CHRISTIANITY CREATED EUROPEAN CULTURE

Călin ROŞU
University of Craiova

Abstract: Europe has been the center of European culture.But what made Europe great was the Christian religion that united Antiquity and Middle Ages and opened the gates of the Age of Exploration.Christianity has survived the roman persecution,the barbarian invasions,the fall of Rome,the turks and the vikings.Against all odds it has become the Mark of God's Will on Earth.Europe and it's feudal age have been kept strong by the religious fervor that swept aside the poverty and horror following the invasions.But from goths to slavs,from huns to normans ,they all became Christians,Europeans.
The Catholic and Orthodox Church have opened the gates of The new World and Asia,setting the stage for the confrontations that would shake the Europe…and turn regional powers into global players.Religion has created european culture!

Keywords:Christianity,Culture,european,feudal,religion.

Europe has been the focal point of the world's cultural evolutions ,the world has spinned in the exact direction of the european compass. Christian Europe has been the leading force behind global transforations and cultural breakthroughs.

The greeks invented medicine,phylosophy,political sciences.The romans had spread the values of Europe to the far corners of the known world.But the most important revolution, the real Evolution came from the Eastern Mediteranean zone,a region colsely tied to Europe by history and culture.[1]Jesus Christ,our Lord,gave hope to those who had none,the hope of eternal life,of freedom and equality.The lands of Palestine had always been considered a part of Europe,even since the days of Macedon,hellenic culture had spread all the way to Mesopotamia.Christianity,although originary from Judea,spread as fast as only God's Will could through Roman Europe to the far ends of Spain and the British lands.[2]Very fast ,it replaced the false,politheistic religions of the Antiquty.The continent appeared to enter a new era of brotherhood and peace,unparalleled in history with the ascension of the Roman Emperor Constantine to the throne,and the recognition of Christianity as the only true Religion of the Empire.[3]

But greed split the realms of the roman in half ,one with Rome at its center and another whit it's heart at Constantinople.

In terms of politics,the two empires became fierce competitors , both struggling for power.On many occasions the only unity between them,was given by religion.Three continents ,united by the same faith ,were the envy of the known world.And soon,the unknown world would come to take over the old.

From the steppes of Mongolia,the huns began a reign of terror that set in motion all the peoples between the Volga and the Rhine,One by one ,barbarian tribes started to flee from

[1] *"Abrahamic Faiths, Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflicts" (Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change. Series I, Culture and Values, Vol. 7) by Paul Peachey, George F. McLean and John Kromkowski (Jun 1997) ISBN 1565181042*
France, R. T. (2005). "Kingdom of God". In Vanhoozer, Kevin J.; Bartholomew
[2] *idem*
[3] *González, Justo L. (1984). The Story of Christianity: Vol. 1: The Early Church to the Reformation. San Francisco: Harper*

BDD-A22005 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:07:38 UTC)

the approaching hoardes into the roman world.At first,they were few,easily absorbed into the latin world,but then came a germanic onslaught:the visigoths,ostrogoths,the longobards,the franks,the slavic tribes invaded the Western Empire.While the East was cowering behind the walls,the romans became victims of their own policy of conquest.

Province after province was abandoned to the barbarians,casualities mounted and,at once, proud romans became slaves themselves.The barbarians had come to settle,to colonise,and their rule was fierce,not based upon Christian morality ,but the primary instincts and tribal laws.While the fall of Rome itself ,the dark ages had begun.Culture plummited,cities were abandoned, as more and more peole fled in terror ,to distant shores.Christianity was once again forced to hide from the animist ruling elite ,and Europe turned into a feudal collection of petty states ruled by clansmen.

The social classes were split in two:on one side the nobility ,governing through brutal force,and on the other ,the poor peasantry,forced into service ,and treated almost like slaves by their feudal masters.This created a climate of inequity and tension between different parts of the population.On the other hand,the new germanic masters were incapable of establishing cultural supremacy over the conquered romans,and thus remained separated ,into their own class,incapable of correctly managing a cultural diverse society.

