

A New Civilization Emerges in Western Europe

Stages of Postclassical Development

- The postclassical West suffered from **several key problems**, including the political fragmentation of Italy, the Muslim conquest of Spain, Viking raids, and a decline in intellectual life.
- Effective political organization was usually local, and **manorialism** created an oppressive system of political and economic organization between landlords and peasants, many of whom were **serfs**. The **moldboard** and **three-field system** gradually improved agriculture.
- The Christian church was the most organized institution in western Europe. It had a relatively clear hierarchy and established a chain of **monasteries**. **Clovis's** conversion to Christianity helped him gain power over the **Franks**.
- **Charlemagne** established a substantial empire in France and Germany around the year 800, but his empire did not survive his death as Europe split increasingly into **regional monarchies**.
- Agricultural advances, population increases, and growing towns helped breathe economic and cultural vitality into Europe after 900.
- The key military and political system in the Middle Ages was **feudalism**, a system in which greater lords provided protection and aid to lesser lords, called **vassals**; vassals, in turn, owed their lords military service, some goods or payments, and advice. The introduction of feudal monarchy generally took time, though **William the Conqueror** introduced feudal monarchy to England following his invasion in 1066.
- Feudal lords cut into aristocratic power. In 1215 noblemen forced King John to sign the **Magna Carta**, and **parliaments** served as further checks on royal authority.
- Western Europe's **expansionist impulse** led to the conquest of Spain, the first European steps in the Americas, and (spurred on by pope **Urban II**) the **Crusades**. Though the Crusades ultimately ended in defeat, they opened western Europe's eyes to new possibilities, particularly for trade.
- Several important reforms impacted the church, including those advocated by the **Franciscans**, the **Order of Saint Clare**, and pope **Gregory VII**. The **investiture controversy** helped give the church power over monarchies.
- Several key creative tensions characterized the High Middle Ages.

Western Culture in the Post-Classical Era

- Theologians like **Peter Abelard** and **Thomas Aquinas** helped to assimilate Greek philosophical ideas into the Catholic religious tradition. **Bernard of Clairvaux** opposed this process, but ultimately **scholasticism** prevailed.
- Though some pagan traditions continued, **Christian devotion among lay people increased**.
- Medieval architecture, literature, and art reflected religious themes. **Gothic** cathedrals rose up around western Europe.

Changing Economic and Social Forms in the Post-Classical Centuries

- Economic activity and social structure developed **innovative common features** around western Europe, and the region became a growing commercial zone.
- **Peasants gained more freedom** with agricultural advances.
- Urban growth allowed more **specialized manufacturing and commercial activities**, which, in turn, promoted still greater trade. The **Hanseatic League** is perhaps the best example of cities working together for mutual economic benefit. **Guilds** grouped people in the same business or trade in a single city, stressing security and mutual control.
- Men placed new limits on the condition of women, and patriarchal structures seemed to be taking deeper root.

The Decline of the Medieval Synthesis

- The devastation and antifeudal innovations of the 14th century's **Hundred Years War** suggested that change was at hand. Agricultural resources could no longer sustain increasing population, and devastating plagues like the **Black Death** swept Europe. The growth of **professional armies** shook the authority of feudal lords, who turned to a ceremonial style of life. A series of **controversies over papal authority** distanced the church from everyday devotion. Intellectual and artistic life gradually moved out from under Church influence.
- The **legacy of the Medieval period** includes academic institutions, political ideas, and a marked change in the relationship between the West and the regions around it.

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. The period known as the Middle Ages in Europe
(A) was an era in which European culture and civilization dominated the Mediterranean region.
(B) was a period of isolation and stagnation for European society.
(C) began with feudal kings in control and ended with the Roman Catholic church the dominant power in Europe.
(D) began with the fall of Rome and ended with the decline of Europe's feudal and religious institutions.
(E) saw Christianity confined to a few lands in western Europe.
2. During the Middle Ages, effective political and military power in Europe was
(A) wielded by the Roman Catholic church.
(B) the domain of the national monarch such as the King of France.
(C) local in nature with regional aristocrats

