

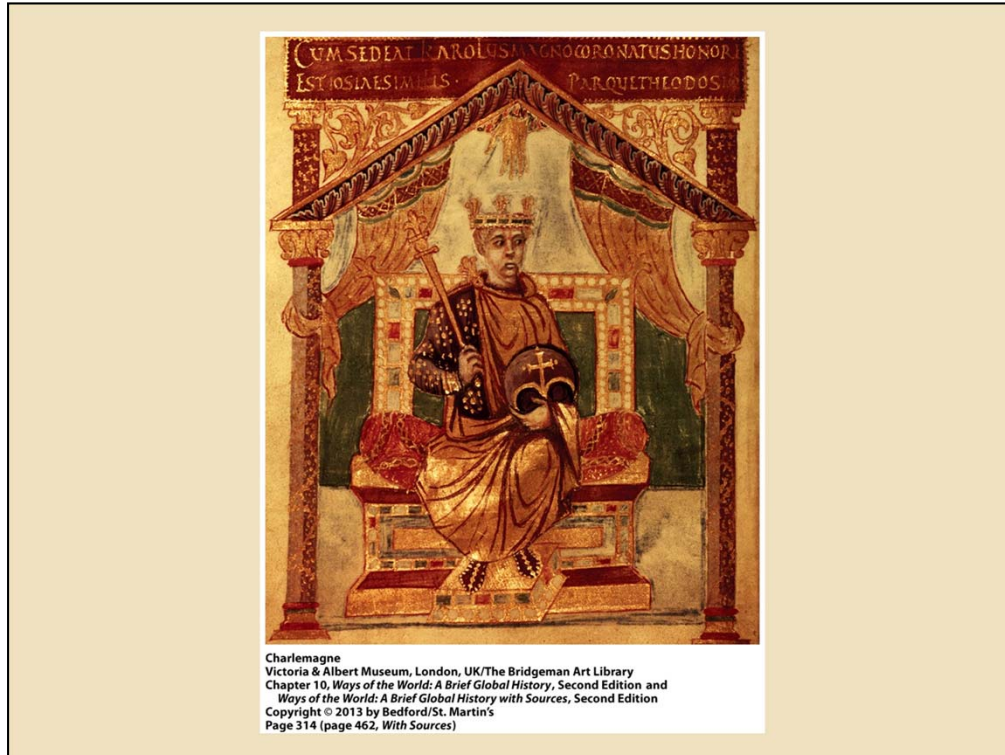
Robert W. Strayer

**Ways of the World: A Brief Global  
History with Sources**  
Second Edition

**Chapter 10**

The Worlds of Christendom: Contraction, Expansion,  
and Division, 500–1300

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1. Who is the man in the picture?

The person depicted on this manuscript page is Charlemagne, king of the Franks, whom the pope crowned emperor in 800 C.E. The empire over which he claimed authority included present-day France, Holland, Belgium, parts of Germany, and parts of Italy. This kingdom broke apart shortly after his death, when his sons split the empire into three parts.

2. Take a look at his facial expression. Why do you think he is looking to the side?

Charlemagne seems to be looking suspiciously to his left. Given that this is a manuscript page, this could simply be an artistic choice by the author of this volume to have Charlemagne look to the opposite page and its text. It might also indicate Charlemagne's unease and awareness about the fragility of his empire. Finally, if we were to place this picture on a map of Charlemagne's kingdom, his gaze would turn southeast toward Rome. That would mean that his facial expression attests to his self-conscious effort at recreating a new Roman Empire.

3. Describe the rest of the image. What cultural influences can you detect?

The Cross on the object in his left hand indicates the Christian identity of Charlemagne and his kingdom, and the hand that seems to be reaching down toward his crown may also be a symbolic expression of divine protection of the ruler and his empire. The Latin inscriptions, the roof over the throne, and the columns are reminiscent of the Roman Empire, which Charlemagne wanted to re-create.

4. About seven hundred years elapsed between the scene depicted here and the date the painting was created. How might the passage of time have shaped the image?