However,in the East ,Christianity survived ,and shadowed the animist religions of the migratory slavs.The Orthodox Church of Constantinople, ruled over a greek speaking majority rather than a latin one.An empire with different customs ,that would, in their own way shape the way that people woul percieve God's rule.By the sixth century,the slavs had converted to Christianity and had embraced the byzantine way of life.The West had kept it's Roman Church intact under the authority of the Pope.Christianity had survived the barbarians and had emerged strengthened ,even in a polithical way[4].Here ,the rulers felt their right to the throne is God's Law and sought support from the Church.The True Faith had prevailed over the animist religions brought by germans,who soon converted to Christianity ,thus becoming integrated in a firm way within the european society.They had, by the seventh century, embraced latin customs and traditions.

This became the setting stone for the new peoples of Europe.Powerfull rulers came to power to unite the lands they considered rightfully theirs,and thus sought legitimity within the glorious past of the Roman Empire.The latin language became once more the language of the elite,but it was a different type of latin in every part of Europe.The early spanish,portuguese,italian,french and romanian peoples were formed.They each represented a successor of the Roman Empire,a different branch which ,over time grew,developed it's own identity,a factor that would soon come to surpass local feudal loyality.Above all,the Allmighty Church reigned supreme,every european lord becoming the iron fist of the social stratification.[5]

For many ,like the Emperor Charlemagne,Christianity unfortunately became the mean of asserting his God given right to rule,a right that on ocassions came into contest with the will of others,wars were a thing of every day life.But ,with the help of the Church social unrest became a thing of the past.Monasteries became centers of study for the sons and daughters of the ruling elites.A different Church began to take form in the West ,built by the hearts of a multiethnic society,a society that began to trade intensly…a society that was,deep inside,beginning to seek it's laicity.

As the feudal states gained power in the nineth century Europe,the differences became apparent between East and West.In the West,the ruler was legitimised by the Pope,but often,the Pope would be put into office by polithical reasons rather than religious fervor.In the

[4] idem
[5] *Woods, How the Church Built Western Civilization(2005)*

BDD-A22005 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:07:38 UTC)

Byzantine Empire,the Patriarch was put into office by powerfull assemblies of high prelates ,and the Emperor had only to accept their choice.

The presence of the muslims on European soil,focused the efforts of the Western europeans on freeing Provence ,Spain and Portugal from the grasps of the moors,so a war of conquest began.After initial succeses the moors were beaten back,and western kings financed more and more campaigns to free Europe from what they percieved as the muslim mennace.

The byzantines had been under siege from the arabs ,fighting to retain its asian posession.But this Empire was a cultural diverse one,and many of its asian subjects found they had more in common with the arab invaders, rather than with their greek speaking monarch.National conscience was not as present as in Western Europe where ethnicity tilt the balance .The only thing that held the Empire together was Eastern Christianity,following the original teaching of Christ and the Apostoles.[6]

By the eleventh century the Western states were already on their way to monarchic centralised rule ,but new invasions came from the viking north.These newcomers brought about savage traditions and customs that terrified Britain France and even southern Italy.Their descendants,the normans,founded a new dinastic line in the British Isles and conquered extensive lands in France.

With the rise of the Holy Roman Empire,the last pagan enclaves, in the Baltic Region and Hungary converted to ChristianityBut by the middle of the century ,the Chruch split ,according to geographic and cultural needs,setting into motion a wrong that would hurt Europe's destinies for centuries to come.[7]

From the East,the turkish mennace began to loom ,countless muslim turanic tribes began to pour into Anatolia and Cappadocia.The Byzantine Empire had been weakened by decades of corruption and attacks ,and ith had to yeald ground to the invaders.Orthodox culture suffered in the conquered lands where Islam was imposed by force.The greek culture that had flourished under byzantine rule was now under threat by a very different way of life.

Another Champion was on the rise in the West ,and it was Spain.Strengthened,after succesfully defeating the moors of Andalusia,the kingdoms of Castilla and Aragon begun what is known as the Reconquista.With the blessing of the Pope and the iron fist of the Inquisition ,they began to push the moors all the way to Granada ,where they made their last stand on Continental Europe.Spanish culture and the Catholic faith were imposed throught the conquered lands and powerfull landlords took over the cities once inhabited by the moors.