- holding the greatest influence.
(D) furnished by mercenary armies supported by the rich towns and cities.
(E) shared by the peasants, urban dwellers, and the church.
3. Manorialism was characterized by all of these conditions EXCEPT:
(A) most peasants were serfs.
(B) manors and peasants depended on merchants for most necessities.
(C) peasants were obligated to give their lord a portion of their produce.
(D) the lords protected the peasants.
(E) levels of production and technology were low and limited.
4. Serfs differed from slaves in that
(A) serfs were largely commercialized artisans while slaves were agricultural.
(B) serfs were ethnically Europeans while slaves were Muslims, pagans, and Africans.
(C) they could not be bought or sold, and owned some of the land they farmed.
(D) serfs could serve in the military, while slaves could not.
(E) slaves frequently were better educated and lived in towns.
5. After the collapse of Charlemagne's empire, the pattern of political life in western Europe
(A) was dominated by the strong empire, that his sons and heirs established.
(B) was modeled on the Byzantine Empire.
(C) returned to small tribes and clans with regional or local loyalties.
(D) focused on religious control of states and politics.
(E) consisted of regional monarchies with strong aristocracies.
6. Medieval universities and schools
(A) were established to train bureaucrats to run the government.
(B) were hesitant to study the Greek classics and Arab sciences.
(C) trained students mainly in theology, medicine, and law.
(D) arose in rural settings around the larger, more famous monasteries.
(E) welcomed members of all classes including women, provided they passed the entrance exams.
7. The major lasting result of the Crusades was the
(A) conversion of eastern Europe to Roman Catholicism.
(B) establishment of cultural and economic contacts between western Europe and the Middle East.
(C) conquest of the Holy Land and Jerusalem.
(D) destruction of the European nobility and military class.
(E) creation of a new Holy Roman Empire ruling many Mediterranean lands.
8. Many scholars in the Middle Ages
(A) disputed Biblical writings.
(B) attempted to assimilate Christian faith with Greek philosophy and reason.
(C) organized themselves into guilds.
(D) increased conflict with the church, which protected the serfs.
(E) advocated against slavery.
9. The Hanseatic League is an example of
(A) a guild.
(B) a military triumvirate.
(C) a commercial alliance.
(D) the growth of cultural institutions in the late Middle Ages.
(E) the educational collaboration of the era.
10. Although western society was not as tolerant of merchants as were Muslim and Indian societies,
(A) weak governments allowed merchants to assert considerable power in semi-independent trading cities.
(B) the Roman Catholic Church encouraged profits.
(C) western merchants amassed greater

wealth than their Muslim and Hindu counterparts.

(D) western rulers rarely interfered in or regu-

lated trade or commerce.

(E) Christian merchants married easily into the aristocratic elites.

Document-Based Question

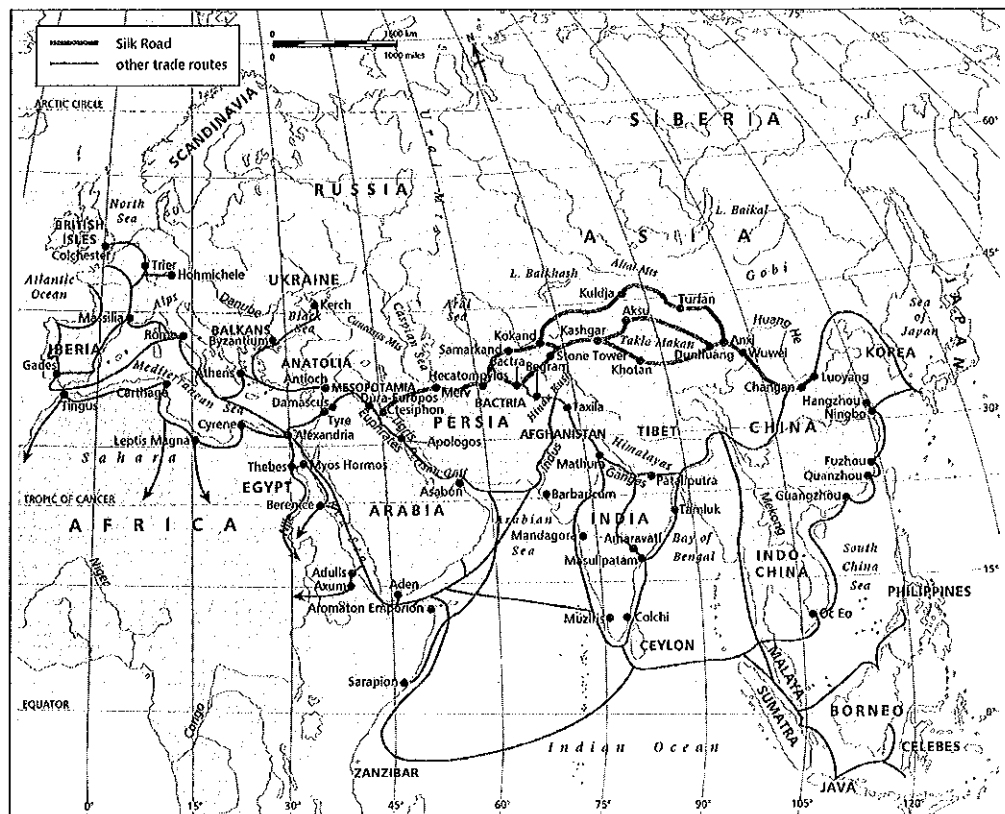
Using the following documents, discuss the reasons for exchanges and the results of exchanges among major societies in the period 600–1450: Why did the scope and pace of exchange tend to increase during the period itself? What other kinds of documents would help in this assessment?

