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Source: *Pacific Historical Review*, Feb., 1992, Vol. 61, No. 1 (Feb., 1992), pp. 1-22

Published by: University of California Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3640786>

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# The Phases of European History and the Nonexistence of the Middle Ages

C. WARREN HOLLISTER

*The author is a member of the history department in the University of California, Santa Barbara. This paper was his presidential address to the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association at its annual meeting in August 1991 at Kona on the island of Hawaii.*

I stand here before you to deliver the 1991 presidential address on the occasion of the eighty-fourth annual meeting of the American Historical Association, Pacific Coast Branch. I do hope you all realize what a heartwrenching task this is for me. I am an historian of medieval Europe. Only a small handful of you are medievalists—and I brought almost all of you here myself—to applaud me after my talk.

There is something deeply incongruous about an historian of medieval Europe presiding at a meeting on the Big Island of Hawaii—but it is thoroughly enjoyable—not to mention salubrious. Yet it is also, as I said, daunting. We have all had a splendid banquet, with an abundance of excellent wine. I do not want to put you to sleep with a boring, highly specialized address. And yet if my talk is too fluffy it will not stand up well when published in our splendid journal, the *Pacific Historical Review*. Worse yet, Norris Hundley might turn it down. I should have examined how past presidents, especially medievalists such as my dear friends Robert Ignatius Burns and the late Lynn White, coped with this problem. But my file of the *Pacific Historical Review* perished in the great Santa Barbara fire of June 27, 1990, which caused our home—with all its contents: computer, computer disks, print-out

manuscripts, many thousands of research notes, and my entire scholarly library, not to mention furniture and appliances—to explode. And since then we have been desperately busy rebuilding before our insurance runs out; it supports us very generously in the interim, but for only twelve months. Then we turn into pumpkins and declare bankruptcy (rents in Santa Barbara are running over \$3,000 a month). I am delighted to say that our home *was* rebuilt in time, and we are in it and therefore solvent—more or less. But I have not had time to scrutinize the entire file of the *Pacific Historical Review* in our library—a library that is, by the way, wretchedly underfunded. So permit me to keep this presidential address rather short—and to wing it.

I am going to discuss with you this evening the periodization of European history—or, as it is more commonly called in our curricula, “Western Civilization.” The first problem to be faced is: should we be teaching Western Civilization at all? I believe we should, although it is vitally important always to see Western Europe in a world context. First, I believe that the history of Western Europe has an integrity all its own—like the history of the United States or of Latin America—with causes and effects far more closely and coherently linked than in a course in world history—and here I must take good-hearted issue with my esteemed friend, the world historian William McNeill (who, incidentally, wrote one of the best short books on *European* history<sup>1</sup> I have ever read): I prefer required courses in both Western Civilization and at least one major eastern civilization—certainly *not* that grab bag course, “Eastern Civilizations,” which embodies a fundamental and deeply xenophobic misunderstanding, for there were many quite separate eastern civilizations. Courses in world history can be tied together by emphasizing the spread of new technologies across the Eastern Hemisphere, and by looking at expeditions such as Marco Polo’s to China and the famous imperial Chinese maritime expedition to East Africa. Pre-modern relations, such as they were, between China and the West, were brilliantly explored some years ago by the great Oxford historian Mark Elvin in his *Pattern of the Chinese*

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1. William H. McNeill, *The Shape of European History* (New York, 1974).

*Past*.<sup>2</sup> But these relations, although spectacular on occasion, were not close and do not lend themselves to tight causal sequences until recent centuries.

Western Civilization has also traditionally been criticized as a course about white males. But in the light of the tremendous abundance and originality of recent work on women's history in medieval and early modern Western Europe this criticism no longer holds. Among the books I have in mind are ground breaking works by such scholars as Caroline Bynum, Joan Kelly, Renate Bridenthal, Claudia Koonz, Suzanne Fonay Wemple, Susan Groag Bell, Brenda Bolton, Vern and Bonnie Bullough, Penny Schine Gold, Margaret Wade Lebarge, Angela Lucas, Edith Ennen, Judith Bennett, Penny Kanner, Sharon Farmer, and many others—first and foremost the great pioneers, Eileen Power and Doris Mary Stenton.<sup>3</sup>

There is also the point that Western Civilization has been, for better or worse, a uniquely potent, transforming force

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2. Mark Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past* (Stanford, 1973).

3. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1982), and *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, 1987); Joan Kelly-Gadol, "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" in Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz, eds., *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* (Boston, 1977) 137-164; Suzanne Fonay Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister, 500-900* (Philadelphia, 1981); Julius Kirchner and Suzanne Fonay Wemple, eds., *Women of the Medieval World: Essays in Honor of John H. Mundy* (Oxford, 1985); Susan Groag Bell, ed., *Women from the Greeks to the French Revolution* (Stanford, 1973); Brenda Bolton and others, eds., with an introduction by Susan Mosher Strand, *Women in Medieval Society* (Philadelphia, 1976); Vern and Bonnie Bullough, *The Subordinate Sex: A History of Attitudes toward Women* (Urbana, 1973); Penny Schine Gold, *The Lady and the Virgin: Image, Attitude, and Experience in Twelfth-Century France* (Chicago, 1985); Margaret Wade Labarge, *A Small Sound of the Trumpet: Women in Medieval Life* (Boston, 1986); Angela M. Lucas, *Women in the Middle Ages: Religion, Marriage, and Letters* (New York, 1983); Edith Ennen, *The Medieval Woman*, translated by Edmund Jephcott (Oxford, 1987); Judith Bennett, *Women in the Medieval English Countryside: Gender and Household in Brigstock before the Plague* (New York, 1987); Penny Kanner, ed., *The Women of England: From Anglo-Saxon Times to the Present* (Hamden, Conn., 1979); Paula M. Cooley, Sharon A. Farmer, and Mary Ellen Ross, eds., *Embodied Love: Sensuality and Relationship as Feminist Values* (San Francisco, 1987); Sharon Farmer, "Persuasive Voices: Clerical Images of Medieval Wives," *Speculum*, LXI (1986), 517-543; Eileen Power, *Medieval Women*, edited by M. M. Postan (New York, 1975); Doris Mary Stenton, *The English Woman in History* (London, 1957), new printing with an introduction by Louise A. Tilly (New York, 1977).