The artist and author of this manuscript page was fully aware that Charlemagne came closer than most rulers after him in re-creating a Roman Empire, and he also knew of the short-lived nature of that empire. Charlemagne's facial expression may be the artist's way of

underlining something that the king of the Franks himself could not have known but that was glaringly obvious seven hundred years later—that his empire was short-lived and fragile.

# I. Christian Contraction in Asia and Africa

## A. Asian Christianity

1. The challenge of Islam, yet many cases of tolerance
2. Nestorian Christians in the Middle East and China
3. Mongols and Christians

## I. Christian Contraction in Asia and Africa

### A. Asian Christianity

1. The challenge of Islam, yet many cases of tolerance: While Christianity had spread through much of North Africa and the Middle East, the unexpected rise of a new monotheistic faith meant the end of some Christian communities, especially in the Arabian Peninsula. However, the treatment of Christians was not uniform and was very much dependent on the attitude of local Muslim rulers. In Syria, Jerusalem, and Armenia, Christian leaders negotiated agreements with the Islamic forces and the communities survived.
2. Nestorian Christians in the Middle East and China: In Syria, Iraq, and Persia, a Church of the East, the Nestorians, found accommodation with Islamic rulers by not preaching to Muslims and by abandoning their sacred image as offensive to Islam's rules against idolatry. In China, the Nestorian Christians adapted to Chinese culture and used familiar terms to communicate the message of Jesus. From the 600s to the mid 800s, this church survived thanks to state tolerance; however, this changed when the dynasty moved against all foreign faiths, including Islam and Buddhism.
3. Mongols and Christians: The Mongols were tolerant in regards to issues of religion, and some even saw Jesus as a strong shaman and converted. Others preferred Christianity to Buddhism and Islam as they wanted to eat meat and drink alcohol. It is unclear what impact Jesus' message of peace had on these fierce warriors of the steppes.

# **I. Christian Contraction in Asia and Africa**

## **B. African Christianity**

1. Coptic Church in Egypt
2. Nubia
3. Ethiopia

## **I. Christian Contraction in Asia and Africa**

### **B. African Christianity**

1. Coptic Church in Egypt: Christians in Egypt developed their own interpretations of the life of Jesus and their own Coptic language for worship. They were tolerated by Arab rulers until violent campaigns against them in the mid-fourteenth century (related to the Crusades and the Mongol invasion). In the good years, Copts preferred Arab rule to Byzantium as the Greek Orthodox Church viewed them as heretics.

2. Nubia: Further south in Nubia, Christianity flourished for some 600 years. Many political leaders also held religious office. Yet by 1500, pressure from Egypt, conversions, and Arab migrations spelled the end of this community.

3. Ethiopia: In the highlands of Ethiopia, a unique form of Christianity developed and survives until this day, where 60 percent of the population are Christian. Isolated from its Islamic neighbors by geography and protected by memories of the Ethiopians' shelter of Muslim refugees from Mecca during the prophet's life, the faith followed its own course without contact with other Christian churches. Ethiopians developed a fascination with Judaism and Jerusalem.

## **II. Byzantine Christendom: Building on the Roman Past**

### **A. The Byzantine State**

1. A smaller but more organized Roman Empire
2. Wealth and splendor of the court
3. Under attack from the West and East, 1085–1453

## **II. Byzantine Christendom: Building on the Roman Past**

### **A. The Byzantine State**

1. A smaller but more organized Roman Empire: Byzantium was really the eastern section of the Roman Empire, becoming the sole heir to Rome after it fell in 476. While Byzantium never regained control over the western Mediterranean (except for a brief period under Emperor Justinian, 527–565) and was much smaller in terms of territory, it had a strong administration and could mobilize its wealth for warfare.
2. Wealth and splendor of the court: Sitting astride the trade routes between the East and West, the empire was extremely wealthy. The empire had a decidedly Greek character but also influences from Persian court ceremonies, such as high officials in silk robes. Political power was centralized in the figure of the emperor who was celebrated in the court with a mechanical throne that rose above his visitors and mechanical lions that roared.
3. Under attack from the West and East, 1085–1453: The empire sustained some four centuries of assaults from hostile Western states such as Venice, Catholic crusaders, and Muslim Turkic armies before Constantinople finally fell to the Ottoman forces in 1453.



