.
- B. Muhammad and the Faith of Islam
1. The religion of Islam united the nomadic Bedouins and the agricultural and commercial Hejazi who inhabited the Arabian peninsula.
  2. Islam attracted adherents in part because of its straightforward theology.
    - . There is one God, and he is all-powerful and all-knowing.
      - a. Muhammad is his prophet.
      - b. Believers must submit to God (Allah).
      - c. There will be a Day of Judgment.
      - d. Believers must recite a profession of faith in Allah.
      - e. Believers must pray five times a day.
      - f. They must fast and pray during Ramadan.
      - g. They must make a pilgrimage to Mecca once in their lifetime.
  3. Muslim women enjoyed greater property rights than women in the medieval West.
  4. Muslims believed that Jesus was a prophet, but not God. They believed that the Christian Trinity was tantamount to polytheism.
  5. Islam split into two great camps in the late seventh century.
    - . Shi'ites emphasized the direct descent of their imams from Muhammad.
      - a. Sunnis emphasized the accounts of Muhammad's actions in particular situations as a guide for behavior.
- C. The Expansion of Islam

1. Between 632 and 732 Muslim armies conquered Egypt, Syria, and North Africa.
2. In 711 a Muslim force invaded Spain, destroyed the Visigothic kingdom there, and took over the most of the Iberian Peninsula.
3. The Frankish victory at Tours (Poitiers) in 733 halted Islamic advance in Europe.
4. Muslims eventually penetrated deep into Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.
5. Islamic scientific and mathematical advances had great influence on Western thought.
6. Islamic scholars developed algebra and made other mathematical contributions such as the concept of zero.
7. They excelled in medical knowledge and preserved Greek philosophy.

D. Muslim-Christian Relations

1. Between the eighth and twelfth centuries Christians and Muslims lived peaceably together in Andalusia, in southern Spain. Christians who had assimilated were known as Mozarabs.
2. Beginning in the late tenth century Muslim regulations attempted to maintain a strict separation between Muslims and Christians.
3. Beyond Andalusian Spain, animosity dominated relations between the faiths.
  - . The Muslim invasions of Christian Europe in the eighth and ninth centuries left a bitter legacy.
  - a. So did the Christian Crusades of the eleventh through thirteenth centuries.
4. Modern notions of religious tolerance were alien to both medieval Christianity and Islam.
5. Muslims showed little interest in European culture, which they viewed as inferior because it was Christian.
6. From the 1300s on, sympathetic attitudes toward Islam appeared in some European writings. Western scholarship on Islam advanced steadily.