in human history—the source of a “cultural singularity” as Francis Oakley, president of Williams College, aptly put it.<sup>4</sup> Western Europe, with its parliaments, philosophies, architecture, art, music, technology, and accounting systems has influenced much of the world, with momentous consequences. The capital buildings of India are Western European in style (thanks to the British); the Tokyo Philharmonic often plays Mozart; and the United States capitol building looks uncannily like a miniature of St. Peter’s in Rome. Indeed, Western Europe has woven us into the global network that we know today. It must not be portrayed, Whiggishly, as a “damn good thing”; indeed, it might well be seen as a damn bad thing, depending on one’s point of view. But whatever the case, its significance simply cannot be ignored.

So let me propose that we retain the course on Western Civilization—as a much updated rendering of the course that we have been teaching at UC Santa Barbara ever since I joined its faculty as a lad of twenty-seven back in 1958 (and it was taught at UCSB long before that, so legend has it). The year 1958 was the first time I ever taught Western Civilization—anywhere. At UCLA, where I was enrolled as a doctoral student before going to UC Santa Barbara with my newly minted Ph.D., I was, through some outlandish administrative blunder, assigned as a teaching assistant in U.S. history, where we were obliged to use a text book that was not one of my favorites, two volumes, bright red in color. I will not disclose the author, but, by way of a hint, he later took on a collaborator who apparently insisted on changing the color of the book to blue—something of an improvement, I thought. I had to discuss with my students such—to me—mysterious matters as the Pendleton Civil Service Act, the Hawley-Smoot Tariff, and the administration of Millard Fillmore. The book explained, in a heroic but unsuccessful attempt to reconcile two irreconcilable positions on the framing of the American Constitution, that although the Articles of Confederation had certain flaws, there were none that could not be corrected by

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4. Francis C. Oakley, *The Medieval Experience: Foundations of Western Cultural Singularity* (New York, 1974), new printing, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching, no. 21 (Toronto, 1988).

amendments. It occurred to me that the same could be said of all public documents back to the Code of Hammurabi.

My heart, however, was always in the Middle Ages. The medieval history seminar in which I was enrolled at UCLA was under the expert direction of Professor David Bjork, soon to retire and, shortly thereafter, to die of heart failure while lifting armfuls of books down from the bookshelves of his campus office on a Saturday morning. He lay dead on his office floor for the better part of the weekend, buried under a great heap of scholarly books. His body was discovered the following Monday by a luckless doctoral candidate who was instructed to use David Bjork's office to take his Ph.D. written exams. They were postponed. As for David Bjork—fine scholar-teacher that he was—to die surrounded and literally blanketed by books is not a bad way for an historian to go.

But, turning backwards, David Bjork's seminar boasted the only medieval history doctoral student I have ever encountered who had a tattoo. His first name was Don. I prefer not to disclose his last name, and because he never finished his Ph.D. you will never know it. Moreover since Don is not presently in the academic profession I can express the belief, or at least the hope, that no medievalist presently employed in a college or university anywhere in the world bears a tattoo. But I do have the vivid recollection of Don's coming into seminar, short-sleeved, sporting a tattoo—indeed, glorying in it—and intimidating us all by carrying an armload of scholarly books in German. Between his books in German (which I have always found a difficult language) and his tattoo, I seriously considered resigning from the graduate program in despair. But instead I decided to meet Don halfway: I learned German but did not get a tattoo—although I suspect it would have been easier the other way around. Actually, Don turned out to be something of a fraud. I recall a seminar paper of his about the navy of the Crusading Order of Teutonic Knights. His paper, on which he labored for an entire year—two full semesters, thirty weeks—ran less than six pages. They proved, with marvelous brevity, that the Teutonic Knights had no navy. But I digress.

As is well known, historians have traditionally divided Western Civilization into the broad periods of Greco-Roman

antiquity (c. 750 BC to c. AD 500), the Middle Ages (c. AD 500–1500), the Modern era (c. 1500 to around the mid-twentieth century), and, often Post-Modern—the last generation or two, which has given us such distinctive creative figures as Charles Keating, Dan Quayle, Roseanne Barr, Ivan Boesky, and Sadaam Hussein. The point has often and very properly been made that all such historical periods are artificial intellectual constructs of our own devising—that in actuality “history is a seamless web.” Nevertheless, the human mind is unable to analyze large subjects, such as the history of humanity, except by dividing them into what Professor Alexander Murray of the University of Toronto described last December at the AHA meeting in New York as “manageable chunks.”<sup>5</sup> Historians would argue that, seamless web or no seamless web, our survey courses and general textbooks must have beginnings and endings and must be subdivided into parts, periods, and chapters.

