religious ideals, gave to Byzantine intellectual and artistic life a special quality that accentuated its differentiation from Western European and Moslem civilizations.

During the century from 750 to 850 the Mediterranean world had thus passed through a new phase of its history. By 850 the three distinctive civilizations were much more firmly established in their different ways than had been the case in 750. Especially rapid had been the progress of Western Europeans in the articulation of their cultural, religious, and political life. The Moslems had supplemented their demonstrated military power by developing a Moslem culture and by transforming their faith into a truly universal religion. In spite of being weakened internally by almost constant religious quarrels, the Byzantine Empire had sustained its basic institutions and had kept its political, religious, and cultural identity. By 850 old Rome was almost lost from sight behind the three new societies which were already filling the stage of the Mediterranean world and beginning to experience the pressures and tensions of their new circumstances and relationships.
ABOUT the middle of the ninth century, the Mediterranean area entered a third—and, for this study, final—phase of its evolution away from the unity of Rome toward tripartition into Moslem, Byzantine, and Western European civilizations. The distinctive feature of the century following approximately 850 is not to be found in any remarkable new departures from the already established characteristics of the three civilizations. Each continued to develop in its own particular direction, thus accentuating the course of historical growth that has been outlined in preceding parts of this essay. There was no undoing the effects of the rise of Islam or the Germanization of the West or the transformations of Byzantium under siege. The true significance of the years following 850 lies in an important turn of events within each of the three civilizations. The unity that had consistently been a feature of Byzantine civilization and that had come to be a near reality in Western European and Moslem societies under the early Carolingians and the early Abbasids gave way to diversity. Gradually the internal bonds of each of these very different civilizations relaxed, leaving loose groups of political units
bound together by cultural and religious ties. Much of medieval history is the record of the continued development of the individual parts which made up Islam, Byzantium, and Western Europe, and yet the bonds of unity, originating for the most part prior to the tenth century, remained strong, making it necessary for the historian to continue to think in terms of Western European, Byzantine, and Moslem civilizations.

Fragmentation of the Moslem World

The driving force of Moslem history during the first century of Abbasid rule (750–850) had been a powerful universalism which strove to create political unity, to establish religious conformity, and to assimilate diverse cultural heritages in a single civilization. During the century following 850, however, fissures began to appear in the Moslem political order which clearly warned of the emergence of independent, rival states. But while divisive forces were at work in this one aspect of the Islamic world, religious and cultural developments attained a degree of unity that was equally significant for future Moslem history. By the tenth century Islam had reached what was long to remain its characteristic form—a world of many states, often bitterly opposed to one another, in which individuals living at the far ends of three continents still found common bonds in religion and culture.

Political Disintegration

Even after the mid-ninth century the caliphs at Baghdad persisted in claiming the title of “commanders of the faithful,” once the proud boast of the great Abbasids of the early period. But the highly centralized bureaucracy, efficient provincial administration, sound financial system, and capa-
ble military establishment declined rapidly after 850, with the decay and corruption of the central government at Baghdad and the establishment of independent political regimes in the far-flung provinces of the caliphate.

The integrity of the central government gradually succumbed to court intrigue, religious discontent, and the disloyalty of provincial governors. In this situation, the existing army recruited chiefly from Persia proved inadequate, failing notably to protect the caliphs against frequent plots and assassinations. Hoping to increase his security in his own capital, the eighth Abasid, Al-Mutasim (833-842), introduced into Baghdad a troop of Turks as a palace guard. These Asian nomads, long a formidable foe of the empire along its northeastern frontier, had impressed the caliphs with their skill as warriors. Although theoretically slaves, they soon made the caliphs their prisoners, and puppets.

A few ninth-century caliphs sought to restrain the influence of the Turks. For instance, the same Al-Mutasim went so far as to move the government away from Baghdad temporarily to avoid a clash between his Turkish guard and the native population. But the caliphs were powerless before their greedy minions. The history of the Abasid caliphate quickly devolved into a monotonous record of palace revolts, usually the handiwork of the palace guard but often originating in the intrigue of ambitious harem eunuchs, wives, or officials connected with the vast governmental machinery at the capital, and all having as their object the replacement of one caliph by another. By 945 an ambitious general actually led his war band into Baghdad in an attempt to capture the caliph. "The city of peace," sunk in incessant turmoil, was no longer capable of the proper conduct of the administrative work required to rule
the huge empire. Successful military commanders were soon calling themselves "emir of emirs," indicating their effective superiority over the other servants of the caliph. In this deteriorating situation, the helpless caliphs were pushed into the background and encouraged to enjoy the luxuries for which the court at Baghdad became fabled. By the tenth century independent dynasties, first in North Africa and then in Spain, assumed the title of caliph, thus creating the spectacle of three rival claimants to the succession to the Prophet. The Abbasid caliphs, however, continued their shadowy existence as prisoners of various military cliques until 1258.

This disintegration of the Abbasid empire was hastened by widespread separatist movements which created numerous smaller Moslem states within the crumbling structure. The processes of partition were much too complicated to discuss in detail here; but the results were plain enough, particularly in the late ninth and early tenth centuries. As early as 756 an heir of the Umayyad dynasty had established an independent state in Spain which became so powerful and prosperous that in 929 its ruler claimed the exalted title of caliph. Two other states developed in North Africa in the ninth century, centering in Tunisia and Morocco. In Egypt a separate state was founded in 668 by a Turkish governor sent to that province by the caliph of Baghdad. Thereafter Egypt remained independent and became one of the chief centers of Moslem power, especially after the Fatimid dynasty, originating in North Africa and claiming the title of caliph by virtue of descent from Mohammed's daughter Fatima, seized power in 969. In Syria, Palestine, and Arabia there emerged a succession of petty states whose duration and power varied, turning the
area into a kind of no man's land fought over by Cairo, Baghdad, and Constantinople, and ultimately Western Europe. In the eastern parts of the old Islamic Empire strong ethnic forces among Iranians, Indians, and Turks, and a growing impatience with Abbasid rule contributed to a comparable fragmentation, which produced a number of important independent states. Thus by the tenth century there was really no Moslem Empire; instead there were ten or twelve rival states competing with one another and evolving each in its own path.

This decay of Abbasid authority and the consequent division of the Moslem world opened the way for the intrusion of outsiders. By 850 the momentum of Moslem expansion had run down and Islam began to suffer from foreign aggression by the Turks in the ninth century (once within the Moslem Empire, they became Moslems), the Byzantine Empire in the tenth, and Western Europeans by the eleventh.

But this is not to say that 850 marked the end of Moslem influence on political life of the Mediterranean area in general and Western Europe in particular. The mediaeval Christian kingdoms in Spain arose out of a perpetual state of warfare between the Moslems and Christians, a struggle that affected most of Western Europe. Italian history was influenced by Moslem attacks from Tunisia on Sicily and southern Italy in the ninth century and by counterattacks made by the Italians and the Normans in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The intercourse of Christian Europeans and Moslems in Sicily and Spain, which resulted in the transmission of important cultural influences from the Moslem world to Western Europe, had no less significant impact than the earlier phase of conquest and political dominance.
Unifying Forces

While many forces operated to split the Moslem political world, there still remained the powerful unifying factors of religion and culture, which permeated the separate and often competing political members and bound them together in the transcendent experience of Islam.

Religious life in the Moslem Empire was not completely peaceful in the period following 850. Several belligerent separatist movements challenged the Sunnite orthodoxy of the Abbasids, and religious differences were often encouraged by rebel political leaders seeking possible grounds for rejecting Abbasid overlordship. Especially active were the various Shiite groups which insisted that the true faith had been transmitted by the Prophet through a line of religious leaders descending from Ali, Mohammed's son-in-law. Other movements, stressing asceticism and mysticism, were as widespread as the Shiite sects, if less aggressive.

And yet after admitting the importance of religious separatism, one must recognize that common religious beliefs still bound Moslems into a community. Sunnites, Shiites, ascetics, and mystics all shared basic doctrines, and all followed a fundamental set of laws and ritual practices. Their adherence to the Koran provided a common origin for their religious and political laws. Symbolic of the religious unity of the Moslem world from Spain to India was the daily ritual of bowing toward Mecca and repeating in the same language the same prayer to God. Diverse groups might argue and even spill blood over the intricacies of doctrine, but a single religion gave them a common outlook and a common pattern of behavior.