Map 10.1 The Byzantine Empire  
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## **II. Byzantine Christendom: Building on the Roman Past**

### **B. The Byzantine Church and Christian Divergence**

1. Caesaropapism
2. Intense internal theological debates
3. Orthodox/Catholic divide
4. Impact of the Crusades

## **II. Byzantine Christendom: Building on the Roman Past**

### **B. The Byzantine Church and Christian Divergence**

1. Caesaropapism: While in Western Europe there was an intense competition between political and religious authority, in the east, the Byzantine emperor was head of the church and the state.
2. Intense internal theological debates: Within the Orthodox faith, there were intense and complicated debates over the nature of Jesus and his relationship to the Trinity and whether or not icons should be used as representations of God and Jesus. Many of these disputes resulted in violence within Byzantium.
3. Orthodox/Catholic divide: While both Western and Eastern Europe were Christian and had many similarities stemming from a shared faith, they each interpreted the faith in their own manner and were extremely suspicious of and hostile to the other faith. When the Roman Pope declared that he was the head of all Christians, the Byzantine emperor who was head of state and the church strongly disagreed. In 1054, representatives of both churches excommunicated each other, thus saying that the other faith was not truly Christian.
4. Impact of the Crusades: When the Crusades started in 1095, things went from bad to worse as Catholic troops behaved poorly, if not violently, in Byzantine lands. The Fourth Crusade of 1204 plundered Constantinople and held the city for several decades. Thus, the Crusades marked an irreparable divide between east and west.



## **II. Byzantine Christendom: Building on the Roman Past**

### **C. Byzantium and the World**

1. Conflicts with Persians, Arabs, and Turks
2. Long-distance trade, coins, and silk production
3. Preservation of Greek learning
4. Slavic world and Cyrillic script

## **II. Byzantine Christendom: Building on the Roman Past**

### **C. Byzantium and the World**

1. Conflicts with Persians, Arabs, and Turks: Byzantium continued the Roman Empire's conflict with the Persian Empire, which in turn weakened both of them and allowed the Arabs to seize Persia. Byzantium held out against the Arab attacks, using such technology as "Greek fire," an early form of flamethrowers. The empire finally fell to the Turkish advance, thus allowing Islam into southeastern Europe.
2. Long-distance trade, coins, and silk production: Sitting at one of the key hinges of trade, the empire became very wealthy. Its coins were used as currency and even jewelry throughout the Mediterranean for some five centuries. The Byzantines also produced much silk for both domestic and external consumption.
3. Preservation of Greek learning: Byzantine libraries preserved Greek texts from the golden age of Hellenic thought at a time when such learning was lost in the West. These texts would later be introduced to the West.
4. Slavic world and Cyrillic script: Blocked to the south and east by the Islamic world, the Byzantines spread their culture northwards into Slavic lands. In the ninth century, two Byzantine missionaries, Cyril and Methodius, developed a writing system for the Slavs based on Greek letters. This allowed for the translation of the Bible and the spreading of the faith.