Like it or not, then, we must necessarily resort to periodization. But as a specialist in what is commonly known as the “Middle Ages,” I have long been doubtful about the coherence of my own chosen period, 500–1500, even as an artificial construct or a manageable chunk. Seventh- through tenth-century Europe was utterly unlike twelfth- and thirteenth-century Europe. This point is demonstrated vividly by one of my favorite medieval cathedrals—Beauvais.<sup>6</sup> The earliest part of Beauvais Cathedral—the nave—was built sometime in the late tenth century. It is relatively plain, and small to the point of being downright snug. The choir of Beauvais, on the other hand, was built generations later, in the thirteenth century—the High Middle Ages. The vaulting of the Beauvais choir is no less than 158 feet in height, the highest on earth until the advent of Hyatt Regencys. The Beauvais choir is breathtaking. Owing, however to certain financial and designing glitches (such as the choir tumbling to the ground shortly

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5. Alexander C. Murray, “Problems with Periodization: Even in the Early Middle Ages?” (Unpublished paper delivered at the 105th Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association, New York, 1990).

6. See Stephen Murray, *Beauvais Cathedral: Architecture of Transcendence* (Princeton, N.J., 1989). I have followed the dating in Kenneth John Conant, *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture, 800–1200* (2nd ed., New York, 1978), 53.



after completion and having to be rebuilt), the little town of Beauvais could never afford to bring the diminutive nave of its cathedral up to contemporary standards. It is essentially unchanged to this day, and the contrast between the tenth-century nave and the thirteenth-century choir is simply awesome (to coin a word favored by our teenagers). To me the nave and choir of Beauvais signify two separate civilizations.

The “Middle Ages” were invented in the year 1469 by the Italian humanist and papal librarian, Giovanni Andrea.<sup>7</sup> But it was not until the seventeenth century that the concept “medieval” emerged clearly—to describe and stigmatize an allegedly stagnant, thousand-year middle period between the fall of the western Roman Empire in AD 476 and the blockbuster events of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that supposedly ushered in “modernity”—the voyages of discovery, the development of printing, the so-called “new monarchies,” Renaissance culture, and the Protestant Reformation. The Ancient-Medieval-Modern paradigm began jelling in the eighteenth century and became petrified in school and university curricula in the nineteenth. It remains to this day an indestructible fossil of self-congratulatory Renaissance humanism. It survives and flourishes despite the radically new approaches that have so enriched and transformed historical scholarship in recent decades: the “Annales” school and the concomitant interest in social history and *mentalités*; the ever tightening bonds between history and archaeology which have vastly increased and often revolutionized our knowledge of material culture; the rise and flowering of women’s history and family history to which I have already alluded; the growing interest in symbols and rituals, both political and religious—an interest that historians have borrowed from their colleagues in anthropology; the new propopographically-oriented political history—which has given rise to a relatively new journal that I cherish, *Medieval Prosopography*;<sup>8</sup> and the fresh perspectives that have emerged

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7. See Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago, 1988), 18.

8. Bernard S. Bachrach, George Beech, and Joel T. Rosenthal, eds., *Medieval Prosopography* (Kalamazoo, 1980 ff.).



from collaboration between historians and art historians or literary scholars—or both.

The time has therefore come, I believe, to reconsider our timeworn illusion that all Western Civilization is divided into three parts. To begin with, however, I must concede that two of the most distinguished medieval historians of this century, Joseph Strayer and Sir Richard Southern, believed firmly in the Middle Ages,<sup>9</sup> the period between the fall of the Roman Empire in the West and the Renaissance and Reformation—that is, the period of approximately AD 500 to 1500—two dates enshrined as the chronological bookends of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. Some have described this period as “The Dark Ages,” but to my mind, anyone who believes that the era that witnessed the building of Chartres Cathedral and the invention of Parliament and the university was “dark” must be mentally retarded—or at best, deeply, deeply ignorant.<sup>10</sup>

Both Strayer and Southern, and particularly Sir Richard, saw the unity of the period in the power of the Church and the dominance of the papacy. The difficulty with that viewpoint is that the papacy was not particularly dominant, with a very few exceptions, until about the mid-eleventh century.<sup>11</sup> The most notable exceptions to the weak early papacy were, first, St. Leo the Great who turned Attila the Hun back from Rome in 452—by summoning up, so it is said, the ghosts of both St. Peter and St. Paul, who stood on either side of Pope Leo as he spoke with Attila and terrified the poor wretched Hun out of his wits; second, St. Gregory the Great who sent a band of forty monks that launched the conversion of England to Christianity; and, third, St. Nicholas I (not our old friend from the North Pole), who put the fear of God into the Holy Roman Emperor Lothar, grandson of Charlemagne. These

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9. Joseph R. Strayer, *Western Europe in the Middle Ages* (3rd ed., Glenview, Ill., 1982), 3-9; R. W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1970), 24-27.

10. For a brief summary of this anti-Dark-Ages view, see C. Warren Hollister, *Medieval Europe: A Short History* (6th ed., New York, 1990), 1-2.

