Medieval Europe: Heir to the Greco-Roman World

Out of the Ashes of Ancient Rome emerged Medieval Europe
Rome

- Most impressive ancient empire
- Large empire, covering the entire Mediterranean region
- Effective political order
- Integration of colonized peoples
- Impressive infrastructure
Fall of Rome:

- Fell in 476 CE, but the process was a long one
- Many internal weaknesses:
  - Hypertrophy: Empire grew too large
  - Poor political leadership
  - Burden of taxation
  - Invasion by northern barbarians
Emergence of Medieval Europe

- Politically and economically a highly fragmented society
- Universal Church the primary power
- Feudalism a response to a hostile world
  - Developed by the 10th century
  - Invasions by Vikings, Saracens, and Magyars
Europe in 1250

- Political System: Feudalism
- Religion: Universal (Roman Catholic) Church
- Culture dominated by clergy
- Wealth defined by land ownership
- Rural civilization
- Latin was the common language
The Big Shift: 1000 to 1500

Agricultural Revolution:
1. New lands under cultivation
2. Horse collar developed
3. Iron plow
4. Field rotation
The Big Shift cont.

- Declining power of papacy
- Economic Stimulation: Crusades
- Renaissance in Italy
- Black Death
Europe in 1600

- Political System: Nation states, centralized power
- Religion: Many creeds following the Protestant Reformation
- Culture now in hands of laymen
- Wealth determined by money
- Urban civilization
- Many languages
The Renaissance

The changes of the late Middle Ages gives rise to the Renaissance.

Economic Foundations:

- Crusades open trade with the Middle East
- Northern Italian cities perfectly poised to take advantage: Genoa, Venice, etc. New wealth was invested in trade, banking, manufacturing. Wealth now determines status more than birth
Renaissance Humanism

The term is coined in the 19th century, but it referred to the ability to read, understand, and appreciate the writings of the ancient world (Greece and Rome).

Later in the Renaissance, it referred to the natural gifts of human reason and that humans could achieve anything.
Humanism compared

“Numberless are the world’s wonders, but none more wonderful than man.”

-Sophocles, 496-406 BCE

“Imagine! The great generosity of God! The happiness of man! To man it is allowed to be whatever he chooses to be!”

-Pico Della Mirandola, 1463-1494 CE
Humanism

- Humanists insist that man would be morally superior for having immersed himself in humanistic studies.

- A key in the Italian Renaissance will be the patronizing of the arts and humanistic endeavors with the new wealth.
Renaissance Art

Key figures like Michelangelo and Da Vinci

Clear break with Medieval art:

In Medieval art, nature was used as a prop, to make the religious point; in Renaissance art reproducing nature became the standard of artistic truth
An Early Medieval Portrayal of the Last Supper
Later Middle Ages from Notre Dame Cathedral
Leonardo Da Vinci’s The Last Supper (1498)
Botticelli’s *The Birth of Venus* (1485); Revival of classical themes
Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*
Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*

- Political expression of the Renaissance
- Real Politik; how to gain and maintain power
- Cynical about religion; a leader should use it if it helps
The Protestant Reformation

Emergence of Protestantism which emphasized the role of the believer in salvation over the intercession of the church

Divided Europe into a Protestant North and a Catholic South

Led to a resurgent, militant, and reformed Catholicism
Problems with the Church

- Church corruption; the church was powerful, and became an avenue for men seeking power
- People resented the Papacy’s secular power
- Tithes
- Indulgences: could bypass confession of sins for purchase of a document, or religious artifacts
Crisis in the Church

- Babylonian Captivity of the Papacy - 1305-1377 (Papal see in Avignon)
- Great Schism (1378-1415) - Two Popes
- Borgia Popes - such as Alexander VI (1492-1503) - were worldly and corrupt.
- Humanist critiques found fertile soil.
Martin Luther (1483-1546)
Author of the 95 Theses

- Cried to St. Anthony for deliverance in a fierce storm and switched from law to theology.
- Came to question core Catholic doctrines because he couldn’t find support for them in the text.
Events in Wittenberg, 1517

- Pope Leo X had an indulgence drive to rebuild St. Peter’s
- Johan Tetzel spearheaded the drive
- Luther posted 95 Thesis on the church door, Oct. 31, 1517

Samples:
95 Theses

43. Christians are to be taught that he who gives to the poor or lends to the needy does a better work than buying pardons;

45. Christians are to be taught that he who sees a man in need, and passes him by, and gives [his money] for pardons, purchases not the indulgences of the pope, but the indignation of God.
Luther cont.

In short, the Pope does not have the keys to heaven and he can’t absolve the sins of the dead. The sale of indulgences takes away the true meaning of contrition.

Later, Luther emphasized three points:

- Sola fide - Salvation by faith alone
- Sola scriptura - Authority of God lies in scriptures alone
- “Priesthood of all believers”
Impact

- Fueled German nationalism, who resented the Italian pope and the Austrian Holy Roman Emperor

- Diet of Worms, 1520-papal committee asks Luther to recant. He refuses, asking priests where in the Bible is he wrong

- He is excommunicated

- Reformation moves to other parts of Europe, especially England
The Reformation Spreads

- King Henry VIII attacks Luther, but breaks with the Catholic church in 1533
- Other reformers like John Calvin continue the theological attack on the papacy
The Overseas Movement

- Renaissance and humanistic thought broke the hold of medieval thinking on Europeans; created the intellectual climate for exploration.
- Opening of the European economy stimulated the need for trade.
- The Reformation broke the hold of the church on Europe and contributed to the rise of national monarchies.
- Primary explorers were Iberians (Spain and Portugal). Why?
Four Factors Propelling Overseas Expansion:

- Emergence of Nation states
- Emergence of capitalism
- Dynamic Judeo Christian culture; linear sense of history
- Technology, mostly borrowed from Muslims and far East

Nowhere else did all of these factors come together as they did in Europe, in particular in Portugal and Spain
Portugal and Prince Henry the Navigator

- Portuguese Prince
- Set up school for explorers
- Knowledge from this school helped Portuguese and Spanish round Africa, sail to Americas
Portuguese Exploration

Explorations of Bartolomeu Dias (1487-88) and Vasco de Gama (1497-99)
The Spanish Overseas Movement

Spain is poised, more than any other country, to explore and colonize.

Spain had been unified with the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella in 1469.

The Reconquista of the Iberian peninsular (expulsion of the Moors) completed in 1492.
Christopher Columbus

Convinces Ferdinand and Isabella to fund his westward expedition
Columbus’ Four Voyages
Reaction to Columbus
The Spanish in the Southwest

What are our general impressions of the Spanish in the Southwest?

Two key figures:
- Ponce de Leon;
- Coronado
Spanish Southwest

Image of Spanish: Ponce de Leon and Coronado are known primarily for their brutality or their foolishness (or both)

Black Legend
- Product of European Rivalries
- Jealousy
- Used throughout history against Hispanic peoples:
  - Mexican-Am. War; Spanish-Am War
  - Statehood for New Mexico and Arizona
“White” Legend

Qualifications:

- Spain came over early with Medieval minds
- Spanish hit the high population areas
- Disease had not done much damage
- Spanish always planned inclusion
- Black Legend masks other depredations by the English and French
Columbian Exchange

Key biological exchange

Europe to the Americas: Horses, gunpowder, the wheel, cattle, Christianity, mule, thistles; numerous diseases

Americas to Europe: Chocolate, tobacco, potatoes, corn, gold, silver, gems; Syphilis