

CHAPTER
14

CHAPTERS IN BRIEF

The Formation of Western Europe, 800–1500

Summary

CHAPTER OVERVIEW A new spirit of religion led to reforms in the Catholic Church and to wars against Muslims. Prosperity followed improved farming and the growth of trade and cities. England and France developed as nations and included some government participation by the people. In the 1300s, however, a terrible plague, a long war, and religious conflict ended this Age of Faith.

Church Reform and the Crusades

KEY IDEA The Catholic Church underwent reform and launched Crusades (religious wars) against Muslims and others.

Beginning in the 1000s, a new sense of spiritual feeling arose in Europe, which led to changes in the Church. Popes began a reform movement. Launching the reform was the founding of the monastery at Cluny, France, in 910. During the 900s, about 300 related monasteries were begun in Europe.

Popes Leo IX and Gregory VII made other reforms. They enforced laws against the marriage of priests and the selling of Church offices. Later popes reorganized Church structure. To advise the pope, they created a group called the Curia, which made church law—canon law—and enforced it. The Church collected a tax from all believers, which it used to care for the sick and poor.

In the early 1200s, a new Church group arose. Called friars, they moved from place to place spreading the ideas of the Church. They owned nothing and begged for food. Some became scholars because they studied the Bible and other writings. Women joined in this spiritual revival as well. Many joined convents to dedicate themselves to God.

This new Age of Faith was shown in another way, as many towns in Europe built magnificent cathedrals. In the early 1100s, these huge churches used a new style of architecture called Gothic. These buildings were tall, reaching toward heaven. They had walls covered with windows of colorful stained glass, which let in beautiful light.

The renewed faith also led to war. In 1093, the Byzantine emperor asked for help against Muslim Turks who were threatening Constantinople, his capital. The pope urged the leaders of Western Europe to begin a holy war. He wanted Christians to gain control of Jerusalem and the entire Holy

Land. This was the first of several Crusades fought over the next 200 years. Rulers and the Church favored the Crusades because they sent warlike knights out of their lands. Common people joined the Crusades out of deep religious feeling.

The First Crusade, begun in 1096, was badly organized. Yet the Crusaders still captured some of the Holy Land, including Jerusalem. Muslims later won back some of this land, and other Crusades began to try to seize it again. Finally, a Fourth Crusade ended in disaster. The Western army attacked not the Muslims but the Byzantine Empire itself. In 1204, the Crusaders looted Constantinople. This helped make a lasting split between western and eastern Christian churches.

A later Crusade took place in Spain. Christian rulers tried to win back the land that Muslims had conquered in the 700s. This fight lasted from the 1100s until 1492, when the last Spanish Muslim land fell. Thousands of Jews had lived in Spanish Muslim lands. Many became Christians so that they could remain after the reconquest was completed.

The Crusades had many effects on Europe. The failure of later ones cut the power of the popes, and the deaths of many knights reduced the power of nobles. Contact with the East revived trade. However, the Christians' harsh treatment of Muslims in the Holy Land led to bitterness that has lasted to the present.

Changes in Medieval Society

KEY IDEA European cities challenged the feudal system as agriculture, trade, finance, and universities developed.

At the same time, Europe enjoyed an improved food supply. The climate warmed between the years 800 and 1200, which helped farming. As farmers moved into areas that were once too cold, they also developed new ways of farming that produced better crops. One technique was to pull

plows with horses that worked twice as fast as oxen. A new harness made the use of horses possible. Another new technique was a method of taking turns with the crops planted in an area. In the past, farmers had planted half their land and let the other half go unplanted each year. That prevented the soil from becoming overworked, but the new system was better. Farmers now planted two-thirds of their fields, leaving only one-third unplanted. This increased the amount of food they could grow.

Along with the growth in the food supply, trade and finance increased. Craft workers began to make goods that were sent all over Europe in trade. Fairs were held each year in towns, where merchants sold cloth, food, leather, and other goods.

Supporting the fairs were new organizations—the guilds. Guilds were formed in each town by the workers in the same craft, such as cloth makers, bakers, or glass makers. Members set standards for their products and set fair prices. They also made rules for how young people could enter the craft.

With more trade, merchants needed more cash. They had to borrow money to buy goods to sell. Christians didn't lend money because the Church had rules against charging a fee for loaning money. So, because Jews were outside the Christian Church, they became the chief sources of loans. Later, the Church relaxed its rules, and Christians began to form banks.

In the early 1100s, the population of western Europe grew rapidly. Towns grew larger and more important. Towns were dirty places, with narrow filthy streets. Built entirely of wood, they were fire hazards. Still, many peasants fled to the towns because, by living there a year and a day, they became free—no longer subject to the power of wealthy lords. Wealthier people in the towns fought for—and won—the right not to pay taxes to lords and to govern themselves.

Growing trade and wealth helped lead to a growing interest in learning. Many towns developed schools linked to the cathedrals, which taught religion and church law. These were called universities. Several writers also began to write in their native languages—not Latin, but English or Italian—producing great works of literature that many people still enjoy today.