11. Geoffrey Barraclough, *The Medieval Papacy* (New York, 1968); Colin Morris, *The Papal Monarchy: The Western Church from 1050 to 1250* (Oxford, Eng., 1989), 79-82; Walter Ullman, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages: A Study in the Ideological Relation of Clerical to Lay Power* (London, 1955), 44-261.

were the big three; the other popes, before 1049, were, by and large, men of very limited real authority—although the eleventh-century pope Benedict IX, who was rumored to have sold the papacy in order to get married, only to demand it back when his marriage foundered, was an intriguing man.<sup>12</sup>

To carry the argument further, Christianity has flourished in the centuries both before and after 1500. The widespread idea of limiting “the Christian Centuries” to AD 500 to 1500 would have been deeply irksome to such post-medieval Christians as Martin Luther, Ignatius Loyola, Thomas More, John Wesley, and John Henry Newman, not to mention such pre-medieval Christians as St. Ambrose, St. Anthony, St. Martin of Tours, St. Jerome, and St. Augustine. Even in the twentieth century not only does the papacy remain powerful—as evidenced by John Paul II’s recent, triumphant visit to Poland—one also encounters influential Christians such as Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa, Jacques Maritain, Albert Schweitzer, C. S. Lewis, and—to plunge precipitously downward—our own American televangelists, mesmerizing their huge and deep-pocketed audiences with words at once soothing, fiery, and imploring: Jimmy Swaggart and Jim and Tammy Fay Bakker, to name but three of the most celebrated practitioners of their craft.

I want to suggest, therefore, that the whole concept of the Middle Ages as the “Christian Centuries” ought to be scrapped. And I must confess, at the cost of denying all originality to this address, that it has *indeed* been called into question. The distinguished French medievalist, Jacques Le Goff, has argued eloquently for an “extended Middle Ages” running all the way forward into the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> But if Le Goff will forgive me, I would like to suggest a “shrunk Middle Ages”—shrunk to the vanishing point. Let me explain.

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12. Morris, *Papal Monarchy*, 31-32, 82-84; Christopher Brooke, *Europe in the Central Middle Ages, 962-1154* (Rev. ed., 1975), 251. C. Peter Williams, in *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, edited by J. D. Douglas (2nd ed., Grand Rapids, 1978), 118, describes Benedict IX as “Perhaps the most discreditable representative of the papacy before it was reformed in the eleventh century.”

13. Le Goff, *Medieval Imagination*, 18-23.

The great historian Peter Brown, who was described not long ago in the *New York Review of Books* as one of Princeton University's "hot" historians, an appellation that Peter Brown despises, staked out a new era of history, between Classical Antiquity and the so called "Middle Ages," which he called "Late Antiquity" in his marvelous book of 1971, *The World of Late Antiquity, AD 150-750*.<sup>14</sup> There has been much further work on Late Antiquity, by Peter Brown himself, by his students, and by others whom he has inspired.<sup>15</sup> These scholars have shown that the culture, the religious beliefs, and even the laws of the later Roman Empire differed drastically from those of earlier Classical Antiquity. There is thus good reason to regard *Late Antiquity* as a period unto itself, perhaps commencing, I suggest, not in 150, as Peter Brown proposed, but in 180, at the death of Marcus Aurelius, the Stoic philosopher and last of the "Five Good Emperors." This, however, is a quibble.

More importantly, there is now good reason to question Brown's closing date of AD 750. A very significant article by Professor Richard Sullivan, published two years ago in *Speculum*, strongly challenged the idea of a "turning point" in the mid-eighth century—which had earlier been seen as a watershed marked by the fall of the Umayyads and accession of the Abbasids, the substitution of the Carolingian for the Merovingian dynasty in Francia, and the establishment of the Papal States.<sup>16</sup> Sullivan's article, bristling with footnotes, was based on research by many scholarly predecessors, including Patrick Geary, whose book, *Before France and Germany* (1987), also drawing on previous research by others, argued that Merovingian Francia was not a barbaric and downcast polity, ruled by long-haired nincompoops, such as historians

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14. (New York, 1971).

15. See, for example, Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981); Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978); Brown, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1982); Sabine G. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1981); Raymond Van Dam, *Leadership and Community in Late-Antique Gaul* (Berkeley, 1985).

16. Richard E. Sullivan, "The Carolingian Age: Reflections on Its Place in the History of the Middle Ages," *Speculum*, LXIV (1989), 267-306, and references cited therein.

have traditionally described it, but a regime that, as Henri Pirenne long ago argued, carried on much of the political, economic, and institutional legacy of the Roman Empire, and, as Pirenne did *not* argue, bore strong resemblances to the Carolingian regime that followed it—resemblances that were masked by early Carolingian propaganda.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, as Professor Thomas F. X. Noble demonstrated in his important book of 1984, *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal States, 680–825*, the origins of a papal principality in Italy much antedated the mid-eighth century.<sup>18</sup> The most telling blow to Peter Brown's ending date of 750 was perhaps administered by Peter Brown himself: in a seminal article published in *Daedalus* in 1975, Brown pointed out that the abandonment of the Germanic judicial ordeal in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries—a gradual but profoundly significant process—reflected a fundamental change in attitude, from law based on divine judgement to law based on testimony and the verdicts of juries.<sup>19</sup> This shift was, as Peter Brown put it, “perhaps the single greatest precondition for the growth of rationality.” Arguments over the significance of the ordeal and its abandonment have been expounded and expanded in the works of other historians, who have reached a diversity of conclusions.<sup>20</sup> One such historian is John Baldwin of Johns Hopkins University, who in 1970 wrote the definitive study of the late twelfth century French scholar Peter the Chanter, a leader in the opposition to the ordeal among members of

17. Patrick J. Geary, *Before France and Germany: The Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World* (New York, 1988); Henri Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne* (New York, 1939).