DOCUMENT 1 Source: An account by the colleague of Hsuan Tsang's on the Chinese Buddhist monk's journey to India in the 7th century.

“The Master of the Law [Hsuan Tsang] when he came to worship the Bodhi tree and the figure of [the Buddha] at the time of his reaching perfect wisdom...gazed on these objects with the most sincere devotion, he cast himself down with his face to the ground in worship, and with much grief and many tears in his self-affliction, he sighed, and said: ‘At the time when Buddha perfected himself in wisdom, I know not in what condition I was, in the troublous whirl of birth and death;’...

“At this time there happened to come to the spot, from different quarters, a body of priests who had just broken up from their religious retreat, numbering several thousand men; these persons, when they beheld (? *The Master*) were all moved to pity and sorrow.”

DOCUMENT 2 Source: Trade Routes 7th–15th centuries.



DOCUMENT 3 Source: Albert van Aachen, who collected reminiscences for veterans of the First Crusade, 1096–1099.

“In the fields of the plains of Tripoli can be found in abundance a honey reed which they call Zucra; the people are accustomed to suck enthusiastically on these reeds, delighting themselves with this pleasure in spite of their sweetness. The plant is grown, presumably and with great effort, by the inhabitants....It was on this sweet-tasting sugar cane that people sustained themselves during the sieges of Elbarieh, Marrah, and Arkah, when tormented by fearsome hunger.”

DOCUMENT 4 Source: Fulcher of Chartres, chaplain to Baldwin of Boulogne, first crusader king of Jerusalem, 1126 or 1127.

“For we who were Occidentals have now become Orientals. He who was a Roman or a Frank has in this land been made into a Galilean or a Palestinian. He who was of Rheims or Charter has now become a citizen of Tyre or Antioch. We have already forgotten the places of our birth; already these are unknown to many of us or not mentioned any more. Some already possess homes or households by inheritance. Some have taken wives not only of their own people but Syrians or Armenians or even Saracens who have obtained the grace of baptism....People use eloquence and idioms of diverse languages in conversing back and forth. Words of different languages have become common property known to each nationality, and mutual faith unites those who are ignorant of their descent....He who was born a stranger is now as one born here; he who was born an alien has become a native.”

DOCUMENT 5 Source: Marco Polo, a European traveler from the merchant class in the 13th century whose travel account was widely read in Europe.

“Passing on from here we came to the province of Pem [Turkestan], five days’ journey in extent, towards the east-northeast. Here too the inhabitants worship Mahomet [Muhammed] and are subject to the Great Khan. It has villages and towns in plenty. The most splendid city and the capital of the province is called Pem. There are rivers here in which are found stones called jasper and chalcedony in plenty. There is no lack of the means of life. Cotton is plentiful. The inhabitants live by trade in industry.”

