
The First “Europe” as the Culture of the Medieval West

■ Introduction

- A. Between 900 and 1350 the culture called the First “Europe” created rich civilization.
 - 1. Feudal relationship resulted in the national state
 - 2. Gothic art and architecture
 - 3. Vernacular literature
 - 4. Scholastic philosophy
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- Basic Elements of the “First Europe”
 - A. Heart of the culture was Greco-Roman-Christian Synthesis, tempered by Germanic traditions.
 - B. Essentially Augustinian, colored by Gregory the Great, emended by others such as
 - John of Salisbury
 - Peter Abelard
 - Thomas Aquinas
 - Bernard of Clairvaux
 - Francis of Assisi
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- Basic Elements of the “First Europe”
 - C. First Europe, like later phase, was dynamic with unresolved tensions which contributed to creativity.
 - Tensions between:
 - 1. Religion as dogmas and rituals and religion as ethical principles to be lived.
 - 2. Task of ruler in feudal world and task of ruler defined by Christian principles.
 - 3. Concept of individual worth and brotherhood of man and the principle of aristocratic superiority.
 - 4. The view of the future as something this-worldly and the next.
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- Question:

- Let's think about the list of tensions above. Your reaction?
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- Basic Elements of the “First Europe”
 - D. What follows is a consensus.
 - 1. What is man and for what purpose does he live?
 - First traditional view and then emendations.
 - Man sinful and deserving damnation.
 - Possessed value as eternal soul.
 - Correct behavior more important than inner spirituality
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■ Basic Elements of the “First Europe”

- Man gained greatest understanding through faith.
 - Peter Abelard and Thomas Aquinas added greater confidence in reason.
 - Bernard of Clairvaux and Francis of Assisi added love; emotional experience with God.
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- 2. God is the God of the Augustinian-Gregorian tradition. God of Judgment. Germanic influence: God is an irascible tribal chieftain who must be approached as such. Christ will return as terrible avenger. Embodied in the Church;
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■ Question:

- Bernard succinctly answers the fundamental question all reformers have faced: what does man need, inner transformation through love and ethics, or outer changes brought about social improvement? Do you change the inner being, or change the conditions in which man lives? Bernard said change the inner man. Your view?
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- God acted through Church.
 - Bernard of Clairvaux - God should be loved because of his love for man. Intense emotional love can transform man and resolve all problems.
 - Even this too harsh-Mariolatry. Mary gave worshippers a human approachable intercessor.
 - Francis of Assisi-back to original Christianity by living life of Jesus.
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- 3. View of the World? Again Augustine/Gregory.
 - Faith views world as God’s creation. Neo-Platonic view of all reality being one. Focus on God and not world. Rely on allegory and analogy to explain. For common mind magical belief in power of relics, practices and rituals.

 - Scholasticism emended traditional view. Work of Abelard and Aquinas. All knowledge can be harmonized with revealed truth. Apply dialectic. Summa Theologica with 631 topics and 10,000 objections and replies.
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- 4. Purpose of Society? Augustine: State is a remedy for sin. An instrument. Pessimistic view of state.
 - Was ruler responsible directly to God? Pope?
 - Feudal rulers?
 - Papal universal rule?
 - Church and state interpenetrated, giving dynamic quality.
 - Actual conditions produced constitutionalism, at least in England.
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- 5. History and Progress?
 - Again Augustinian-Gregorian. Basically unchallenged. Otto of Freising (1158) The Two Cities.
 - Cyclical view rejected.
 - Augustine and Gregory parted company here. For Augustine the Church can never be triumphant in world. Grace alone merits salvation. For Gregory, the Church can be triumphant. Church is embodiment of God on earth. Works lead to salvation. If they don't, why bother?
 - For medieval man, generally, history is a story of progress ending in next world.
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- Question:

- Pie in the sky by and by, or heaven on earth?
Which is it to be?

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- Questions from the Frame of Reference
 - 1. Are you sorry the national-state model of the feudal monarchs won out over the universal rule sought by the Holy Roman Emperors and the Church? Why? Would a world-state today be preferable to nation-states?
 - 2. Europe seems to be reunifying after a millennium of disunity. Is this a good thing?
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