18. Thomas F. X. Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal States, 680–825* (Philadelphia, 1984).

19. Peter Brown, “Society and the Supernatural: A Medieval Change,” *Daedalus*, CIV no. 2 (1975), 133–151.

20. A very thoughtful inquiry into the subject is Paul R. Hyams, “Trial by Ordeal: The Key to Proof in the Early Common Law,” in Morris S. Arnold, T. A. Green, and others, eds., *On the Laws and Customs of England: Essays in Honor of Samuel E. Thorne* (Chapel Hill, 1980); Charles M. Radding has offered another, more controversial interpretation: “Superstition to Science: Nature, Fortune, and the Passing of the Medieval Ordeal,” *American Historical Review*, LXXXIV (1979), 945–969; and Radding, *A World Made by Men: Cognition and Society, 400–1200* (Chapel Hill, 1985); see, most recently, Robert L. Bartlett's highly revisionist study, *Trial by Fire and Water: The Medieval Judicial Ordeal* (Oxford, Eng., 1986).

university faculties, particularly the faculty of the University of Paris.<sup>21</sup> As a result of the opposition of this clerical elite the ordeal was condemned at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 under the authority of Pope Innocent III—himself a former student at the University of Paris.

Edward Peters, intriguingly, maintains that one of the procedures that replaced the ordeal was torture—an alternative means of getting at the truth.<sup>22</sup> As my UCSB colleague and close friend, Jeffrey Russell, argues in his works on witchcraft, torture was a most imperfect means of determining the truth because the torturers normally asked yes or no questions, rather like the methods preferred by the Educational Testing Service.<sup>23</sup> “Did you fly through the air and join a witches coven and then kiss the devil’s arse?” “Ouch, yes, boss, I sure did; whatever you say!” Understandably, Jeffrey Russell places little confidence in such testimony. But again, I digress.

A growing international body of scholars has argued—from a variety of perspectives, disciplines, and subdisciplines—that the great divide between the late-antique and modern eras should be located in the eleventh and twelfth centuries rather than the fifteenth and sixteenth.<sup>24</sup> As I present this evidence to you, let me turn first to the realm of law. The great legal scholar Harold J. Berman, who was stolen a few years ago from the Harvard Law School by Emory University, argued persuasively in his ground-breaking 1983 book, *Law and Revolution*, that modern Western law began with the “Papal Revolution”—as he perceptively calls it—of the mid-

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21. John W. Baldwin, *Masters, Princes, and Merchants: The Social Views of Peter the Chanter and His Circle* (Princeton, N.J., 1970); and Baldwin, “The Intellectual Preparation for the Canon of 1215 against the Ordeal,” *Speculum*, XXXVI (1961), 613-636.

22. Edward Peters, *Torture* (New York, 1985).

23. See Jeffrey B. Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1972; and Russell, *A History of Witchcraft: Sorcerers, Heretics, and Pagans* (London, 1980). But cf. Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches’ Sabbath* (New York, 1991).

24. This view, and its advocates, are conveniently discussed and supported in Dietrich Gerhard, *Old Europe: A Study of Continuity, 1000-1800* (New York, 1981); for an even broader sweep, akin to Le Goff’s “extended Middle Ages” (n. 13), see Robert L. Reynolds, *Europe Emerges: Transition toward an Industrial World-Wide Society, 600-1750* (Madison, 1961).

and late-eleventh century.<sup>25</sup> Medievalists have more often called this phenomenon “The Gregorian Reform Movement” or “The Investiture Controversy.” Technically, this was an issue about whether a newly appointed bishop or abbot should be invested with the symbols of his office—normally a ring and a pastoral staff—by a lay aristocrat or by a churchman. Insisting that churchmen, not laymen, should make such appointments, and should confer the traditional ritualistic symbols on the appointees to such offices was a means of bringing to realization the guiding idea of the reform papacy—that the Church alone should be the body to decide on clerical appointments and thereby establish its independence from the lay order.<sup>26</sup>

In taking this stance, Gregory VII and other popes of his times sought to buttress their positions by encouraging ecclesiastical scholars to develop the discipline of Canon Law—analyzing the opinions of the Doctors of the Church—St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, and St. Gregory the Great—the judgments and pronouncements of papal councils, and teachings from the Bible.<sup>27</sup> At the urging of the reform papacy of the later eleventh and early twelfth centuries, canon lawyers did so. And by approximately 1140 the great canon lawyer Gratian had completed his seminal *Concordance of Discordant Canons* (better known as the *Decretum*)—a rational analysis of the entire historical corpus of canon law.<sup>28</sup> Gratian’s achievement was to reconcile differing

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25. Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983); see in particular pp. 538–558 for Berman’s views on periodization.

26. Scholarly works on this subject are virtually innumerable. See, most recently, Uta-Renate Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century*, translated by the author (Philadelphia, 1988).

27. *Ibid.*; Berman, *Law and Revolution*, esp. 115–119; Brian Tierney and Peter Linehan, eds., *Authority and Power: Studies in Medieval Law and Government Presented to Walter Ullmann on His Seventieth Birthday* (Cambridge, Eng., 1980); Ullmann, *Growth of Papal Government*, 359–381.