## **II. Byzantine Christendom: Building on the Roman Past**

### **D. The Conversion of Russia**

1. Kievan Rus
2. Prince Vladimir of Kiev
3. Doctrine of a “third Rome”

## **II. Byzantine Christendom: Building on the Roman Past**

### **D. The Conversion of Russia**

1. Kievan Rus: This was a state in present Russia and the Ukraine. Composed of diverse people including Finns, Vikings, and Balts as well as Slavs, the area engaged in long-distance trade networks along its rivers that linked Scandinavia to Byzantium. The region had a diverse religious makeup with various nature gods and small numbers of Jews, Christians, and Muslims.
2. Prince Vladimir of Kiev: In the tenth century, this leader decided the state needed a religion that would link it to the outside world. According to chronicles, he decided against Islam as his people were fond of drinking—perhaps a little too fond, some might say. Eastern Orthodoxy was attractive as the Byzantine state was wealthy and powerful and a marriage alliance sealed the decision. Importantly, this conversion was a free decision made without a military invasion, and the faith made deep inroads into the people of the region.
3. Doctrine of a “third Rome”: The Rus borrowed extensively from Byzantium, including the use of icons, architectural style, a monastic tradition, and imperial control of the church. When Constantinople fell in 1453, the Rus declared that they were the “third Rome” as the first Rome had

abandoned its faith and the second fell to the Muslims.

### **III. Western Christendom: Rebuilding in the Wake of Roman Collapse**

#### **A. Political Life in Western Europe, 500–1000**

1. What was lost with the fall of Rome?
2. What aspects of Rome survived?
3. Charlemagne as a Roman emperor, 800

### **III. Western Christendom: Rebuilding in the Wake of Roman Collapse**

#### **A. Political Life in Western Europe, 500–1000**

1. What was lost with the fall of Rome? With overthrow of the last Roman emperor in the West by the German general Odoacer in 476, Rome officially fell. However, this was merely a moment in a long-term decline of central authority and civilization in the West. Central political authority collapsed, cities shrunk and decayed, literacy was lost, roads fell apart, trade broke down, barter replaced a standard currency, and diseases spread among desperate people.

2. What aspects of Rome survived? While things fell apart in the Mediterranean, aspects of Rome survived in northwest Europe. Germanic peoples, once viewed as barbarians by Romans, adopted Roman law and military organization.

3. Charlemagne as a Roman emperor, 800: The survival of the dream of Rome is best seen in the crowning of King Charlemagne (r. 768–814) as a new Roman emperor by the Pope in 800. As king of the Carolingian Empire, he sought to re-establish a standard imperial infrastructure, bureaucracy, and system of weights and measures. Later Otto I of Saxony (r. 936–973) would take the title of Holy Roman Emperor.



Map 10.2 Western Europe in the Ninth Century  
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## **III. Western Christendom: Rebuilding in the Wake of the Roman Collapse**

### **B. Society and the Church**

1. Feudalism and Serfdom
2. Role of the Roman Catholic Church
3. Spreading the faith
4. Conflicts between church and state

## **III. Western Christendom: Rebuilding in the Wake of the Roman Collapse**

### **B. Society and the Church**

1. Feudalism and Serfdom: When Roman authority collapsed, an ad hoc political and military system developed as the political, economic, and social power of isolated land estates or manors fell into the hands of wealthy warriors. As these warrior elites were in constant competition with each other, lesser knights and lords swore loyalty to the stronger warriors. Frequently they would receive land and loot for their military service. While the slavery of the Roman Empire faded away, peasants were increasingly not personal property but were tied to the land on which they worked and not free to leave. In return for access to land, they had to pay some of their crops and other produce to the lord. In return they also received protection.

2. Role of the church: The Roman Catholic Church, with its hierarchical organization of priests, bishops, and cardinals, was the only surviving institution of the Roman past. Its organization allowed it to administer the faith, in Latin, and also to amass wealth via taxation.

3. Spreading the faith: The church worked to convert pagan Europeans to Christianity in a long and sometimes slow process. Often pagan practices, sites, and holidays were remade as Christian rituals, churches, and sacred days. On occasion, force was used to spread the faith.

4. Conflicts between church and state: With the church being the only pan-European institution and relatively weak kings eager to build power within their realms, secular-sacred tensions flared over wealth and the right to appoint bishops.