During the late ninth and tenth centuries important attempts were made by theologians and legal authorities to
define the nature of Islam. From this period emerged some of the major official collections containing the sayings of Mohammed, expositions on the Koran, codifications of Moslem law, and treatises on theology which have continued to provide the bases of Islamic religion. The effort to define the true faith was an international undertaking, involving scholars from all corners of the Moslem world whose works circulated wherever there were believers in Allah.

A second powerful unifying force in the Moslem world was its common culture, which in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries represented one of the major phases in the cultural history of the world. During the early Abbasid period, as has already been noted, the translation into Arabic of Greek, Persian, and Indian literature and learning provided Moslem scholars with a vast store of knowledge. Beginning about 850 they undertook to test this accumulated wisdom and information against the teachings of their religion, and they soon turned to synthesizing the diverse material in encyclopedic collections intended to summarize all knowledge by fields and topics. In the process, Moslem scholars frequently found themselves confronting problems which could be solved only by original contributions, thus diverting them from synthesizing and compiling toward truly creative activity. The results of these monumental studies spread throughout Islam, overriding political barriers and linking educated classes everywhere in common possession of the most up-to-date knowledge available in the contemporary world.

The range of Moslem scholarship during this period was immense. Theology and religious law commanded primary attention, but other fields of scholarship were also extremely active. In the realm of the natural sciences, Moslem scholars,
building on their encyclopedic collections of ancient knowledge, created scientific manuals that were superior to any found elsewhere in the contemporary world. It is possible to detect in these works the origins of our modern scientific knowledge and spirit. The Moslems excelled particularly in medicine, where they supplemented knowledge borrowed from earlier societies by new medical discoveries. The great works of Al-Razi (865–925) and Ibn Sina (980–1037), known in Western Europe as Rhazes and Avicenna, respectively, were typical products of the combination of ancient knowledge and contemporary practical experience. Avicenna's great treatise on medicine was translated into Latin at the end of the twelfth century and remained the chief authority on the subject in the west until early modern times. Medical knowledge was put to practice in numerous hospitals built in nearly every important Moslem city, and at least in some cities the competence of prospective physicians was carefully tested before they were licensed to practice. In the fields of astronomy and chemistry also, Moslem scientists prepared huge summaries of past knowledge brought up-to-date by the addition of their own observations and experiments. The typical Moslem scholar in these fields usually combined astrology and alchemy with more legitimate scientific pursuits, and for many centuries everyone interested in occultism and magic found in Moslem scientific manuals a vast storehouse of material. Because of the ease of travel in the Moslem world, geographers were able to produce more accurate descriptions of the earth and its natural features than had ever been known. Mathematicians also made notable advances, in part because of their unique opportunity to combine Greek and Indian mathematics as a basis for their own. Algebra, invented by Al-Khwarizmi in the ninth century, was the
chief contribution of the Moslem mathematicians, along with the Arabic system of numbering. Steadily perfected in succeeding centuries, these inventions ultimately passed to the West to form the basis for modern mathematics.

Although modern students are especially fascinated by the Moslem scientific achievement, they must not overlook the work of Moslem philosophers and its importance to later philosophical development. Many Arab scholars were captivated by Greek rationalism, particularly that of Aristotle, while others—mostly theologians who were drawn to mysticism rather than to rationalistic theology—found in Greek Neoplatonism an important source for their speculations. These and other Greek philosophers were quickly translated into Arabic. But the chief Moslem philosophers went beyond mere translation, seeking not only to reconcile the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions with each other, but to reconcile both with Moslem theology. This was a difficult task, demanding that the philosopher find a common ground between the revealed tenets of the Islamic faith and the complex logical abstractions of Greek philosophy without destroying either. The efforts of what we might call the Islamic scholastics reached a culmination in the extensive works of Ibn Sina, mentioned above, Al-Ghazzali (1058–1111), and the Spanish Moslem Ibn Rusd (1126–1198), known in the West as Averroës. These philosophers exerted an important influence on both Jewish and Christian theologian-philosophers, who were likewise seeking to reconcile their religious beliefs with Greek philosophy. Because of their own contributions and their influence on others, the Moslem philosophers occupy an important place in the history of philosophy.

The combined works of the Moslem theologians, lawyers, scientists, and philosophers (as well as a considerable number of poets, storytellers, and historians who have been un-
worthily excluded from this essay by lack of space) created a body of knowledge that united in a single cultural community men living far apart geographically. This vast array of knowledge, springing from numerous sources in past ages, was cast in a new mold by Moslem scholars in accord with the tenets of Islamic religion. In its new shape, this knowledge was able to serve as a common denominator among all thinking Moslems and as a justification of their claim to cultural equality with the rest of the world, and perhaps even cultural superiority. The vigor, comprehensiveness, and creativity of Moslem culture in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries was marked, and coupled with a common religion it formed the enduring foundation of Moslem civilization.

This cultural achievement is especially important to a student of Western European history because of its impact on the revival of cultural life in the west. Beginning in the late eleventh and continuing through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, western scholars appropriated huge amounts of Moslem scientific and philosophical knowledge to add to the meager existing store of culture derived chiefly from Latin sources. So strong was the impact of Moslem learning on Europe that historians say it contributed to a "twelfth-century renaissance." This essay is not the place to pursue that theme; but it is proper to remind the reader that the deep significance of ninth- and tenth-century Moslem cultural history lies not only in its role as a unifying force within the Moslem world, but also in its role as a civilizing force far beyond Moslem boundaries.

**Byzantine Recovery**

The Byzantine Empire, reversing its previous tendency to shrink in size and prestige, began about 850 to enjoy the rebirth of political power, religious solidarity, and cultural
vitality which was to assure it a major role in the history of the Mediterranean for many centuries and to extend its influence into a considerable portion of the Slavic world. The primitive Slavs began to draw vital nourishment from Byzantium, especially in religion and culture, even though they successfully maintained their political and ethnic identity. Thus the Byzantine sphere of influence also acquired that element of diversity within unity which became characteristic of the Mediterranean civilization of the late ninth and tenth centuries.

Restoration of Political Power under the Macedonian Dynasty

In 843, as we have seen, the Byzantine government decreed a restoration of the icons in religious services, thereby ending the iconoclastic struggle that had so long divided the empire. The political recovery, which followed almost immediately and continued throughout the tenth and into the early eleventh century, produced a revival of such magnitude that it resulted in the golden age of Byzantine power. Its main architects were the rulers of the Macedonian dynasty which came to power in 867 and which included several of the most distinguished emperors in Byzantine history.

The first two of this line, Basil I (867–886) and Leo VI, the Wise (886–912), devoted their major efforts to redefining and strengthening the internal structure of Byzantine society. Seldom have two men differed more completely. Basil, though of peasant origin, left his home in Macedonia for Constantinople in early manhood. In the great capital he attracted the attention of Emperor Michael III because of his tremendous physical strength and his skill in taming horses. The close association of the two, spiced by an al-

\[ \text{Chart:}\]

Basil I (867–886) \rightarrow Leo VI (886–912) \rightarrow Phocas (963–69) \rightarrow
most constant round of revelry, ended abruptly when Basil murdered Michael in 867 and seized the throne. Leo VI, on the other hand, was a highly educated and refined representative of the intellectual elite of the city.

Despite such dissimilar personalities, both Basil I and Leo VI worked vigorously toward the single goal of reconstituting a strong political regime. Their efforts resulted in an extensive body of legislation, the main import of which was to define anew both absolutist and divinely sanctioned monarchy. This legislation reached its culmination in the publication by Leo VI of the Basilica, a code of laws, written in Greek, which borrowed heavily from Justinian's now outmoded Latin code and improved upon the legal reforms undertaken in the eighth century by Leo III. Supplemented by numerous individual laws and descriptive manuals, this body of legislation served as a constitution for one of the most efficient governmental systems ever constructed. Under the Macedonians, Byzantine monarchy by divine right finally reached its apogee.