28. Stanley Chodorow, *Christian Political Theory and Church Politics in the Mid-Twelfth Century: The Ecclesiology of Gratian’s Decretum* (Berkeley, 1972); Stephan Kuttner, “The Father of the Science of Canon Law,” *Jurist*, I (1941), 2–19; and Kuttner, *Gratian and the Schools of Law* (London, 1983); Berman, *Law and Revolution*, 143–148.

opinions from all the canonical sources. But his method of applying logical analysis to Church law was actually begun by Gratian's eleventh-century predecessors—men such as Irnerius of Bologna and Ivo, bishop of Chartres, and it was later carried on by such thirteenth-century scholars as Popes Gregory IX and Boniface VIII.<sup>29</sup> These great advances in the field of canon law were accompanied by a parallel process in civil law based on the revival and analysis of Justinian's *Corpus Juris Civilis*—the “Body of Civil Law”—which was, essentially, a compilation of the laws of the Roman Empire.<sup>30</sup> Together, these two achievements, canon law and Roman law, constituted, according to Berman, the beginnings of high-level Western jurisprudence—a tradition that is ending, Berman would further argue, indeed, putrefying, only in our present generation.<sup>31</sup> (Prophetically, Berman came to this conclusion *before* the recent Supreme Court ruling forbidding federally funded physicians to so much as mention the possibility of abortion to impoverished pregnant women.) And notice that the origins of canon law and the revival of civil law both commenced shortly after the mid-eleventh century.

This twofold legal revival, as Brian Tierney convincingly argues, was paralleled by the emergence of Western constitutional thought.<sup>32</sup> The concept of a social contract, Roman in origin, resurfaced amidst the papal-imperial polemics of the later eleventh century.<sup>33</sup> And constitutional thought in general, Tierney maintains, underwent a more-or-less continuous development from the twelfth century far into the seventeenth. Again, the Investiture Controversy or “Papal Revolution” was the ultimate stimulus to the constitutional no less than the legal traditions that shaped modern Western Europe.

The period beginning around AD 1000 or 1050 marks a

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29. Berman, *Law and Revolution* 123-127, 143-144, 202-204, 602 n. 11, and references therein.

30. *Ibid.*, 127-143, 204-205, 273-275.

31. *Ibid.*, 33-41.

32. Brian Tierney, *Religion, Law, and the Growth of Constitutional Thought, 1150-1650* (Cambridge, Eng., 1982).

33. Ullmann, *Growth of Papal Government*, 357.



truly fundamental turning point in Western Civilization—not simply in law and constitutional thought, as important as they are, but in many other areas as well. Georges Duby and Robert S. López have both viewed eleventh and twelfth century Europe as an era of swift urbanization, “commercial revolution,” and “economic take-off.”<sup>34</sup> Milan, Paris, Florence, Venice, and London, among others, all became major cities, as the exchange of goods in Western society underwent a profoundly significant shift from an early medieval economy based on gift-giving to a high-medieval and modern economy lubricated by money and based on profit.<sup>35</sup> Seymour Phillips, G. V. Scammell, and Filipe Fernández-Armesto have all demonstrated, from different perspectives, that the voyages of Columbus represented a crest in a long sequence of medieval advances in maritime exploration and shipbuilding that had extended back for at least 250 years and had resulted in the discovery of the Canary and Cape Verde Islands and the Azores.<sup>36</sup> Robert Fossier and Jean Chapelot, in a brilliant brew of history and archaeology (*The Village and House in the Middle Ages*), argue that not only the European city but even the so-called “traditional” European agrarian village first emerged in the tenth to twelfth centuries and remained much the same until the industrial revolution—and often well beyond.<sup>37</sup> Anchored by the lord’s castle or manor house, and by the village church, more and more frequently built of stone (and many of these churches remain in service

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34. Georges Duby, *The Early Growth of the European Economy: Warriors and Peasants from the Seventh to the Twelfth Century*, translated by Howard S. Clarke (Ithaca, N.Y., 1974), 157-270, esp. 266-267: “In the heart of the West, in England and the Old Frankish lands of Gaul and Germania, the turning point of the late-twelfth century stands out most clearly. Here it assumes the aspect of a veritable take-off....” Robert S. López, *The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages, 950-1350* (New York, 1971).

35. Duby, *Early Growth*, 232-234 and *passim*; Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1978).

36. J. R. S. Phillips, *The Medieval Expansion of Europe* (New York, 1988); G. V. Scammell, *The World Encompassed: The First European Maritime Empires, c. 800-1650* (London, 1981); Filipe Fernández-Armesto, *Before Columbus: Exploration and Colonization from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, 1229-1492* (Philadelphia, 1987).

37. Jean Chapelot and Robert Fossier, *The Village and House in the Middle Ages*, translated by Henry Cleere (Berkeley, 1985).

to the present day), the village acquired a degree of cohesion and permanence that it had not known before.

Michael Clanchy sees the eleventh and twelfth centuries as the crucial period in the development of literacy, marking a fundamental shift “from memory to written record.”<sup>38</sup> Brian Stock, in a brilliant and complex book, *The Implications of Literacy*, more or less concurs.<sup>39</sup> Alexander Murray (the All Souls Oxford Sandy Murray, not the Toronto one) sees this period as witnessing a prodigious increase in the circulation of money, resulting in the shifting of political and economic power into the hands of men trained in “reasoning and reckoning.”<sup>40</sup> Karl Schmid and Georges Duby note that the coming of the castle in about AD 1000 contributed to the transformation of the Western European aristocracy into the structure that it has retained ever since, from loosely organized collateral kin groups to families based on lineage, primogeniture, and toponyms bearing the name of the family seat—often the chief castle—Beaumont, Montfort, Brionne, Clare.<sup>41</sup>

Further, M. D. Chenu points to the dawning realization among twelfth-century thinkers that the physical world functioned on natural rather than supernatural principles.<sup>42</sup> God, in short, created our world so perfectly that it could, by and large, get along without Him in its day by day affairs. And this being so, the workings of the physical world—indeed, the entire cosmos—lay open to human inspection and rational

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38. M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record in England, 1066–1307* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979).

39. Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, N.J., 1983); see also, by the same author, *Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past* (Baltimore, 1990).