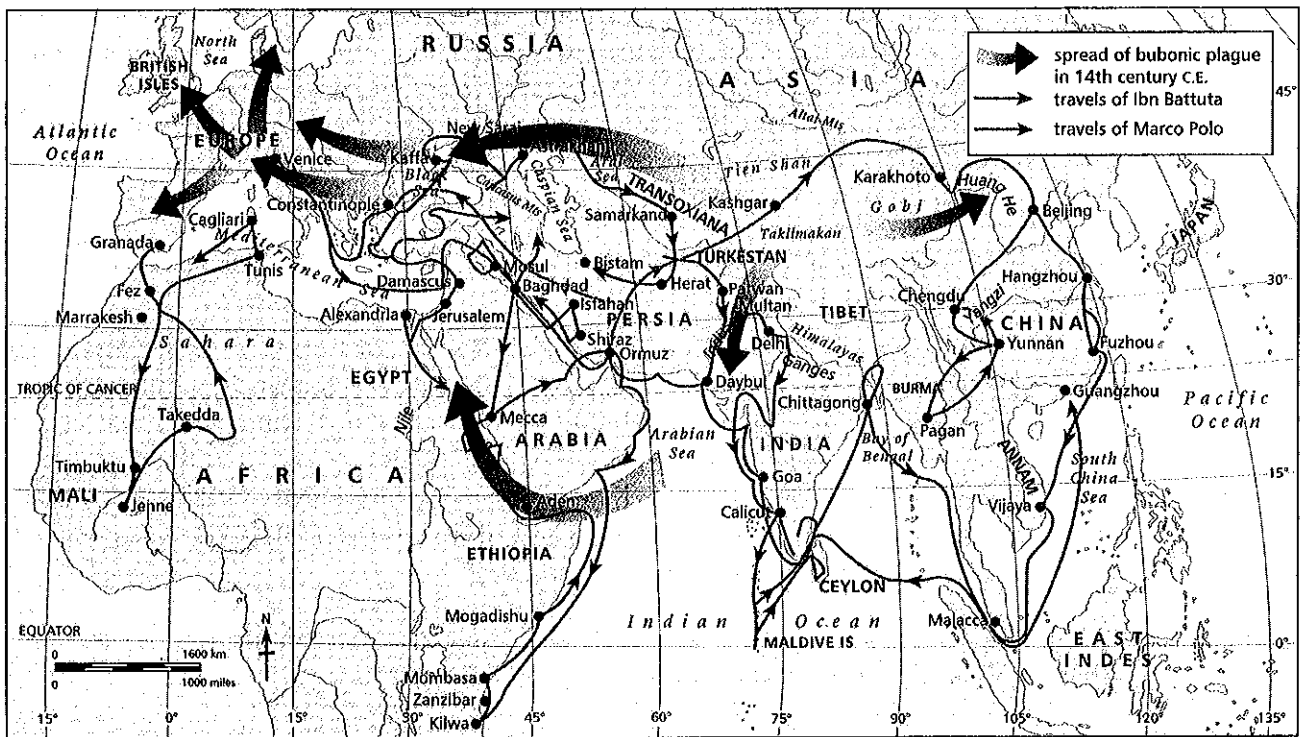
DOCUMENT 6 Source: Wang Li (1314–1389) was a native of the western region of China who adopted Chinese customs. He wrote this piece while reflecting on cemeteries in the area.

“By the time of [Kublai Khan] the land within the Four Seas had become the territory of one family, civilization had spread everywhere, and no more barriers existed. For people in search of fame and wealth in north and south, a journey of a thousand *li* was like a trip next door, while a journey of ten thousand *li* constituted just a neighborly jaunt. Hence, among people of the Western Regions who served at court, or who studied in our south-land, many forgot the region of their birth, and took delight in living among our rivers and lakes. As they settled down in China for a long time, some became advanced in years, their families grew, and being far from home, they had no desire to be buried in their fatherland. Brotherhood among peoples has certainly reached a new plane.”

DOCUMENT 7 Source: Ibn Battuta, a Moroccan traveler, pilgrim, and diplomat, in West Africa in 1352.

“Then I traveled at the beginning of the month of God, . . . with travel companions . . . In the company was a group of the merchants of Sijilmasa and others. We arrived after twenty-five days at Taghaza . . . Amongst its curiosities is the fact that the construction of its houses and its mosques is of rock salt with camel skin roofing and there are no trees in it, the soil is just sand. In it is a salt mine. It is dug out of the ground and is found there in huge slabs, one on top of another as if it had been carved and put there under the ground. A camel can carry two slabs of salt. Nobody lives in it except slaves of the Massufa who dig for the salt and live on dates brought to them from Dar’a and Sijilmasa, and on the meat of camels, and on *anli* which is brought from the land of the blacks . . . The blacks exchange the salt as money as one would exchange gold and silver.”

DOCUMENT 8 Source: The Routes of the Plague, 14th century.