## **III. Western Christendom: Rebuilding in the Wake of the Roman Collapse**

### **C. Accelerating Change in the West**

1. New security after 1000
2. High Middle Ages (1000-1300)
3. Revival of long-distance trade
4. Urbanization and specialization of labor
5. Territorial kingdoms, Italian city-states, and German principalities
6. Rise and fall of opportunities for women

## **III. Western Christendom: Rebuilding in the Wake of the Roman Collapse**

### **C. Accelerating Change in the West**

1. New security after 1000: After centuries of Muslim, Viking, and Magyar attacks, security settled into Europe.
2. High Middle Ages (1000–1300): This era of economic, political, and demographic growth is known as the High Middle Ages.
3. Revival of long-distance trade: Essential to economic growth was the revival of trade routes. Regional routes connected the British Isles to the coast and onto the Baltic Sea, rivers connected the coasts to the interior, and the cities of the Mediterranean established circuits of commerce.
4. Urbanization and specialization of labor: Substantial growth in the cities saw a specialization of labor and professions. Guilds served as a method of organizing and monitoring specific professions.
5. Territorial kingdoms, Italian city-states, and German principalities: With the new security and economic growth, the states became more powerful. Some kingdoms in the northwest developed large land bases while commercially vibrant city-states characterized Italy and numerous small states dominated the German lands.
6. Rise and fall of opportunities for women: Initially, economic growth opened up opportunities for women in both the labor force and the church. However, men reasserted control and either removed women from certain trades or downgraded their role. Women also lost control over certain church to men from the clergy.





Map 10.3 Europe in the High Middle Ages  
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### **III. Western Christendom: Rebuilding in the Wake of the Roman Collapse**

#### **D. Europe Outward Bound: The Crusading Tradition**

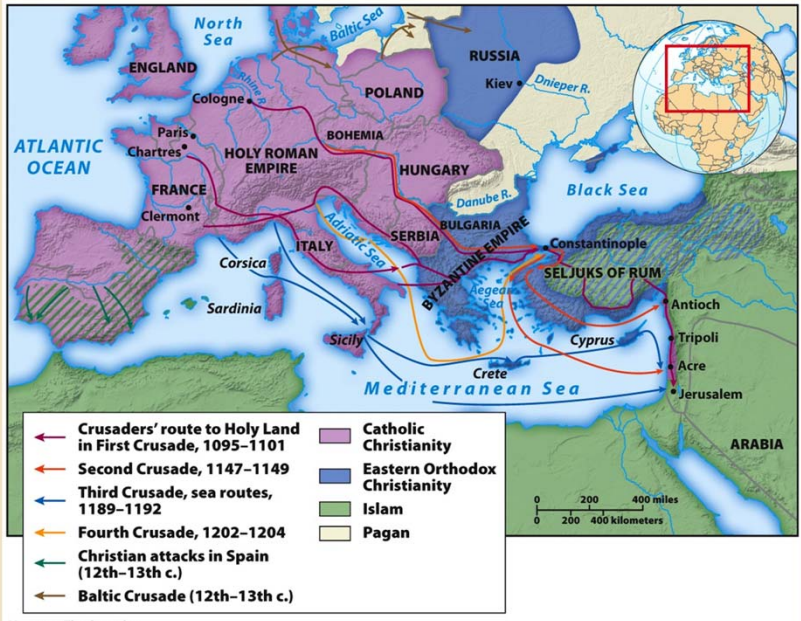
1. Merchants, diplomats, and missionaries
2. Christian piety and warrior values
3. Seizure of Jerusalem, 1099
4. Crusader states, 1099–1291
5. Iberia, Baltic Sea, Byzantium, and Russia
6. Less important than Turks and Mongols
7. Cross-cultural trade, technology transfer, and intellectual exchange
8. Hardening of boundaries