40. Alexander Murray, *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, Eng., 1978).

41. Several papers bearing on these points are included in Timothy Reuter, ed. and trans., *The Medieval Nobility: Studies on the Ruling Classes of France and Germany from the Sixth to the Twelfth Century* (New York, 1979); see, further, Georges Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*, translated by Cynthia Postan (Berkeley, 1977), 59–80, 134–157.

42. M. D. Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*, edited and translated by Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little (Chicago, 1968).

comprehension. The world was no longer a theater of miracles but a *natural* order, operating on natural, discoverable principles. The way was thus opened up to a far greater emphasis on science, as we are reminded from Sir Richard Southern's recent, masterful biography of the great thirteenth-century scientist and bishop of Lincoln, Robert Grosseteste.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Charles Radding, inspired by the psychology of Piaget, sees the period as marking childhood's end: the primitive notion of imminent justice—punishment if one violates a rule, no matter how justifiably—gave way, so Radding believes, to the adult concept of intent.<sup>44</sup> Collectively, these new insights resulted in a gradual demystification of what Carolly Erickson so vividly described as an "enchanted world" of miracles and visions.<sup>45</sup> This is not to say that after the mid-eleventh century ordinary people ceased believing in miracles and visions. My colleague Jeff Russell recently completed a book on the myth of the flat earth proving that educated people throughout the Middle Ages understood perfectly well that the earth is spherical.<sup>46</sup> One marvelous symbol of this point is a famous manuscript illumination showing the Emperor Otto III, c. AD 1000, enthroned and holding an orb and a scepter. The orb represents the earth.<sup>47</sup> If Otto and his councilors had thought the earth was flat, he would have been holding not an orb but a spatula.

Nevertheless, uneducated people throughout the Middle

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43. R. W. Southern, *Robert Grosseteste: The Growth of an English Mind in Medieval Europe* (Oxford, Eng., 1986); on medieval science in general, see A. C. Crombie, *Augustine to Galileo* (2nd ed., London, 1964); Crombie, *Medieval and Early Modern Science* (2nd ed., Cambridge, Mass., 1961); Edward Grant, *Physical Science in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Eng., 1977).

44. Radding, "Superstition to Science," 945-969; this view is questioned by, among others, Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water*; see, further, Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300* (Oxford, Eng., 1984), 24-26, 36-38.

45. Carolly Erickson, *The Medieval Vision: Essays in History and Perception* (New York, 1976), 3-28; compare Benedicta Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event, 1000-1215* (Rev. ed., Philadelphia, 1987), 1-32; and Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society*.

46. Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Inventing the Flat Earth: Columbus and Modern Historians* (New York, 1991).

47. K. J. Leyser, *Medieval Germany and Its Neighbours, 900-1250* (London, 1982), xiv-xv.

Ages believed in a number of exotic things, including ghost riders in the sky and a flat earth. Some people have believed in such things ever since.<sup>48</sup> I have heard that there is an organization that survives to this day known as the Flat Earth Society. Others today, so I am told, believe that the earth is spherical, but that we are living on the inside of the sphere. Still others are convinced that aliens from space built the Egyptian pyramids and launched the Inca Empire, or that Elvis Presley is alive in hiding. I have an aunt who is carrying on an intensive two-way correspondence with my grandmother, Cora, unremarkable except that Cora died in 1938. I believe that we in academic life are sheltered to a large extent from implausible notions of these sorts by the intellectual rigor—such as it is—required to earn a Ph.D. Our Ivory Towers are havens of reason, at least to a degree, and overlooking intradepartmental power struggles and feuds. But out there in the Real World be prepared for anything—flying saucers, ghosts both affectionate and hostile, automatic writing, seances, palmistry, numerology, black cats bearing curses, and the belief, popularized by A. A. Milne, that if you step on a seam in a concrete sidewalk you will be consumed by ferocious bears.

Thus, with the coming of the High Middle Ages *c.* 1000 or 1050, the changes in attitude toward literacy, intention, and reason occurred primarily among the intelligentsia—not simply professors but administrators, bishops, monks, and educated nobles as well.<sup>49</sup> And there were indeed profound changes among these groups. Colin Morris credits the period with a great upsurge of introspection—“The Discovery of the Individual”; Caroline Bynum, modifying Morris’s view, credits it with the discovery of self through new religious

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48. See, for example, Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1971).

49. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*; H. G. Richardson and G. O. Sayles, *The Governance of Mediaeval England from the Conquest to Magna Carta* (Edinburgh, 1963), 269-284; Ralph V. Turner, “The *Miles Literatus* in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century England,” *American Historical Review*, LXXXIII (1978), 928-945.

communities.<sup>50</sup> I and several of my students have argued that the Anglo-Norman monarchy of the early twelfth century—with its Exchequer, Treasury, well articulated patronage system, and network of sheriffs, justiciars, and itinerant justices—had virtually all the characteristics traditionally ascribed to the so called “new monarchies” of the sixteenth century.<sup>51</sup> I would argue further that early thirteenth-century French sculpture such as one finds on the facades and porches of Chartres, Reims, and Amiens, although differing in obvious ways from the more muscled and voluptuous sculpture of the Italian Renaissance, shares with it the inspiration of classical naturalism and is much closer to Italian Renaissance art than to much of the radically non-naturalistic European sculpture of c. AD 1000 and before.