Free-Response Question

Describe the ways in which Christianity shaped postclassical European culture.

ANSWERS AND EXPLANATIONS

Multiple-Choice Questions

- **1. (D) is correct.** Historians have set these chronological boundaries for the Middle Ages.
- **2. (C) is correct.** The system of manorialism governed relations between local elites and the peasant masses.
- **3. (B) is correct.** Though life was difficult for peasants, most everyday needs were provided within the manorial system.
- **4. (C) is correct.** Serfs retained essential ownership of their houses and lands as long as they kept up with their obligations. They could also pass their property rights on through inheritance.
- **5. (E) is correct.** A durable empire proved impossible, given competing loyalties and the absence of a strong bureaucracy.
- **6. (C) is correct.** Universities began as training centers for future clergy members, but expanded to teach those who desired careers in law and medicine.
- **7. (B) is correct.** The Crusades helped expose the West to new cultural and economic influences from the Middle East. This was a major spur to further change.
- **8. (B) is correct.** Scholars like Peter Abelard and Thomas Aquinas wrote treatises that attempted to reconcile pagan philosophy with Christian faith.
- **9. (C) is correct.** Cities in northern Germany and southern Scandinavia grouped together in the Hanseatic League to encourage trade.
- **10. (A) is correct.** Because Western governments were weak, with few economic functions, merchants had a freer hand than in many other civilizations. Many of the growing cities were ruled by commercial leagues.

Document-Based Question Sample Response

Using the following documents, discuss the reasons for exchanges and the results of exchanges among major societies in the period 600–1450: Why did the scope and pace of exchange tend to increase during the period itself? What other kinds of documents would help in this assessment?

Missionaries, pilgrims, soldiers, and merchants traversed the trade routes of Africa, Asia, and Europe in search of religious salvation or inspiration, conquest, or profits throughout the period 600 to 1450. As religions spread and new empires were created, more stability was brought to old trade routes, increasing the dissemination of commodities and knowledge, but inadvertently also spreading the plague and other diseases. To illustrate the geographical extent of the spread of major religions and empires, it would be useful to have maps showing the progression of the spread of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, and the empires that promoted these religions such as the Byzantine, Carolingian, Umayyad, Abbasid, and Delhi Sultanate. Although it did not promote any one religion, the Mongol Empire was also significant in reestablishing stability along the Silk Road and thus creating avenues for the passing of goods and ideologies.

Religious exchange was a key factor in cultural interaction in this time period. Missionaries traveled from India to China spreading Buddhism, and in return, Chinese converts traveled to India to bring back relics and scripture to China. Pilgrims, such as Hsuan Tsang (**DOCUMENT 1**), sought knowledge of their religion in the country of its source, often sponsored by the rulers of the newly converted lands. It should be noted that document 1 is written by a colleague of the man described in the document and so his representation of the influence that the “master” had on priests from all over, numbering in the thousands, might have been exaggerated. This account was probably intended for a Chinese audience, and therefore the colleague wished to boost the importance of the “master.” Ibn Battuta, one of the most widely traveled people of the era (**DOCUMENTS 7 AND 8**), began his interest in travel as a Muslim pilgrim to Mecca. A document from a pilgrim on hajj talking about the exchange of ideas with pilgrims from other areas of Dar al Islam would be useful, as the annual hajj to Mecca was such a great gathering of many individuals from all walks of life and a wide geographic area that it gave birth to the term “mecca” for a gathering of people and thus a gathering of ideas. Christianity also expanded during this time period due to the efforts of the Byzantines in Eastern Europe and the Carolingians in Western Europe. Later, in the 11th century, as Europeans began to identify themselves as a Christian group, they sought to recapture the Holy land, now controlled by Muslims, in part to make easier access to Christian holy places for Christian pilgrims.