If the legislation of the early Macedonians defined absolutism, the rulers of the dynasty effectively put it into practice. From the time of Basil I through the reign of Basil II (976–1025), Byzantine government was a model of efficiency. The emperors were living personifications of the state. Basil II, though undoubtedly the most outstanding, was in many ways typical of the whole dynasty. A contemporary said of him that “he ruled not according to the written laws, but according to the unwritten law of his own spirit.” A man of great energy, intelligence, and ambition, he spent his entire reign in ceaseless activity devoted to the personal direction of military, financial, and diplomatic affairs of the empire. The imperial court at Constantinople consisted of a huge staff of trained experts whose ranks,
duties, and salaries were defined in minute detail. The rigid system of control imposed by this bureaucracy on Byzantine trade, industry, and agriculture assured the state of necessary resources in money and material and brought the empire renewed social stability and economic prosperity. The system of themes was further refined, and it continued to serve as an effective means of provincial administration and military recruitment. Byzantium's highly skilled diplomatic service not only exerted influence far beyond her frontiers but served as a model for the entire civilized world; and her military and naval power became increasingly important in the Mediterranean and in eastern Europe. This revitalized Byzantine government, of course, did not escape occasional threat by court intrigues, military revolts, and popular unrest. Especially difficult were the ambitious aristocratic landowners who struggled incessantly to deprive the peasants of their holdings, to create larger estates, and to defy the central government. Nevertheless, the Macedonian regime was unquestionably the strongest government in the whole Mediterranean area during the ninth, tenth, and early eleventh centuries, as well as one of the most successful examples of absolutism in all history.

Internal reorganization led to a revival of Byzantine influence in international affairs. At the end of the iconoclastic period, the diplomatic and military position of Byzantium was extremely precarious and it continued to remain so under the early Macedonians. The Moslems still exerted dangerous pressure on Sicily, Byzantine Italy, and Asia Minor, and the appearance of a Russian raiding party at the walls of Constantinople in 860 posed a threat from a new quarter. But the Bulgars presented the gravest danger, and Byzantine resources were devoted chiefly to countering their attacks. During the reign of the King Simeon (893–

King Simeon (893–976)
Bulg. King
(927), Bulgar pressure reached a climax. This able king’s determined efforts to create a Bulgar empire equal to that of Byzantium drastically reduced Byzantine influence in the Balkans and forced the imperial government to make humiliating concessions to the Bulgar ruler.

By the second quarter of the tenth century, however, Byzantium was ready for a counterattack. In the Balkan area Byzantine diplomacy and Bulgarian internal problems first neutralized Bulgar power. In the process of isolating the Bulgars, Byzantium created an intricate network of diplomatic relations with Slavic principalities both in the Balkans and in Russia and with such nomadic warrior groups as the Hungarians (Magyars), Patzinaks, and Khazars. Maintaining peace in the Balkans through diplomacy, Byzantium launched a major military attack against the disintegrating Moslem Empire. Under the great emperor-generals Nicephorus Phocas (963–969) and John Tzimisces (969–976) a series of crusading campaigns re-established Byzantine power in northern Syria and Armenia. About the same time a revived Byzantine navy recaptured Crete and Cyprus, thus restoring Greek might in the eastern Mediterranean.

Having forced Islam to retreat in the east, the Byzantine government was free to dispose of the Bulgar threat. During the tenth century the Bulgar kingdom had been subtly drawn into the orbit of Byzantium by religious and cultural penetration. The Emperor Basil II, prompted by Bulgar interference in Byzantine affairs, finally settled the score with the Bulgars by conquering their kingdom and incorporating it in the empire as a province. His vigorous campaigns, which earned for him the name “Bulgar Slayer,” not only removed an ancient enemy but also assured Byzantine dominance over the Slavic population in most of the Balkan

(976–1025) "Bulgar Slayer"
peninsula and in a large area extending northward and eastward through central Europe into Russia. During this same period the Byzantine empire even managed to retain an important foothold in southern Italy, although its major military and diplomatic efforts were directed east and north.

Thus by the time the Macedonian dynasty attained its greatest power under Basil II, Byzantium had been restored to a position of world prominence exceeding that achieved by any previous emperor since the reign of Justinian. The territorial extent of the empire had been increased considerably by the recapture of northern Syria, Armenia, Bulgaria, Crete, and Cyprus. Byzantine might was solidly grounded on a strong government, a prosperous economy, and a stable social order, and, at least politically, the life of Byzantium was assured for a long time to come.

Religious Development

The resolution of the iconoclastic struggle not only resulted in a political revival but also opened an era of religious revival in the Byzantine church. This renascence produced three developments which must command our attention: the widening rift between the patriarchs of Constantinople and the popes of Rome, which presaged the ultimate schism between Eastern and Western churches; the continued accentuation of distinctive aspects of religious practice and thought which set the Greek church apart from other branches of Christianity; and the zealous efforts of the Greek church to promote the strength of the Byzantine government, especially in terms of its influence outside the empire.

The clash between Rome and Constantinople engendered
by the iconoclastic quarrel appeared to have ended with the restoration of the icons. Although the papacy was not consulted by Theodora, still the imperial order of 843 vindicated the papal position and once again placed in power a party interested in peace with Rome. The prospects of concord thus seemed excellent at the middle of the ninth century, but shortly thereafter a new and especially bitter quarrel drove the two churches even farther apart.

Within the Byzantine church itself the iconoclastic quarrel had left a heritage of factionalism. A party of clergymen and monks, dedicated to the eradication of all traces of iconoclasm and to a greater degree of ecclesiastical independence from the imperial government, struggled against a more moderate faction which sought to conciliate religious differences and to co-operate with the civil authorities in unifying Byzantine society. The radical faction, dissatisfied with the usually moderate patriarchs chosen by the emperors, repeatedly invoked Rome's intervention. When the popes became involved, they inevitably justified their action on the grounds of their supreme authority over the universal church. The Byzantine government and most of the clergy did not deny this claim, but often rejected its application when papal decisions interfered with the interests of the Byzantine state and church.

The situation became critical in 858 when Patriarch Ignatius was deposed and replaced by Photius, a learned layman and civil servant of great ability. Photius and the imperial government both appealed to Rome to sanction the change of patriarchs. The pope at that moment was Nicholas I, who held an exalted view of papal power and who was extremely eager to assert his authority wherever possible. After protracted negotiations, he finally refused to
recognize Photius' election and excommunicated the patriarch, actions which, needless to say, were acceptable neither to the imperial government nor to Photius.

Nicholas' condemnation of Photius was in large part dictated by the emergence of a new issue of vital concern to both Rome and Constantinople. Shortly after 860 the possibility of important missionary work suddenly developed in Moravia and Bulgaria, both of which had been partly included in the Roman ecclesiastical province of Illyricum until it was taken away by Emperor Leo III in 732. Nicholas, moved by his ideal of Rome's universal authority, entertained high hopes of directing the conversion of the Moravians and the Bulgars and of binding them to Rome, in spite of the obvious fact that the Byzantine Empire could not permit such a development among its most dangerous enemies. If Greek missionaries could convert the Moravians, Constantinople might establish an important ally in the rear of the dread Bulgars. And if they could convert the Bulgars, a basis might well be formed for more peaceful relations between that dangerous kingdom and the empire. In this vital matter the clear-sighted Photius moved quickly and between 861 and 864 established Greek missionary forces in both Moravia and Bulgaria. His successes deepened the hostility in Rome.

However, the Byzantine missionary victory was not complete. The Greek missionaries in Moravia soon encountered German rivals and sought papal help. The Bulgar king Boris, who was baptized in 864 by Greek clergymen, also turned to Rome, in the hope of gaining papal approval for a separate Bulgar patriarchate. Nicholas exerted every effort to capitalize on these appeals, and Photius fought back lest Byzantine interests be compromised. As the jurisdictional battle widened, the protagonists played increasingly on
doctrinal and disciplinary differences between the Roman and Greek churches, each trying to persuade the new converts that their opponent was guilty of heresy in doctrine and usage.