### **III. Western Christendom: Rebuilding in the Wake of the Roman Collapse**

#### **D. Europe Outward Bound: The Crusading Tradition**

1. Merchants, diplomats, and missionaries: These Europeans established connections to the outside world and taught an isolated Europe what was out there.
2. Christian piety and warrior values: The crusading spirit combined the two most important forces of the Middle Ages: religious piety and the warrior ethos. Evidently, the European knights were able to overcome Jesus' teachings about peace and love.
3. Seizure of Jerusalem, 1099: The siege and taking of Jerusalem ended in a massive massacre of Muslims and Jews in the very place where Jesus was to have walked and taught his message of love.
4. Crusader states, 1099–1291: These were states in the Middle East held by crusading knights for almost two centuries.
5. Iberia, Baltic Sea, Byzantium, and Russia: These regions also experienced attacks from crusading knights. The Christians fought against Muslims, pagans, and Eastern Orthodox communities.
6. Less important than Turks and Mongols: For the Middle East, the Crusades were much less important than the invasions from Turkic peoples and the Mongols. It was not until the era of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century western imperialism that the Crusades were widely discussed in the Islamic world.
7. Cross-cultural trade, technology transfer, and intellectual exchange: The Crusades did give Europeans exposure to new goods such as sugar and spice and ideas from Islamic technology to Greek learning.

8. Hardening of boundaries: While trade did come from the Crusades, they also hardened the divisions between Roman Catholics and Muslims, Jews, and Eastern Orthodox Christians.



Map 10.4 The Crusades  
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The Crusades  
Snark/Art Resource, NY  
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1. Who are the figures in this painting?

On the extreme left in this image stands a monk or a priest, identifiable by his robe and hood. He seems to be speaking to a densely packed row of soldiers dressed in European armor, aiming their bows and arrows upward. In the center of the image stands a tower on which a man in the same European body armor and a bright golden crown looks toward the similarly dressed soldiers below him. Behind this crowned figure in the upper-right half of the image stand a group of soldiers pointing bows and arrows as well as rocks downward from the top of a fortress toward the attackers. They don't wear helmets but have their heads draped in white cloths instead.

2. What historical event does this painting illustrate?

This painting illustrates the Christian seizure of Jerusalem in 1099 c.E. The crowned figure in the center is the French knight and nobleman Godefroi the Bouillon, who figured prominently in the attack and was briefly known as King of Jerusalem.

3. Can you explain the figure in the upper-left corner?

On top of the painting, seemingly on the edge of the frame of this illustration, sits a knight with a shield featuring a yellow lion against a blue background. He is looking outside the picture to the left but is pointing to the right of the painting with his right arm as if to direct

viewers from the outside of the painting toward the scene of battle and the fortress that is Jerusalem. This could have been the artist's way of turning this image into a call for a new crusade and a renewed effort at capturing the holy city.

## **IV. The West in Comparative Perspective**

### **A. Catching Up**

1. Backwards Europe
2. New trade initiatives
3. Agricultural breakthroughs
4. Wind and water mills
5. Gunpowder and maritime technology

## **IV. The West in Comparative Perspective**

### **A. Catching Up**

1. Backwards Europe: In all measures of comparison, Western Europe was behind the great civilizations of Eurasia. Visitors to Europe saw them as barbarians, and Europeans who went abroad realized their poverty.
2. New trade initiatives: Thanks to the exposure to the outside world, new trade missions reached out to the rest of the world. When the Mongols conquered the entire Silk Roads, European merchants such as Marco Polo ventured all the way to China and brought back tales of wealth and sophistication.
3. Agricultural breakthroughs: The foundation for Europe's growth lay in its agricultural revolution. New plows, horse harnesses, and crop rotation techniques increased grain production, which allowed for population growth, developed of a surplus, and labor specialization.
4. Wind and water mills: Europeans used wind and water mills to grind grain but also power the production of crafts goods from tanned hides to beer.
5. Gunpowder and maritime technology: A variety of technologies came from China, India, and the Arab world, and Europeans incorporated and built upon them. This is clearly seen in the development of cannons and the use of magnetic compasses, shipbuilding, advances in sails and rudders, and navigations techniques that allowed Europeans to start to project power overseas.



