

Charlemagne and the Origins of Christendom

I. Western Europe during the Time of the Muslim Expansion

A. Decline and Isolation

1. Decline of Trade and Industry
 - a. How would one conduct long-distance trade at this time?
 - b. Vikings (“nomads of the sea”) as response
2. Decline of Culture and Learning
 - a. Did Charles Martel save “western civilization” at the Battle of Tours in 732?
 - b. Baptistry at Poitiers
3. Dissolution of Centralized Government

II. Political, Social, and Economic Relations in the Middle Ages

A. Manorial Self-Sufficiency

1. Estates: Division by Function
 - a. 1st Estate: Those Who Pray (clergy)
 - b. 2nd Estate: Those Who Fight (nobility)
 - c. 3rd Estate: Those Who Work (peasants)

B. Feudalism — A Stage in Every Nation’s Development or Historiographic Ghost?

1. Standard Textbook View
2. Use of the Term by Researchers
3. Question about Its Origins
 - a. Montesquieu (18th cent.) — German tribal comitatus
 - b. George Waitz (1880s) — Roman clientage and patronage
 - c. Heinrich Brunner (1890s) — fusion of comitatus and clientage
 - d. Lynn White (1964) — importance of stirrup
4. Another Possibility — Muslim *iqṭā'*

C. Charlemagne (768–814)

1. Political Significance

- a. Crowned Roman Emperor in the West—“Holy Roman Empire”
- b. Impact on Western institutions?
- c. Lands divided among grandsons—Treaty of Verdun (843)

2. Education and the Revival of Learning

- a. Alcuin of York (735–804)
- b. Trivium (represents argument)
 - Grammar
 - Rhetoric—“the open fist”
 - Logic—“the shut fist”
- c. Quadrivium (represents mathematics)
 - Arithmetic—numbers in themselves
 - Geometry—numbers having taken form
 - Astronomy—numbers in motion
 - Music—numbers in relationship to each other

3. Carolingian Renaissance (Aachen [Aix-la-Chapelle])

- a. Miniscule—Preservation of Ancient Latin Texts
- b. Einhard—*The Life of Charlemagne*

D. The End of the Millennium? The Year 1000.

Recommended Reading on Question of Feudalism:

- Bernard A. Bachrach, “Charles Martel, Mounted Shock Combat, the Stirrup and Feudalism,” *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, 7 (1970).
- Elizabeth A. R. Brown, “The Tyranny of a Construct: Feudalism and Historians of Medieval Europe,” *American Historical Review*, 79 (1974): 1063–1088.
- Donald Ostrowski, “The Military Land Grant along the Muslim-Christian Frontier,” *Russian History*, 19 (1992): 327–359; a corrected version can be found at <<http://hudce7.harvard.edu/~ostrowski/mm/frontier2.pdf>>.
- Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe 900–1300* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).