In 867 a revolution deposed Photius and made Basil I emperor. Nicholas I died shortly thereafter. Basil and his new patriarch, the previously mentioned Ignatius, made a strong effort to resolve the quarrel with Rome in an effort to strengthen the new dynasty. The papacy agreed to reinstate Ignatius, but extracted from the reluctant Greeks a recognition of Rome's final jurisdiction in disputes within the Greek church. This victory was soured, however, by what appeared to be a voluntary reversion of Bulgaria to the jurisdiction of Constantinople. Seizing this opportunity, the Greeks allowed the Bulgars to establish their own independent archbishopric, thus increasing Byzantine religious influences and decreasing whatever chances the papacy might have had in Bulgaria.

In succeeding years the papacy sought to regain control of Bulgaria, and its opportunity seemed to have arrived with the death of Ignatius in 877. Basil I recalled Photius to the patriarchate and sought Rome's approval for the installation of a man previously condemned by both Basil and the pope. Pope John VIII was willing to negotiate, however, and at an important council in Constantinople in 879–880 his legates agreed to a settlement. Photius was recognized as the lawful patriarch, while Bulgaria was restored to Rome's jurisdiction. This agreement marked a pacification between Rome and Constantinople that endured for many years. The Greeks had honored Rome's claims to highest ecclesiastical authority by allowing the papacy to have an important part in deciding the suitability of Photius for the patriarchate and had satisfied Rome's claims on Bulgaria. In
return, the Greek church gained clear recognition for the capable Photius, whose subsequent leadership greatly strengthened the internal structure of the Greek church.

Actually the Greeks gained considerably from the settlement. In spite of their admission of Rome's supremacy, the long quarrel had demonstrated that the imperial government could have its way in choosing patriarchs. The papacy could no longer count on a strong following in the Greek church to bring decisive pressure on the imperial government and its ecclesiastical officials. By skilful diplomacy, tact, and the careful mustering of public sentiment, the Greek government and church could vitiate Rome's control of Greek religious affairs even while admitting Rome's supremacy in principle. The return of Bulgaria to Roman jurisdiction cost the Greeks nothing, for the Bulgars refused to accept Rome's guidance. Perhaps Basil I and Photius realized that the Bulgars were already so powerfully attracted to Byzantine religion and culture that the chance of their accepting Rome's authority was small. In any case, after 880, the Bulgar church developed increasingly close communion with Constantinople at the expense of Rome. Considerable credit must go to Photius for the development of this policy of respectful conciliation toward Rome coupled with the systematic exploitation of each new opportunity to raise the prestige and strengthen the internal organization of the Greek church. The marked success of his policy may explain the violent abuse of this great patriarch by western church leaders in later years.

A long period of relative peace between Rome and Constantinople began with the agreement in 880. The papacy, deeply enmeshed in Italian politics and weakened by the feudal decentralization of ecclesiastical life in the west, was seldom able to interfere in Greek affairs. When, on occa-
sion, discontented elements in Byzantium sought papal aid, the emperors and the patriarchs were usually able to prevent effective intervention without arousing papal ire. No violent dogmatic disputes challenged the authority of the patriarchs. The penetration of Byzantine religious influences among the Slavs of the Balkans, central Europe, and Russia put an indelible stamp on their various states and brought Slavic Christians to Byzantine monasteries, particularly the many communities on Mount Athos, to learn religion and letters from Greek teachers. The military victories of the emperors in the east restored active relationships between the patriarch of Constantinople and the patriarchs of the east. The total effect of these developments was to raise the prestige of the Byzantine church and its patriarchs, to confirm its independent status, and to develop in it a strong sense of leadership among the converts of the Slavic world and the “liberated” Christians in the east.

By the eleventh century, however, changing conditions again sharpened hostilities between Rome and Constantinople and eventually produced the schism that has lasted to the present. Although the story of the final break lies beyond the scope of this essay, it is surely worth noting that the revitalization of the Greek church during the Macedonian era contributed significantly to the ultimate division. Having grown accustomed to independent existence, to a position of high rank, and to a role of leadership, the Byzantine patriarchs felt no need to bend before the demands of the popes, who—particularly during the great reform movement of the eleventh century—became more insistent in their claims to supremacy and more vigorous in their condemnations of Greek religious usages and teachings.
The evolution of the Greek church during the Macedonian era contributed significantly to the growing divergence in the doctrines and practices of the eastern and western churches and marked a second phase of this development. The emperors and their able patriarchs defined clerical usage and encouraged a distinctive religious ethos within their empire. The quarrels between the Greek and Roman churches that developed during and after the schism emphasized chiefly variations in clerical marriage, the wording of the creed, fasting regulations, the order of worship in the Mass, and procedures for administering the sacraments. These outward variations, however, were symbolic of more basic differences in the spirit of the two churches. During the iconoclastic period the Byzantine church had been dominated by puritanical ideas, but after 850 the old Greek elements began to reappear in religious practices. Signs of this new development can be found in the elaborate Greek Orthodox ritual, the exquisite symbolism of Greek religious art, the glories of Greek church music, the intricacies of Greek Orthodox theology, the powerful role of monasticism in Greek religious life, and the concepts of piety exemplified by Greek religious festivals. It is probably safe to say that many of these unique features assumed something like their final form in the posticonoclastic era of the Macedonian dynasty. Certainly the experience of this era dispelled any hopes that the Roman church may have had at the end of the iconoclastic quarrel of imposing Roman usages throughout all Christendom, and it laid the basis for more vigorous disputes over religious practice in later periods.

The third notable stage of the evolution of the schism was the vigorous support by the Byzantine church of the expansion of the absolute power of the state. The original
imperial concept of the church as an arm of the state, and of the emperor as a religious as well as a political leader, had been seriously challenged in the iconoclastic struggle, when the emperors attempted to impose a generally unpopular religious policy. Considerable segments of the Byzantine church resisted, and the end of the iconoclastic quarrel was in a sense a victory for the church over the state. During the Macedonian period the emperors regained command of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but they used their authority with great circumspection, manifesting deep respect for the church, seldom interfering in doctrinal affairs. This policy was explicitly stated by one Macedonian emperor, who said, "I recognize two authorities in the world, priesthood and empire; the Creator of the world entrusted to the first the care of souls and to the second the control of men's bodies. Let neither authority be attacked, that the world may enjoy prosperity."

In reality, however, emperors did not need to coerce the church, for the chief religious figures of the ninth and tenth centuries felt a fervent responsibility for the welfare of the state. They bent every effort to guide the populace to obedient service of the emperor, who was exalted on all occasions as God's servant and whose absolute authority was vigorously defended. And they were especially eager to support Byzantine foreign policy. Greek missionaries regularly sought to bind their new converts to Constantinople and thus were largely responsible for the close ties uniting many Slavs to Byzantium. The complete union of church and state became final during the Macedonian period. Seldom in all history can one find a better example of a state church operating within its proper sphere to exalt the ruler and to inculcate the faithful with loyalty to the state. From the ninth century onward Byzantine church-
state relations present a marked contrast with the bitter struggles between church and state which divided Western European society throughout much of the Middle Ages.

Cultural Renaissance

The resurgences of Byzantine society in the Macedonian period was further highlighted by a brilliant cultural revival. During the long era when Byzantium was under siege and torn by internal religious quarrels, the Byzantine world was able to guard its precious heritage of classical Greek culture and early Christian learning of Greek origins. With the resolution of religious quarrels and the revival of political vigor in the middle of the ninth century, however, scholars and artists drew inspiration from this ancient heritage to create perhaps the greatest phase of Byzantine culture.

Beginning in mid-ninth century this revival was marked especially by the intensification of scholarly activity at the university in Constantinople. Its curriculum was focused on a study of Greek classics, and its teachers included the best intellects of the day, led by the great patriarch Photius. The imperial government, always the chief patron of learning and art, produced some of the great scholars of the era from the ruling dynasty itself. Leo VI the Wise and Constantine VII were both learned men, distinguished scholars, and productive writers. The state supported the great school in the capital, where teachers were adequately paid and all students were accepted free of charge. An emphasis on classical learning, primarily literature, science, and philosophy, gave Byzantine culture of the Macedonian period a marked secular spirit, even though religious studies were avidly pursued in the great libraries of the monasteries.