The Crusades were both a means of exchange and a result of exchange. Bedouin tribes, newly united by their sense of identity in Islam, moved from Arabia into the Byzantine and Persian territories and into North Africa. These converts converted others, such as Moors who went to Spain, and Turks who moved into Northern India. At the same time, Christianity was spreading throughout Europe. Soldiers of these two great religions eventually came into conflict over control of the land of Palestine, which is considered holy for both religions. These conflicts led to a variety of exchanges from knowledge of spices like sugar (**DOCUMENT 3**) to linguistic changes and religious conversions (**DOCUMENT 4**). As document 3 was written for veterans of the First Crusade, it might glorify a product that was seen as useful during the time of the sieges. Sugar was fairly rare in Europe at the time and became a valuable spice. Exchanges between Christians and Muslims were often contradictory. Although at war, they also learned from each other, occasionally married each other, and often traded with each other. Chaplain Fulcher describes this and seems to be accepting of the blending of cultures in the Holy Land as long as Christianity is the dominant religion. As a chaplain in the Christian Church, it is natural that he would favor acceptance of his religion by other cultures. He might be less tolerant of the situation later when Muslims took back Jerusalem and Islam again dominated. It is a blatant disregard by Christians of the reality of the Third Crusade. Richard the Lion Hearted did not defeat Saladin. This is purely European Christian propaganda. A document from the Muslim perspective on the crusades would be a nice balance to the Christian views presented here. Perhaps Saladin’s account of his battles with the

crusaders or a Muslim merchant's account of selling relics to a Christian knight would show a different aspect to the exchanges between these two cultures.

By the 13th century, a new stability occurred on these continents. The Mongol conquests created a stable Eurasia and a revival of trade along the Silk Road. Feudalism provided for economic growth in Europe and a demand for goods like spices and silk that the Europeans became exposed to during the crusades. The emergence of West African kingdoms that were Islamic connected the salt and gold trade to a wider Islamic market. Thus we see Marco Polo, a European, being able to travel all the way to China and reside in the court of the Mongol ruler of China, Kublai Khan. As a merchant, it is natural that he would remark on the availability of goods he saw on his journey, like gem stones and cotton. It is interesting to note that as a European he is also remarking on where the Muslims live, as the Christians still consider Islam a threat. Similar to document 4 on Jerusalem, **DOCUMENT 6** demonstrates the blending of cultures occurring in Eurasia under *Pax Mongolica*. The fact that a Chinese author saw this as a brotherhood is interesting as the Chinese usually disdained the nomads. However, the author is implying that as the nomads settle in China they are losing their nomad identity and are becoming more sedentary, like the Chinese. Since the Mongols worked hard to maintain their Mongol culture, which they saw as superior, and their power, this account was either later in the period or perhaps exaggerated. Although the Abbasid Caliphate also fell to the Mongols, Islam continued to be a unifying force in much of the world, especially bringing Africa into the world network of trade. Islamic merchants connected East Africa to India (**DOCUMENT 2**) and farther in the Indian Ocean trade. The trans-Saharan trade in salt is important as noted by Ibn Battuta in **DOCUMENT 7**. Trade increased dramatically. Sugar, cotton, gem stones, and salt are carried vast distances by merchants, as are other goods. A look at both maps shows the travel routes of Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta are the same as the trade routes. Ibn Battuta, who is a diplomat and pilgrim, even states that he traveled with merchants. Clearly, merchant activity was important and increased with the stability provided by *Pax Mongolica* and Islam. Although the spread of goods and ideas was primarily beneficial, the diseases spread by these travelers, and the conquering armies who created the unified empires was not. Perhaps that is why the designer of the map put the travel routes together with the plague spread on the same map. Bubonic plague in the 14th century was especially devastating for the Mongol Empire and for Europeans. Although it helped cause the collapse of the Mongol Empire and disrupted some trade in Europe, it did not end trade completely, especially in the Indian Ocean and West Africa as the map in **DOCUMENT 8** shows.

The period 600 to 1450 is often considered the beginning of a world system in history because of the trade networks established at this time. Although the network is Afro-Eurasia, it is extensive enough to be considered a world system. The expansion of Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam also united disparate peoples and cultures, allowing for the dissemination of ideas across vast territories and creating syncretic cultures in border areas. Although these cultures often came into conflict, as in the crusades or the wars between nomadic

and sedentary societies, the end results were the spread of ideas and commodities that increased as new empires created stability. This paved the way for a greater demand for goods and the emergence of new states in Europe that will take a more dominant role in the world's trade network.

Free-Response Essay Sample Response

Describe the ways in which Christianity shaped postclassical European culture.

Christianity permeated many aspects of postclassical European life. The church established itself as a higher power than individual monarchs, in part as a result of the investiture controversy. Universities, though allowing for some disagreement, emphasized theology and trained countless clergymen; they also provided the backdrop for the assimilation of Greek and Roman ideas into Christianity. Finally, religious themes dominated art and architecture. As the Middle Ages came to a close, however, the influence of the church declined.