It was Charles Homer Haskins who first popularized the idea of a fundamental cultural shift in the middle of the Middle Ages in his classic work of 1927, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*.<sup>52</sup> And Haskins argued for an expanded twelfth century, 1050–1250, just as Italian Renaissance scholars had earlier argued for an expanded Quattrocento, 1350–1550. Haskins was a pioneer, and he was just a bit defensive about his theses: “A renaissance in the twelfth century!” he wrote. “Do not the Middle Ages, that epoch of ignorance, stagnation, and gloom, stand in the sharpest contrast to the light and progress and freedom of the Italian Renaissance which followed?”<sup>53</sup> As you might have suspected, Haskins’s answer was a resounding “humbug!”

The intriguing thing about the Haskins thesis is that in the more than sixty years since its inception it has received massive backing from the scholarly community, as I hope my

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50. Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual, 1050–1200* (New York, 1972); Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 82–109.

51. C. Warren Hollister, *Monarchy, Magnates, and Institutions in the Anglo-Norman World* (London, 1986), 97–116, 171–189, 209–245; Judith Green, *The Government of England under Henry I* (Cambridge, Eng., 1986); W. L. Warren, *The Governance of Norman and Angevin England, 1086–1272* (London, 1987), 1–95; Stephanie L. Mooers, “Patronage in the Pipe Roll of 1130,” *Speculum*, LIX (1984), 282–307.

52. (Cambridge, Mass., 1927).

53. *Ibid.*, v.

paper has made clear.<sup>54</sup> This is not to deny the importance of such weatherbeaten historical milestones as the Protestant Reformation—even though Francis Oakley, in his perceptive study of the late-medieval Church (1979), echoes many other scholars in viewing the Reformation as essentially medieval in spirit.<sup>55</sup> Nor do I question the existence of the Italian Renaissance or its deep significance. Renaissance art and architecture are dazzling and unprecedented, as was Renaissance civic humanism—which flourished in Florence for about fifty years, thereafter to die out. I am arguing, however, that the truly fundamental changes—the advent of the city, the agrarian village, the university, literacy, the lineage-based aristocracy, the revival of Greco-Roman art and thought, Parliament, the Western legal and constitutional traditions, large-scale international commerce, and much else—occurred in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, during Haskins’s “Twelfth Century Renaissance.”

Western Civilization obviously witnessed many further changes of great importance during the centuries that followed. But the next truly fundamental turning point, I would argue, occurred in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the coming of the Enlightenment and, much more importantly, the French and Industrial revolutions.<sup>56</sup> As a medievalist, I am not permitted to move out of my field and comment publicly on these later changes, although if anyone in this audience questions the significance of the Industrial Revolution I will be happy to discuss it with you privately afterwards. Suffice it to say that the evidence from social, economic, institutional, and intellectual history, from art history, legal history, literature, philosophy, psychology, archaeology, and anthropology suggests that the Ancient-Medieval-

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54. See Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable, with Carol D. Lanham, eds., *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982); Cristopher Brooke, *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (New York, 1970); C. Warren Hollister, ed., *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (New York, 1969).

55. Francis C. Oakley, *The Western Church in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1979).

56. Gerhart, *Old Europe*, 111-147; W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (3rd ed., Cambridge, Eng., 1990); Rostow, *How It All Began: Origins of the Modern Economy* (New York, 1975); Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780-1880* (London, 1969).

Modern paradigm requires drastic modification. I propose a different periodization schema as follows: Classical Antiquity (to about the late second century AD); Late Antiquity (to the eleventh century); Traditional Europe (or Pre-industrial Europe: eleventh century to late eighteenth century, ending with the French and Industrial revolutions); Modern Western Civilization (late eighteenth century to mid-twentieth); and the Post-Modern West (which should clearly include Pacific-Rim Asia). The attentive listener will notice that the Middle Ages have vanished.

But if the Middle Ages evaporate, what happens to my job, and the jobs and job prospects of my students and other friends in the medieval business? Actually, I am safe enough. I am deeply cemented into a tenured professorship. But in truth I have no fears at all—for myself, my fellow medievalists, or the apprentice medievalists who are studying at UCSB and elsewhere. The Middle Ages, even though non-existent, were chiseled indelibly into our curriculum in the nineteenth century, and there is no getting rid of them. They are doomed to endure far into the academic future, and I must concede at this point, in what is at once a confession and a conclusion, that I myself share the blame. I have written a standard textbook on medieval Europe, now in its sixth edition (1990), and another textbook of mine, on medieval England, called *The Making of England*, is in press and due out in its sixth edition in 1992. Worse yet, together with three of my former Ph.D. students, I have just completed a second, revised edition of a book of readings published by McGraw-Hill titled *Medieval Europe: A Short Sourcebook* (1992), to accompany my medieval history text. Further, in collaboration with three of my *current* Ph.D. students (including Heather Tanner, a marvelously gifted doctoral candidate who gave a splendid paper here at our PCB conference just this afternoon), I am working on a book of problems in medieval history under contract with D. C. Heath.

To add to the chaos, we will have in our medieval history doctoral program at UC Santa Barbara this coming year no less than twenty-one outstandingly gifted students from all across North America, survivors of a ruthlessly selective admission process administered by the pitiless triumverate



of Jeffrey Russell, Sharon Farmer, and me. All this is very depressing to those of us who dream of someday abolishing the Middle Ages. Most discouraging of all, several of my past students in medieval history are themselves training doctoral students—my academic grandchildren so to speak—in this nonexistent field. So we remain under the spell of that bewitching illusion, the Middle Ages. Our traditional tripartite division of Western Civilization, no matter how threadbare and wrongheaded, will be with us until Armageddon. In short, there will always be a Middle Ages, and my presidential address has been in vain. Nevertheless, thank you all for coming, and enjoy the beaches.