Among the many manifestations of the Macedonian ren-
 Internal Division  

Renaissance, probably the most typical consisted of encyclopedic compilations drawn from the vast literature of ancient Greece. Like their Moslem counterparts in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries, Byzantine scholars compiled manuals on nearly every conceivable subject: law, public administration, military science, history, natural sciences, agriculture, medicine, court ceremony, saints’ lives, ethics, linguistics, and diplomacy among many others. Such a list makes it obvious that the scholars were inspired by a desire to serve their society in practical matters. Such work required extensive libraries, and as a consequence the Macedonian period was distinguished by great collections, especially of classic Greek literature. The use of such material, of course, necessitated careful linguistic training. Since by the tenth century the Greek spoken in Byzantium differed considerably in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar from that of the classical authors, linguistic studies were revived to train students first to comprehend the ancient authors and then to imitate their literary style. Numerous commentaries were drawn up to elucidate ancient texts and to reconcile them with Christian teachings and experience, but many of these reflected a vein of humanism, sophistication, and secularism which reveals the deep impact of the ancient Greek authors on their explicators.

Although this golden age was not primarily creative, the impetus supplied by study and compilation carried over into more original work. A remarkable series of historians recorded the actions of past and current rulers. Numerous biographies were written, especially by monastic authors who specialized in lives of the saints. And the endless theological discussion often presented fresh interpretations of doctrine. Much of the large body of poetry produced in this period followed classical models, and in the tenth cen-
tury a native Byzantine epic poetry emerged. But by far the most profound inspiration is to be found in the poems and hymns which express the intense personal emotions and deep piety of the religious revival.

It was also in this era that some of the chief stylistic features of Byzantine art were perfected. To their adaptation of classical line and form, the Byzantines added a taste and talent for rich ornament and striking color that transformed what began as a sterile imitation of Hellenistic models into an original and powerful style. The most representative monuments of the Macedonian period are the magnificent churches of Constantinople, their walls covered with mosaics and paintings which not only portray with startling realism the great dramatic episodes of Christian tradition but dazzle the beholder with glowing jewel-like colors accented with gold and black. There was also a lively secular art, expressed chiefly in palaces and public buildings, and although less of this remains there is still enough to establish its distinctive qualities. Tenth-century Byzantine art and architecture were also much admired outside the empire. They were imitated in almost complete detail in Western Europe and the Slavic world and exerted in each an important influence on the development of artistic taste.

The Byzantine revival of the ninth and tenth centuries represented a cultural achievement far surpassing anything produced by the Carolingian renaissance and only equaled by the Moslem. Furthermore this Byzantine renaissance assured the survival of the ancient Greek heritage in its original form rather than in the Arabic or Latin versions by which it reached Islam or Western Christendom. Western European scholars of later periods, especially during the Renaissance, depended almost entirely on Byzantine learning to provide access to the Greek classics. At the
same time the Byzantine renaissance marked a vital step in the long process of creating the unique Hellenized culture which was to flourish in and around Constantinople.

**Byzantium and the Slavic World**

Restored to the rank of a major power, Byzantium after 850 was able to create a new sphere of influence in a considerable portion of the Slavic world, which served to compensate for losses in Asia, Africa, and Western Europe during the preceding centuries and at the same time to change completely the destiny of the Slavs.

Byzantine influences penetrated the Slavic world on many levels. From the sixth century onward Slavic tribes crossed Byzantium's Balkan frontier and settled among Byzantine communities over much of the peninsula. The newcomers quickly adopted their neighbors' superior ways of life. Even the constant clash of arms between the two groups resulted in some useful cultural contact through the Byzantine policy of settling Slavic prisoners of war all over the empire. There was also a steady stream of diplomatic exchanges, in which Slavic princes journeyed to Constantinople and Byzantine legates and their retinues traveled to barbarian capitals. The pomp of the Byzantine court, the brilliance of Byzantine society, and the splendor of Constantinople almost inevitably inspired Slavic princes to emulate Byzantium in their primitive capitals. Byzantine diplomacy was often successful in bringing Slavic principalities into the imperial sphere of influence, thereby opening permanent channels of communication, along which the traders and the products of the empire moved to a large part of the Slavic world.

The chief bond between Byzantium and the Slavic world, however, was Christianity. The conversion of the Slavs in-
olved a long process, which began when they first settled along the frontier of the late Roman empire. For a considerable period the Byzantine church made no concerted missionary effort, and the process of Christianization among the Slavs was very slow. Not until the middle of the ninth century was a more aggressive policy established under the patriarch Photius. His chief agents were the scholar-clergy men Cyril and Methodius, rightly called the "apostles of the Slavs," whom he sent to Moravia in 862 in answer to a request by a Moravian prince for missionary assistance. Cyril and Methodius bent their major efforts toward developing a Slavic liturgy and an instructional literature suitable for the Moravians. To achieve this end the missionaries adapted the Greek alphabet to the needs of a written Slavic language, thus flattering the Slavs and convincing them that they were acquiring their own version of Christianity. But more important, this linguistic development also made possible the transmission of the whole vast learning of Byzantium to the Slavs through their various languages. The missionary work of Cyril and Methodius was not permanent in Moravia, and by 885 their disciples were driven out by Germans propagating Roman Christianity. Finding a welcome refuge in Bulgaria, however, they pursued with great vigor the task of creating a Slavic Christianity and a Slavic culture, both derived from Byzantium.

The conversion of Bulgaria was begun in 864 with the baptism of the Bulgar ruler by Byzantine clergymen. For a brief period the Bulgars wavered between Roman and Greek Christianity, but ultimately were won to Constantinople by the Greek willingness to allow them considerable organizational independence, even including a Bulgar patriarch, and to approve their use of the new Slavic liturgy. The desire of the Bulgar rulers to strengthen Christianity
led to considerable borrowing from Byzantium for nearly a century after their conversion. Numerous Greek religious writings were translated into Bulgarian and formed the starting point for a national literature. Byzantine models were used for monasteries built in Bulgaria, and even for such activities of the monks as the writing of saints' lives and devotional books. Most of the churches also were frank copies of Greek architecture and decorative art.

Byzantine influences also began to make important inroads into Russia in the Macedonian period. The empire had long had an interest in the various inhabitants of southern Russia, especially the Asiatic nomads who swept across this area from time to time. In 860 Constantinople was attacked by a people calling themselves the Rhos (whence came our word “Russian”). Who these people were is not entirely clear, but they may have had some connection with new principalities which emerged in Russia during the ninth century. It was at this time that the Swedes (known as Varangians in Russian history) established cities along the river routes connecting the Baltic with the Black Sea and Constantinople. Kiev soon became the most important of these, its rulers extending their authority over the surrounding Slavs to create a powerful principality. A lively relationship developed between Constantinople and Kiev. Sometimes this took the form of war, resulting in several attacks on Constantinople, and at other times the form of alliances which provided the emperors with powerful support against the Bulgars. There were always numerous commercial exchanges between Kiev and Constantinople, and on a few occasions Kievan princes and princesses visited Constantinople to view the wonders of the city and receive the honors of its emperors. Missionary parties from the empire also made their way into the principality of Kiev.
and won converts in spite of the strong Roman Christian influences which had penetrated Russia from Bulgaria, Moravia, and Western Europe. Finally, the conversion of Prince Vladimir to Greek Christianity and his marriage to Emperor Basil II's sister in 988 or 989 opened the way for the uninterrupted flow of cultural and religious influences of Byzantium northward into the heart of the Slavic world which was maintained and augmented by the organization of a Russian church in close alliance with the Byzantine hierarchy.

Examples of the rapid spread of Byzantine culture in the Slavic world are plentiful. Law codes were created by Slavic princes on Byzantine models. A considerable religious literature, translated from Greek, began to circulate in Slavic tongues. Churches were built and adorned in the Byzantine style. Monasticism took root among the Slavs. The courts of the native princes were modeled after the Sacred Palace in Constantinople, and the conduct of government followed Byzantine patterns. The manners of Byzantine society were aped by Slavic aristocracies. The eastern Slavs particularly made rapid progress in the ninth and tenth centuries under Byzantine influence, but the incipient Slavic states managed nonetheless to retain extensive independence. As a rule Byzantium did not attempt their political conquest, but rather was content to attach them to Byzantium as satellites incapable of breaking the magnetic pull of religion, art, and learning. This orientation toward the north was the final step in the evolution of the new Byzantine civilization.