## **IV. The West in Comparative Perspective**

### **B. Pluralism in Politics**

1. A system of competing states
2. Gunpowder revolution
3. States, the church, and the nobility
4. Merchant independence

## **IV. The West in Comparative Perspective**

### **B. Pluralism in Politics**

1. A system of competing states: As there was no overall power in Europe, there was a system of competing states that struggled with each other for centuries. These long-term conflicts created a militarized society with a warrior elite at its head, in contrast to China where the scholar-gentry ruled.
2. Gunpowder revolution: This interstate competition led to increased innovations in technology and military organization, as well as systems of state taxation to pay for warfare.
3. States, the church, and the nobility: A three-way political conflict developed between the heads of state, the international reach of the church in Rome, and nobles who jealously guarded their wealth and right against their kings.
4. Merchant independence: The three-way political struggle allowed merchants a great deal of independence and autonomy.

## **IV. The West in Comparative Perspective**

### **C. Reason and Faith**

1. Connections to Greek thought
2. Autonomous universities
3. A new interest in rational thought
4. Search for Greek texts
5. Comparisons with Byzantium and the Islamic World

## **IV. The West in Comparative Perspective**

### **C. Reason and Faith**

1. Connections to Greek thought: In the early years of Christianity, Greek philosophy was part of the explanation and understanding of faith. However, with the post-Roman decline, access to these texts and ideas was lost.
2. Autonomous universities: Stemming from the tradition of church schools, universities were established in various cities. Importantly, they maintained a high degree of independence and intellectual freedom.
3. A new interest in rational thought: With the growth of universities came a new interest in applying reason to explain the world and to explain the Christian faith. This was first seen in subjecting theology to critical inquiry, and later rational inquiry was applied to the natural world.
4. Search for Greek texts: As contact with the Byzantine and Arab world grew with the Crusades, there was a growing desire to get to the original source material. Scholars got ahold of texts from centers of learning in these cultures. Direct access to these texts spurred further study and the development of philosophical activity.
5. Comparisons with Byzantium and the Islamic World: While the Byzantines had many Greek texts, they were not interested in natural philosophy and focused more on the humanities. They were also suspicious of the pagan roots of much of this learning. In the Muslim world, many Greek texts were translated into Arabic, but debates arose regarding whether reason was an aid or a threat to faith.



European University Life in the Middle Ages  
Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY  
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1. Describe the scene in this painting. Who are these people, and what type of building are they in?

This fourteenth-century manuscript painting shows a lecture hall in the University of Bologna, Italy. To the left, behind a tall lectern, sits a lecturer with a long beard and robe. In front of him and to his side are rows of benches and desks where mostly men and two or three women sit in long robes, some of them with books before them.

2. Look at the position of the speaker on the left and the shape of the windows. Do they remind you of something?

The lecturer's elevated seat and the conic shape of the window tops resemble the architecture of a church. This is no accident: Early European universities of the Middle Ages grew out of cathedral churches.

3. What aspects of this scene remind you of university classes today? What aspects would be different in a university lecture hall today?

The depiction of some of the students as seeming to have fallen asleep, while others have turned to one another in conversation, is a familiar scene today. Professors no longer sit in elevated pulpits, however, and the ecclesiastical style of the building and the gathering would be in conflict with our modern notion of higher education as secular.

## **IV. Remembering and Forgetting: Continuity and Surprise in the Worlds of Christendom**

**A. Christendom's legacies**

**B. Misleading history?**

### **IV. Remembering and Forgetting: Continuity and Surprise in the Worlds of Christendom**

**A. Christendom's legacies:** Many of the features of the modern world can be traced back to the period between 500 and 1300.

**B. Misleading history?** Yet, as we know the end of the story, it is sometimes too easy to write Europe's rise back into the history. We can this misconception Europe as destined for world power.



Visual Source 10.1 Christ Pantokrator  
Ancient Art & Architecture Collection  
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Visual Source 10.2 The Nativity  
Private Collection/The Bridgeman Art Library  
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Visual Source 10.3 Ladder of Divine Ascent  
Roger Wood/Corbis  
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