

# THE THIN TWEED LINE

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SCHOLASTICISM AND  
THE DARK AGES

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# The Roman Republic (Review)

- Formed in 450 BCE after the overthrow of the previous dictatorship of Rome
- After the death of Alexander, the Romans would slowly fill the void left.
- By 44 BCE the Republic, almost 400 years old, would control the Mediterranean basin.
- [Julius Caesar](#)'s appointment as perpetual dictator seen as the beginning of the end, despite his murder on 15 March, 44 BCE.

# The Roman Empire (Review)

- **Octavian**, the adopted son of Julius Caesar, defeats his opponents at the **battle of Actium** in 31 BCE, and is installed as emperor of Rome, taking the name **Augustus Caesar**, and starting the empire phase of Roman society.
- By the reign of **Trajan** (98 CE - 117 CE) and **Hadrian** (117 CE - 138 CE) The empire would expand to nearly 6 million square kilometers in size (Washington is 184,000 square kilometers, the U.S. is 9.8 million square kilometers).

# Jesus of Nazareth

- The historical **Jesus** was a hebraic teacher active in the first half of the first century common era. He was born between 4 BCE (the death of Herod the Great) and 6 CE (the Census of Quirinius) in Nazareth.
- He probably spoke Aramaic, was literate, and was trained as a common laborer.
- The difficulty is pinning down historical information about his early years comes from his place as a member of the lower orders of society.

# Jesus of Nazareth

- The Jesus would develop a following among group of Galilean fishermen and women. On his death by crucifixion around 30 CE he was deified by this group.
- Jesus of Nazareth's death is associated with the beginning of an end time by his followers, making early Christianity eschatological. When his followers predictions of an early return by Jesus do not come true, the group begins organizing to spread their religion.
- At some point the group splits permanently from the Jewish religion.

# Eschatological Religions

- Primary tenet of [Zoroastrianism](#), a Persian religion, it entered Judaism during the exilic period between 600 and 500 BCE.
- Christianity gained eschatological views from Judaism, especially the Essene movement.
- The Roman Empire had several eschatological movements present in the 1st and 2nd century CE, including Mithraism and Christianity.
- Eschatological thinking would affect Muslim and Norse thinkers.

# Early Christianity

- Contacts with diaspora Jewish communities, and later with gentiles who read the letters of **Paul (Saul) of Tarsus**, would spread this “religion of the lower class” across the Roman Empire.
- The letters of Paul are the earliest primary source of Christianity, but Paul never met Jesus during his lifetime.
- While the historical route this spread took is difficult to prove (lower classes are rarely written about) by 150 CE the religion would form a significant minority of the Roman Empire.

# Persecution of Christianity

- Early Christianity suffered persecution by the Romans and by the Jewish Community in Judea. The “War of the Jews” in CE 66-70 set a tradition of persecution of Jews, Christian Jews, and Gentile Christians.
- According to Tacitus, Nero blamed the fire in Rome on Christian terrorism and used it as an excuse to persecute this group.
- Emperors such as Marcus Aurelius saw Christian doctrine of immortality of the soul as setting dangerous precedents that would harm Roman social order.

# Constantine I

- Roman empire splits into two halves in 286 CE, capital of the west moves to Milan (Mediolanum) then Ravenna.
- Constantine I (CE 272 - CE 337) ascends throne as Emperor of the Roman Empire in CE 306.
- Constantine defeats several rivals during his early reign, then sets about repairing the Empire. These repair include expansion of its territory, and establishing a new capital in the city of Byzantium, renaming it Constantinople.
- His mother is Christian, and he will legalize the religion in CE 313 with the Edict of Milan, converting to this religion.

# Decline in the West

- Julian (332 CE - 363 CE) is last “pagan” Emperor, pagan religions start to suffer at hands of Christian Emperors after the reign of Julian, his successor Jovian would be restore Christianity and make ancestor worship illegal.
- The split rulership of the Empire resulted in two Emperors holding places. Valentinian I is considered the last strong western Emperor
- 407 CE, last Roman coin minted in Britain, legions slowly withdrawn leading to the “Arthurian” post-roman period.

# Fall of the Roman Empire

- Romulus Augustulus, last of the western Roman Emperors, deposed by Odoacer in 476 CE. This is the traditional end of the western empire.
- Except for a short resurgence under [Justinian I](#) (527 CE to 565 CE) the eastern empire would shrink until its destruction by the Turks in 1453 and the death of the last Roman emperor, Constantine XI Palaiologos, last seen fighting Turkish soldiers hand to hand at the walls of Constantinople.

The Fall of the Western Empire is not the End of Rome, but does see an gradual reduction in commerce, literature, education, building, and travel by common people.

Scholars would call this period the  
Dark Ages.

# 5th-10th Century Europe

- Europe between CE 400 and CE 900 attempted to deal with the withdrawal of the Roman Empire by forming loose alliances based on military power connected by its following of the Universal or Catholic Church.
- This period was a low point for learning and education. Literacy in Europe would fall to lows not seen since before Roman times. Most education was associated with Church administration and the Monastic movements.