In the East, the Golden Horde that had ravaged Asia and Eastern Europe had split into petty successor kingdoms,that became easy prey for the Kievan Rus and the Russian Kingdoms.Both slavic branches had converted to the Orthodox faith and stood firm against the invasion of Islam.

Crusades were launched by the Catholic nations to conquer Jerusalem and the rest of the Holy Land.They were initially succesfull into establishing crusader kingdoms on the Eastern Shores of the Mediteranean.But one crusade attacked and deposed the byzantine emperor and severely weakened byzantine power .With the rise of Salladin,crusader states were destroyed by muslim attacks ,and soon enough, muslim turks and arabs arrived at the gates of Constantinople.

Meanwhile the portuguese began journeyng to the ends of the Earth,to China,South Africa,India,Indonesia.The spanish kingdoms accomplished the total reconquista of the Peninsula and by 1492,spanish caravels had set sail for the New World.

---

[6] idem

[7] Padberg, Lutz v., (1998): *Die Christianisierung Europas im Mittelalter*, Stuttgart, Reclam

BDD-A22005 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:07:38 UTC)

But Constantinople had fallen to the turks and the byzantine East quickly followed.The restless hoarde of Mehmet the second, then turned their sights to Catholic Europe.For the first time,Christianity united under the same banner against the common mennace.

The Russian Tzar had all but eradicated tatar presence on slavic soil and was on his way to unifying all russian speaking kingdoms .Now Russia was the Orthodox ruler of Eastern Europe.

The Habsburg dinasty that ruled Spain and Austria became the most poerefull dinasty in Western Europe.Spanish ships opened the new World to european conquest and colonisation.Dauntless explorers conquered the Aztec Empire sending countless treasures to Madrid.Thousands of europeans set sail to the Americas in search of wealth, glory,and in some cases,adepts for conversion.Portuguese colonists established Brazil,Goa and Indonesia,bringing home precious silk and spices.Christianity became a world religion,thus reaching the far corners of the Globe,setting the stage for the clash of the Enlightment.[8]

Throught the ages,Christianity and Culture coexisted and coincided in a successful cooperation ,that to a large extent made Europe the uncontested ruler of the World.Christianity has influenced the way we live and has become the fabric of our of our power ,our existance.Religion has been and will forever remain the key factor in the existance of humanity in general and Europe in particular.

Această lucrare a fost realizată in cadrul proiectului "Cultura româna şi modele culturale europene: cercetare, sincronizare, durabilitate", cofinanţat de Uniunea Europeana şi Guvernul României din Fondul Social European prin Programul Operaţional Sectorial Dezvoltarea Resurselor Umane 2007-2013, contractul de finanţare nr. POSDRU/159/1.5/S/136077 sau „This paper is suported by the Sectorial Operational Programme Human Resources Development (SOP HRD), financed from the European Social Fund and by the Romanian Government under the contract number SOP HRD/159/1.5/S/136077

Bibliography:

1. *Harent Stephane,Original Sin ,Catholic Encyclopedia,vol 11,New York,Robert Appleton Company,1911*
2. *"Abrahamic Faiths, Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflicts" (Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change. Series I, Culture and Values, Vol. 7) by Paul Peachey, George F. McLean and John Kromkowski (Jun 1997) ISBN 1565181042*
3. *France, R. T. (2005). "Kingdom of God". In Vanhoozer, Kevin J.; Bartholomew, Craig G.; Treier, Daniel J. et al. Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. pp. 420–2. ISBN 978-0-8010-2694-2*
4. *González, Justo L. (1984). The Story of Christianity: Vol. 1: The Early Church to the Reformation. San Francisco: Harper*
5. *Woods, How the Church Built Western Civilization(2005)*
6. *Dussel, Enrique, A History of the Church in Latin America, Wm B Eerdmans Publishing, 1981*
7. Padberg, Lutz v., (1998): *Die Christianisierung Europas im Mittelalter*, Stuttgart, Reclam

[8] *Dussel, Enrique, A History of the Church in Latin America, Wm B Eerdmans Publishing, 1981*

BDD-A22005 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:07:38 UTC)