Partition of the Carolingian Empire

In the ninth century Western Europe's dream of a Christian commonwealth ruled by a single emperor was shat-
tered by the disintegration of the Carolingian empire into a series of successor states. So devastating was the collapse that even these broke up into political fragments, thus inaugurating feudal disorder in the West. The shock, however, was not great enough to sunder the unifying bonds of Roman Christianity and the Latin culture which had emerged from the Carolingian renaissance.

**Emergence of the Western European Kingdoms**

Evidences of weakness in the empire, by no means lacking toward the end of Charlemagne’s reign, became ominous in the reign of Louis the Pious (814–840). This deeply religious and idealistic son of Charlemagne, as has already been noted, began his reign by trying to solidify the empire and to exalt the office of emperor. His chief support came from a diligent coterie of ecclesiastical and lay leaders who shared his belief in the need for a powerful Christian state and his conviction that it must be grounded in Christian idealism. The emperor and his supporters, however, failed to capture the imagination of his disparate subjects scattered across an empire stretching from Saxony to Rome and from Brittany to central Germany. Even though many had probably felt an identification with the great warrior and lawgiver Charlemagne, they now failed to understand what his less colorful son Louis, surrounded by priestly confidants, was trying to accomplish. The widespread indifference and even hostility to the dream of Louis the Pious was revealed the first time it encountered a serious issue.

The succession problem presented just such a test. The Carolingian ideal clearly demanded that the empire remain unified under a single ruler. But Germanic custom, which exercised a powerful influence in shaping the daily
lives of the Carolingians and their subjects, dictated that a kingdom was only a piece of property and must, therefore, at the death of the king be divided among his sons. Louis himself wavered in his devotion to the principle of unity, torn by the compelling pull of custom reinforced by the ambitions of his sons and nobles. In 817 he pronounced in favor of imperial unity by issuing an edict which provided that his oldest son, Lothair, would inherit the imperial title and the largest portion of the empire. His two other sons were to be assigned small kingdoms within the empire and under the overlordship of Lothair. Almost from the beginning the younger sons intrigued for a more equitable division. The position of Lothair and his imperialist supporters was seriously compromised when Louis acquired a fourth son, born of a second wife, and tried to provide a patrimony for him in a new partition in 829. From 830 until his death in 840 Louis' government was paralyzed by a series of revolts prompted by his sons. Increasingly the nobles joined in these affairs because they found the royal contestants willing to buy their allegiance with grants of land.

Lothair did succeed his father as emperor in 840 and held that title until his death in 855, but Louis' two other surviving sons, Charles and Louis, revolted against their brother. After a bitter struggle they forced Lothair, in 843, to agree to the Treaty of Verdun, which assigned to Charles a large kingdom of the West Franks, embracing most of modern France, and gave Louis an equally sizable kingdom of the East Franks, lying east of the Rhine. Lothair retained a long strip of territory stretching from the mouth of the Rhine down its west bank and into Italy. He was conceded the imperial title, but its significance was almost wholly vitiated by the fact that the other two rulers were given
virtual independence. In effect, three kingdoms had been carved out of the Carolingian empire.

For a few years after 843 the three brothers managed to maintain peaceful relations and to co-operate on the basis of mutual problems and interests. The church, long faithful to the ideal of Christian unity, worked hard to inspire the Carolingians with the spirit of co-operation. Each king, moreover, was troubled by internal rebellion and the savage attacks of new invaders. North African Moslems began to raid Italy, even entering Rome in 846, and the awesome Vikings from the shores of the North and Baltic seas sailed in larger and larger groups into the river valleys of Europe to spread terror and destruction by bold and sudden strikes which the kings could not contain.

Not even these common concerns, however, were sufficient to preserve the fraternal co-operation. In 855 Lothair died, dividing his elongated kingdom among three sons and thus creating three new kingdoms of Lorraine, Burgundy, and Italy alongside the existing kingdoms of the West Franks (France) and East Franks (Germany). One of his sons, Louis II (855–875), assumed the imperial title along with that of king of Italy. He devoted his energies mainly to a heroic defense of Italy against the Moslems, seldom looking across the Alps to the main body of the old empire. Perhaps he realized that nothing could be gained from that area, which was rapidly sinking into chaos. Charles the Bald, ruler of the West Franks, faced grave threats of rebellion from his nobles, who were abetted by his brother, Louis the German, and he was unsuccessful in attempts to curb the Viking invasions which were especially savage in the territory of the West Franks. Although Louis was able to invade Charles's kingdom on two occasions, he had almost as much difficulty with his own minions in the king-

\[ \text{Charles the Bald, Ruler of West Franks (France)} \]

\[ \text{(son of Louis the Pious)} \]
dom of the East Franks. Both Louis and Charles spent considerable energy trying to seize the territories of their nephews, the kings of Lorraine and Burgundy. They achieved partial success when they divided Lorraine in 870, but their victory was a costly one in terms of the concessions demanded by the nobles, concessions which could only hasten the disintegration of the empire.

After the death of the emperor Louis II in 875, Carolingian history was dominated by two equally disheartening tendencies. On the one hand, a few hardy adherents of the old imperial ideal, led by the papacy, conducted a futile search for a prince, preferably one of Carolingian descent, upon whose head the imperial crown might be placed. On the other, within each of the several Carolingian kingdoms there was a collapse of effective central government, which permitted powerful royal vassals to acquire virtual independence and ultimately encouraged them to elect as their kings men who seemed no better suited to the office than the last “do-nothing” Merovingians.

The papal quest for effective emperors was a failure. Each successive emperor after 875 had less influence on the whole empire than his predecessor; the last holder of the imperial title was nothing more than a petty Italian king whose power even in Italy was largely undermined by the growing strength of the Italian nobility. By 924 the Carolingian dream of Western Christendom as an effective political unit had vanished. Even the imperial throne was left vacant from 924 until 962, when the crown was assumed by Otto the Great, a German prince whose imperial domain embraced only the kingdom of the East Franks and that part of Italy lying roughly north of Rome. This general dissolution of unified political power was especially serious for the popes, who found themselves lacking a
protector and threatened by the ambitions of the Roman nobles. In addition, Moslem raids continued in Italy, and the appearance of a new invading force, the Magyars (or Hungarians), deepened the political chaos.

North of the Alps, the Carolingian kingdoms disintegrated rapidly under the mounting pressure of Viking and Magyar raiders and the increasing independence of the great nobles. The Carolingian successors of Charles the Bald (died 877) and Louis the German (died 876) were incompetent and short-lived, devoting their limited talents mainly to schemes to deprive their relatives of territory. The Carolingian sense of responsibility for the administration of justice, promotion of religion, defense of the realm, and supervision of vassals had nearly vanished. The functions of government were increasingly usurped, or assumed by default, by powerful nobles, who made the traditional public offices hereditary, established the principle that royal grants of land were irrevocable, and in turn created their own circles of vassals. The principle of strong monarchy synonymous with earlier Carolingian rule was being undermined at a rapid rate.

For a brief period between 881 and 888 the Carolingian dynasty seemed destined to recover when Charles the Fat, son of Louis the German, was successively elected king of the East Franks, king of Italy, emperor, and finally king of the West Franks, thereby reuniting the whole empire under a single Carolingian ruler. But this was only a fortuitous interlude. Charles's early death in 888 resulted not only in the revival of the separatist trend of the preceding half century but also in widespread reaction against the Carolingians. Even before the death of Charles the Fat, the West Frankish nobles elected Eudo, count of Paris, as their king, his chief recommendation being his strong defense of
Paris against the Vikings. The Carolingian dynasty was later restored to the West Frankish throne and lasted until 987, but the election of 887 indicated that the hereditary right of the Carolingians to the throne was no longer admitted by the nobles and clergy. In the East Frankish kingdom the last ruler of Carolingian descent was Louis the Child; when he died in 911 the powerful East Frankish nobles and clergy elected the duke of Franconia, a non-Carolingian, as their king. In Italy, Provence, and Burgundy non-Carolingian kings were also elevated to the royal thrones.