# Holy Roman Empire

- In CE 732 Charles Martel, a Frankish warrior, uses horse-based mobility to defeat a Muslim invasion force at the Battle of Poitiers.
- Pepin the Short, Martel's son, was crowned king of the Franks in CE 752 and essentially granted a position of leader of the Roman Empire by the Catholic church.
- Pepin's son Charlemagne would be crowned Emperor of the Romans in CE 800, establishing the Holy Roman Empire. Most Europeans of the time considered themselves to still be Roman subjects.

# Instability in Europe

- The Roman infrastructure left in places like Britain attempted to keep Roman culture and society alive, but was overwhelmed by pagan invasions of Angles, Jutes, Saxons, and later by Norse. Celtic Roman traditions retreated to the far parts of Scotland under the onslaught. Oddly enough, each invasion that displaced Roman culture was “infected” by Christian ideology in a few generations, although it lacked connection to the Roman educational and administrative processes.

# Preservation of Educated Thinking

- Europe after the withdrawal of the Romans nearly lost Greek thinking for nearly six hundred years, but it remained alive in some places.
- Augustine of Hippo is one of the first examples of this preservation. His writings on the relationship of the Christian tradition with Greek thinking would indirectly keep Greek rationalism alive.
- Irish, French, and Latin Monasteries would preserve copies of Greek works, where they would be available to thinkers during the Middle Ages.

# Scholasticism

- Many scholars concentrate on the period from CE 1100 to CE 1500 as a period of Scholasticism, but in reality Scholasticism, or the educational movement that emphasizes the reading and understanding of past works, was the primary method of knowledge transmission in the Roman Empire, and remained in place during the so called “Dark Ages.”
- Christian teachings, based as they were on canonical works, was essentially scholastic in nature, although it did not include Greek writings in its syllabus.

# Scholasticism

- The education system of most of Europe, including the Eastern Empire, was based on training people for the priesthood, or for monastic orders.
- While some priests were probably illiterate, logic dictates that most could not be literate and carry out the duties of their office.
- Literacy, because it depending on knowledge of a foreign language (Latin or Greek), was rare. It was cross cultural though, since the language of literacy was agreed upon.

# Characteristics of Scholasticism

- Scholasticism, by demanding a canon that can be preserved and transmitted, is a stable form of education. Scholastic educational settings change slowly, but are capable of surviving times of chaos, such as existed in Europe for nearly 1000 years.
- Scholasticism forms a fertile ground for movement into a dynamic education system. If scholastic teaching systems begin to question the published truths in an organized fashion, it can lead to a dynamic education system. This happened numerous times in the Dark and Middle Ages.

# Monastic Schools

- Monasteries were established after CE 350 in the Roman Empire, most following a tradition of poverty, service, brotherhood, and learning known as the Cenobitic tradition.
- Later monastic traditions, including that of the Master, Augustine, Benedict, Basil, and Albert would amplify this rule. Monks were expected to be literate, and monastic libraries were maintained by monks who would copy and preserve books in their care.
- Irish monasteries were in particular noted for preserving Greek texts lost to the rest of Christianity.

# Monastic Schools

- Monasteries served as a place where scholarly life could continue isolated from the chaos of the post-Empire world.
- Nobles commonly sent children who were not intended to inherit titles to monastic schools for education.
- Monastic schools trained many Priests in the period between CE 500 and the establishment of abbey schools in the 8th Century.
- Many monastic schools rejected both scholasticism and dynamic educational principals, acting more as grammar schools than centers of higher education.

# Monastic Scholars

- Bede (CE 673 - CE 753) established the standard dating system using the birth of Jesus as a zero point. He wrote *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* a history of England.
- Alciun of York (CE 735 - CE 804) was influential in starting general abbey schools. He taught in the court of Charlemagne and is the supposed author of *Propositiones ad acuendos juvenes*.
- Notker the Stammerer (CE 840 - CE 912) wrote *De Carolo Magno*, a historical account of Charlemagne.

# Charlemagne and Scholastics

- Emperor Charlemagne passed a decree in CE 787 establishing schools in abbeys to train priests and aid in administration. These schools attracted educated people including Irish monks with a tradition of preserving Greek language texts.
- Abbey schools (and monastic schools) started to experiment with an organized curriculum that consisted of the Trivium, and later added the Quadrivium.
- The Trivium is the “three ways” of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, forming the basis for traditional understanding of the Scholastic movement.

# Quadrivium

- The Quadrivium, or four ways, was built on the Trivium, but consisted of four areas of study that used the Trivium for transmission. The four ways were arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy.
- Study of the Quadrivium in scholastic education systems consists of reading the works of past scholars, and trying to rationalize their differences using logic.
- Problems in this rationalism process would require new educational ideas to fix, and would not be clearly established until the Enlightenment.

# Transition to the Middle Ages

- Feudal society grows in Europe around manors whose leaders owe military service and fealty to Kings. The most powerful king in Europe is usually considered the King of the Franks (France).
- In CE 1000 the passing of the millennium gives rise to a religious movement dedicated to retaking the “Holy Land” leading to the invasion of the Muslim Caliphate. This invasion creates an awareness of other cultures in Europe.
- Anglo-Saxon England falls to Norman invasion in 1066 leading to Feudal domination of England.