Helping this new interest in learning was the contact with Muslims brought about by the Crusades. Muslim scholars had preserved books from ancient Rome and Greece, which came back

to Europe in this period. Christian thinkers became influenced by the thinking of these ancients. They tried to bring together the logic of old thinkers with the teachings of the Church.

● England and France Develop

KEY IDEA *As the kingdoms of England and France began to develop into nations, certain democratic traditions evolved.*

England was formed by the blending of cultures. Danish Vikings came to the island in the 800s, uniting with the Anglo-Saxons who had come there from Germany hundreds of years earlier. Over time, these peoples became one kingdom. In 1066, the king died, and the duke of a land in northern France invaded and won control of the island. William the Conqueror, as he was called, declared England to be all his.

Later English kings, descendants of William, tried to expand the amount of land they still held in France. They also wanted to increase their control over the government. Henry II, who ruled from 1154 to 1189, was one of the strongest of these kings. He married Eleanor of Aquitaine, thus gaining control of more of France. At home, he began the practice of trial by jury.

One of Henry's sons, King John, had serious problems. Lack of money and his own harsh rule led nobles to rebel against him. They forced John to sign a paper called the Magna Carta that put limits on the power of the king. The document protected the power only of nobles, but later common people said that the protections applied to them as well. Another step toward limiting the king came in the 1200s. Edward I hoped to raise taxes to pay for a war in France. He called a meeting of representatives to approve his tax plan. His Model Parliament was famous because for the first time it included not only bishops and nobles but also common people from the towns.

In France, a new dynasty of kings, the Capetians, ruled from 987 to 1328. France was split into 30 separate small territories, each ruled by a different lord. The kings—who held only a small area centered in Paris—tried to gain control of all of the land.

One of the most successful kings was Philip II, who ruled from 1180 to 1223. He tripled the lands under his control, in part by seizing the French land held by the English King John. He also made

a stronger central government, giving the king more control over his subjects. His grandson, Louis IX, ruled from 1226 to 1270, and carried on Philip's work. Louis set up royal courts where people could appeal decisions made by their lords. This increased the king's power. In 1302, Philip IV called for a meeting of the kingdom's most important groups. He, like Edward in England, invited commoners to this meeting of the Estates General, as the assembly was called.

❶ The Hundred Years' War and the Plague

KEY IDEA *During the 1300s, Europe was torn apart by religious strife, the bubonic plague, and the Hundred Years' War.*

In 1300, the pope challenged Philip IV of France, claiming to have supreme authority over the king. Philip held the pope as a prisoner for trial. He was rescued but died shortly thereafter. The king forced the election of a French cardinal as pope, and in 1305 the new pope moved to a city in France, to lead the Church from there. This action weakened the Church. In 1378 the French pope at that time died. An Italian was elected the next pope, but the French elected their own pope. Confusion resulted. Church officials had two popes—one in France and one in Rome. The situation, called the Great Schism, lasted 39 years.

At the same time, the pope's authority was being challenged. The English scholar John Wycliffe and the Bohemian John Huss argued that the Bible alone was the final authority for Christian teaching—not the pope.

People of the late 1300s experienced an even more severe shock. A fearful disease—the bubonic plague—swept across Europe starting in 1347 and lasting for decades. The disease killed millions of people—about one-third of the population of Europe.

The plague had a serious effect on Europe's economy. Trade declined, prices rose, and towns became smaller. Fewer people meant fewer workers. Peasants demanded wages or their freedom. When nobles resisted these demands, peasants often revolted. The Church lost prestige, as it was unable to stop the plague. The plague helped bring about the end of the Middle Ages.

A century-long war contributed as well. When the last Capetian king of France died in 1328, he

left no heir. Edward III of England claimed the throne—he was a grandson of Philip IV of France. In 1337, he began a war, known as the Hundred Years' War, to win France.

English forces won three important battles. At one, their archers used longbows to launch arrows that destroyed the French troops—even armored knights. By 1429, the French were in desperate shape. Their army held the town of Orléans, which the English were about to capture. A teenage girl named Joan of Arc arrived on the scene. Convinced by voices of the saints that she could save the day, she persuaded French leaders to allow her to lead the army of France, which was victorious. With that, the French crowned a new king, Charles VII. Later, Joan of Arc was captured by English allies, turned over to the English, tried, and burned at the stake.

The Hundred Years' War finally ended in 1453. It had been fought mostly in France and brought much suffering to that nation. However, the war produced a strong national feeling in both England and France, a sense that the king was not just a feudal lord but also the leader of a nation. The English king's constant need for money led him to ask Parliament many times for taxes. This increased the power of Parliament.

Review

1. **Determining Main Ideas** How was the renewed religious feeling of the Middle Ages shown?
2. **Analyzing Causes and Recognizing Effects** What were the effects of the Crusades?

Clarifying

3. What social, economic, and cultural changes took place in the Middle Ages?
4. What changes occurred in England and France in the Middle Ages?
5. **Forming and Supporting Opinions** Which of the three problems that affected Europe—the Great Schism, the bubonic plague, or the Hundred Years' War—do you think was worst, and why?