And thus the heirs of Charlemagne dissipated their heritage. The imperial title created in 800 to unite Western Christians was by 900 held by a weak Italian king whose voice commanded little attention in Italy and none elsewhere. The empire had given place to the new nations of France, Germany, Italy, Burgundy, and Provence. Although these kingdoms were to bear the stamp of their Carolingian origin for many centuries, their emergence in the ninth century announced a new stage in European history.

To round out the picture of progressive political division of the West a word must be said here about the political fate of the rest of Western Europe. During the ninth century the world witnessed the grouping of Scandinavian war tribes into the three distinct kingdoms of Norway, Denmark, and Sweden. These turbulent realms, under the nominal rule of weak kings produced seemingly endless waves of Viking adventurers who attacked accessible parts of Western Europe, Russia, the British Isles, Iceland, Greenland, and perhaps even North America between the late eighth and the early tenth centuries. Many of the raiders ultimately settled in the lands they ravaged, among them
Norman France, northern England, Ireland, Iceland, and the regions of Novgorod and Kiev in Russia. In these far-flung places the Vikings rapidly established themselves and played vital roles in European history before they were absorbed by the local population. In spite of these emigrations the Scandinavian kingdoms continued to develop and increasingly took an important part in Europe’s political development.

The ninth century was crucial in England’s early history. Into the chaos of petty states founded by earlier Germanic conquerors, the Vikings launched a series of devastating raids that first resulted in the conquest and occupation of much of northern Britain and then produced a strong national reaction. The hero of this recovery was Alfred the Great (871–899), whose defense of Wessex in southern England saved his kingdom from the Vikings and earned for him the title of “founder” of England. His immediate successors led the forces of Wessex in a counter-attack which reconquered northern England and created a unified English kingdom to join the other independent states emerging in Western Europe.

Toward Feudal Society

The collapse of the Carolingian empire represented much more than the division of Western Europe into independent kingdoms. It was, in fact, only the most spectacular manifestation of the fundamental change in the political, social, and economic structure of society which finally produced the feudal regime. Although by no means uniform throughout the West, the process of feudalization generally involved certain broad developments: the limitation of monarchical power, the personalization of political obligations, the identification of political power with land-
holding, the articulation of a warrior-ruler nobility controlling a dependent serf population, and the growth of the manorial regime. Each of these principal aspects of what was to become the feudal regime had appeared and taken root before, thereby making what happened in the ninth century only the final denouement of a long evolutionary process.

One marked characteristic of the deepening crisis of the ninth and tenth centuries was the progressive limitation of royal authority, both legally and practically, through the development of vassalage. Although the great Carolingians had surrounded themselves with a large number of men bound to them by special oaths of loyalty, they did not consider this arrangement a limitation of their sovereignty. While these "vassals," as such special supporters came to be called, were favored by the king and expected to serve him, they were still subject to public authority. During the reign of Louis the Pious a subtle change began to effect this situation. Royal vassals, abetted by churchmen seeking to influence governmental policy, began to insist on a more and more explicit definition of what the king owed them. Each harassed Carolingian was forced to accede to these demands to buttress his strength against competing Carolingians. Inexorably, monarchy assumed the nature of a contractual arrangement: vassals on one side claiming rights and admitting duties, and kings on the other side also possessing rights and acknowledging reciprocal responsibilities. With increasing boldness, vassals repudiated their oaths of allegiance to the king on the grounds that he had failed to meet his obligations to them. Such acts—which not so long before would have been regarded as a serious breach of duty—were often sanctioned by legal enactments and by custom. The king was no longer a sov-
ereign; he was now a lord, supported normally by those inhabitants of his kingdom who owed him personal allegiance but not necessarily by the growing number who had become vassals of other lords. The last Carolingian kings were so weak that they could provide little justice or security for their subjects, leaving the more vulnerable with little choice but to pledge themselves to strong individuals in return for the promise of protection. Eventually these arrangements produced an intricate network of personal relationships between subjects and lords without significant reference to the king and his authority.

Thus monarchical power all but disappeared, and real political power gravitated rapidly into the hands of great landholders. Increasingly vassals demanded grants of land or offices from their lords to provide them with the means of fulfilling their obligations to him, a development already sanctioned by earlier Carolingian practice. Gradually such grants, or fiefs, as they were called, became virtually inalienable, especially after they were made hereditary in the late ninth century. As a result this process of granting fiefs to vassals badly depleted royal resources, particularly during the troubled period of the ninth century, when the kings, seeking desperately to win followers, even granted royal offices as hereditary fiefs. Those nobles able to exact large grants from the king usually subdivided them into lesser fiefs, thereby creating political entities independent of the monarch and dependent primarily upon themselves. Soon the right to political authority was claimed as a necessary prerogative of the vassal. All these factors contributed to the fragmentation of political power, the virtual destruction of a central public authority, and the further entrenchment of the landholding nobles.

The practical consequences of the development of vas-
salage and fiefs in the Carolingian empire nearly defy description. In general, each Carolingian successor state split into many virtually independent principalities, which often coincided with the administrative subdivisions of the old Carolingian empire. The counts and dukes, who were among the most important Carolingian officers, had been charged with exercising royal power in certain well-defined administrative districts and were usually given financial support by grants of land. From the king's point of view the success of this system depended upon the willingness of the vassal to respect the king's superior authority. The strong Carolingians commanded sufficient respect to make the system work, but by the mid-ninth century the situation had begun to change. The counts and dukes increasingly insisted on their rights as vassals, often giving those rights precedence over their duties as royal officials. They exacted from the king larger landholdings, from which they derived greater independent power. Most important of all, they began to treat the prerogatives of office—collecting taxes and fines, for instance—as a part of their fiefs to be used as personal income, and they insisted that both their land and their political functions were hereditary. The kings, carried along by developing custom and their increasing need for support, were unable to resist these demands. Thus, by the beginning of the tenth century the kingdoms of France, Germany, Italy, Burgundy, and Provence had split into clearly definable principalities which were to play an important role in the later history of each kingdom. Treated as private domains by the vassals who ruled them, these fiefs were virtually independent substates under the nominal overlordship of the king. Within each substate, moreover, the same process occurred, and the vassals of the counts and dukes arrogated to them-
selves, in turn, independent power over their smaller fiefs, just as their lords had done with their counties and duchies. Some lords were powerful enough to control their vassals, but most were not. In this process the concept of public authority nearly vanished, and political rights and duties could only be expressed in terms of the relations of lords and vassals to each other and the land.

And yet monarchy survived the atomization of public authority into private power. Since the only legal justification for the existence of great fiefs derived from the authority of the crown, the great dukes and counts, however little intention of respecting royal power they may have had, were always careful to elect a king. Accordingly, at the beginning of the tenth century, the fragmented society of Western Europe recognized kings whose only effective power derived from their rights as feudal lords. From 900 onward, much of Western European history is the story of how these kings used their basic feudal rights, buttressed by the surviving Carolingian tradition that the king was his subjects' leader in war and their guardian in matters of faith, to reconstitute strong monarchies—or to put it more accurately, strong feudal monarchies.

The transformation of the political order from centralized monarchy toward greater and greater dependence on personal relationships strongly influenced the social development of Western Europe. The number of men who could hold land and exercise political authority—that is, participate fully in feudal society—was small. Within the ranks of this elite of lords and vassals there rapidly developed a characteristic pattern of life deriving directly from the feudal system—fighting, governing, managing land, and retaining status among peers. The virtues proper to this life were carefully cultivated—bravery, loyalty, prowess
in war, concentration on local concerns, and independence of action. Not until the tenth and eleventh centuries did this warrior-ruler nobility give conscious expression to its feudal ideals, but by 900 an aristocracy of lords and vassals had assumed effective leadership of Western Europe.

The fate of the vast bulk of the population was clearly settled by the new emphasis on landholding and localism which hastened the regime of large estates. With land the only source of wealth, the feudal nobles depended entirely on its successful exploitation for their power. Increasingly they concentrated on the development of the large, self-sufficient estates or manors that had been emerging since Roman times. By the end of the ninth century the important lord or vassal controlled many manors, with part of the land of each reserved to supply his needs. The rest of the land was divided into tenancies granted to peasants who paid for the use of their plots by returning produce to the lord and by assuming the burden of tilling the lord's portion of the manor. To assure the orderly operation of this system, the peasants for the most part were legally attached to the manors as serfs. Their political and social life was necessarily directed by the manorial lord, thus instituting the practice of private local government on each manor. Although the noble was complete master of the manor, his fortune depended upon the labor of his serfs, a fact which encouraged a paternalistic attitude toward the serf's welfare but which did not prevent the development of a distinct peasant social order. Even though the predominance of self-contained estates fragmented Europe economically as well as politically, and transformed it into a wholly agricultural society, the new manorial system did supply Europe's material needs and create a stable world where the weak found protection and the means
of sustenance amidst the confusion of military and political anarchy.

Common Bonds in Western European Society

The disappearance of the strong Carolingian government in the ninth century not only disrupted the political unity of the empire, but also dissolved the ties linking Europe’s peripheral areas to a Carolingian center. The emergent feudal order, the new invasions of Europe, and the failure of Carolingian idealism also threatened the religious and cultural ties linking Western Europeans together. Nevertheless, the religious and cultural development of the last half of the ninth and early tenth centuries did leave a residue of unifying forces that must be taken into account.

The last half of the ninth century saw a continuing development of Roman Christendom. The central theme in ecclesiastical history was a clearer definition of the church’s claim to guide Western society. Under the leadership of the great Carolingian rulers, Roman doctrine, liturgy, and discipline had spread over most of the West, and the idea that service to Christian ends was the ultimate objective of society took deep root. This trend had exalted the Roman church, but it had also imposed certain restrictions on it. Charlemagne and Louis the Pious conducted themselves as virtual superpriests endowed with the right and duty to discipline clergymen, issue religious legislation, and dictate moral life, but after 840 the church asserted its independence more vigorously by taking advantage of the opportunity created by the decay of Carolingian authority. Many bishops intervened in the quarrels of the Carolingian family. They boldly compiled collections of church law which were intended to establish ecclesiastical discipline but which had the added effect of laying a claim of the clerical hierarchy to direct political activity. These laws increasingly guarded
the right of the church to control its own property. Especially significant was the reinvigorated papal spirit of independence. On the basis of events in the reigns of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, the popes assumed the right to bestow the imperial crown, and by the late ninth century they were choosing emperors. They worked actively to curb the family quarrels of the ruling dynasty and to censure kings for unbecoming conduct. Careful study of the careers of popes Nicholas I (858–867) or John VIII (872–882) reveals that they had reversed the situation existing under Charlemagne by making the priest the guardian of peace, order, and unity, and the king a servant of the church destined to labor for those ends. Even so, papal aspirations were rudely checked early in the tenth century when the rampant Italian nobles gained control of the papacy and turned it into a feudal prize, and by that time most bishops had become so deeply implicated in the feudal system that their interests were largely local and private.

The church, however, had won important victories for the principle of its independence from lay authority before the feudalization of society reduced the state to anarchy. Against the background of the ultimate dissolution of political order the church transformed its growing spirit of freedom into a more fruitful sense of responsibility for the fate of society, and this became the major force of unity in the West. The very spirit of church teaching centered around the brotherhood of those baptized in Christ, the obligation of all to pay homage to God, and the common fate of all men in the hereafter. The ability of the church to divorce itself from complete identification with the Carolingian dynasty after Carolingian rulers forgot about service to these ideals made it the single remaining institution symbolic of the common character of Western so-
ciety. In this respect Western Christendom did not differ too much from the Moslem world; there too, common beliefs, practices, and ethical values still remained the signs of a community superimposed on a confusing array of political powers.

The church served as a unifying force in another important way during the late ninth century by continuing missionary efforts among those who lived on the periphery of Western Europe. In spite of all the troubles of the era, new converts were steadily being won in Scandinavia and among the Slavs living in eastern Europe. The successful missionaries, often Benedictine monks, spread Western usages and doctrines and thus forged a link between the new converts and the "old" world.

Latin culture, too, continued to function as a common bond during the last half of the ninth century; ironically, the Carolingian renaissance bore some of its finest fruits in this period. After the death of Charlemagne, his brilliant court circle declined and the center of cultural activity in the empire shifted to the monasteries. In these retreats work went on in the old pattern: Latin was studied, books copied, theological treatises composed, and history and biography written. Each monastery drew its membership from a wide territory and maintained constant contact with scholars in other monasteries throughout the west. The monasteries of the Frankish empire became refuges for a large number of scholars forced to flee from England and Ireland by the Viking attacks. These refugees brought with them precious books that enriched the monastic libraries and a range of talents that added depth and variety to intellectual and literary life. In the late ninth and early tenth centuries scholarly and literary activity shifted more into religious channels than had been the
case during Charlemagne's day. Fundamental theological questions were discussed with insight and skill. Probably the most provocative theologian of the period was an Irishman, John Scotus Erigena, who wrestled with the problem of predestination and free will. Paschasius Radbertus composed an important work on the nature of the eucharist, which provoked a spirited quarrel among other theologians. The works of Agobard, Hincmar, and Jonas—all three important bishops—discussed problems in political theory concerning church-state relations and the nature of royal power. Histories and biographies, dealing in most instances with particular monastic houses and religious leaders, were produced. In spite of the increasing religious emphasis, however, there still remained a vital interest in the Latin classics. One of the most influential figures of the era was Rhabanus Maurus, a disciple of Alcuin, who carried on his master's interest in education and the liberal arts.

In these circumstances the church reasserted the domination of cultural life it had enjoyed prior to the Carolingian renaissance and again was able to stress those views and ideas that served its own interests. If the cultural achievements of the West in the ninth and early tenth centuries could not rival the brilliance of the Byzantine or Moslem worlds, they at least sustained a tradition of learning and a kind of education which, ultimately, were to provide the bases for Western Europe's reassertion of its cultural strength.

The picture of Western Europe in the last part of the ninth and the early tenth centuries would not, however, be complete without some mention of the effect of the political and social disorganization on the religious and cultural life of the period. The feudalization of lay society
had powerful repercussions in the clerical organization of the times. High ecclesiastical offices were converted into fiefs and as a consequence often fell into the hands of ambitious secular nobles interested chiefly in their material exploitations. Church dignitaries holding feudalized offices were required to render all the obligations customary in the feudal system, including the basic duty of military service, and often found themselves slighting their spiritual functions in favor of secular affairs. Many tenth-century commentators on religious life complained that the secularization of the church hierarchy contributed to a decline in the spiritual life of the great mass of Christians in Western Europe. The civil wars and the barbarian invasions of the ninth and tenth centuries resulted in the destruction of many churches and monasteries, especially in England and northern France. The evolving feudal customs did not always nurture piety, social responsibility, and artistic or literary taste; in fact, the feudal noble of the age often had little respect for religious or cultural refinement. In this difficult phase Western Europe lacked the vigorous leadership it had enjoyed in the eighth and early ninth century, when Carolingian rulers, popes, and monastic leaders served as rallying points against the always present danger of a reversion to barbarism. This meant that the struggle to retain any degree of unity in the name of religion and culture had become desperate.

In the century after 850 each of the three great civilizations encircling the Mediterranean developed a degree of internal, primarily political, diversity not clearly evident before. Moslem and Western European civilization had been broken into several independent states, and in the West these were themselves divided into numerous feudal principalities. Byzantium had expanded her political
strength so that she was able to draw into her orbit several Slavic kingdoms, thus creating a kind of community of states even though the Byzantine empire itself remained powerfully united. However, the emergence of diverse political units within the embrace of each civilization did not mean the end of the larger entity, the civilization itself. Religious and cultural forces still bound together the political fragments to the extent that each of the three—Western Europe, Byzantium, or Islam—was able to maintain the unique qualities around which their civilizations had been formed.