

The History of the Medieval World: From the Conversion of Constantine to the First Crusade

By Susan Wise Bauer

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A masterful narrative of the Middle Ages, when religion became a weapon for kings all over the world.

From the schism between Rome and Constantinople to the rise of the T'ang Dynasty, from the birth of Muhammad to the crowning of Charlemagne, this erudite book tells the fascinating, often violent story of kings, generals, and the peoples they ruled.

In her earlier work, *The History of the Ancient World*, Susan Wise Bauer wrote of the rise of kingship based on might. But in the years between the fourth and the twelfth centuries, rulers had to find new justification for their power, and they turned to divine truth or grace to justify political and military action. Right thus replaces might as the engine of empire.

Not just Christianity and Islam but the religions of the Persians and the Germans, and even Buddhism, are pressed into the service of the state. This phenomenon?stretching from the Americas all the way to Japan?changes religion, but it also changes the state. 4 illustrations; 46 maps

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
Bauer (*The History of the Ancient World*) continues her witty and well-written examination of world history with a volume that is rich in detail and intriguing in anecdotal information. In describing dramatic events (such as the worldwide –impact of the eruption of Krakatoa in 535 C.E., or civil war among the descendants of Charlemagne), near-legendary individuals (like the great general turned mercenary El Cid), and decisive historical movements from the fourth century C.E. to the beginnings of the 12th century, attention is effectively paid not only to western and eastern Europe but to North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, the Far East, South Asia, and the Americas. The political and military rise and fall of rulers or would-be rulers and the prominence of religion in matters of conscience and state give force and power to the narrative as does the constant impact of simple human emotion and ambition on the flow of history. A bit overwhelming in its scope, Bauer's work nevertheless proves perfectly, and entertainingly, that the more things change, the more they stay the same. 20 illus., 85 maps. *(Feb.)*
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From Booklist
In this second title in the author’s projected four-volume world history, narratives of monarchs, generals, and clerics transport the reader through centuries of tumult culminating in the First Crusade’s capture of Jerusalem in 1099. Intentionally general interest, Bauer’s book provides a vital scorecard in the form of rosters of rulers and dozens of maps that track successions aplenty, of legitimate heirs and usurpers alike. Rightful possession of power, as in Bauer’s History of the Ancient World (2007), thematically infuses this work’s welter of accounts of imperial rises and falls in Europe, the Near East, India, China, and Japan. If it was a truth universally acknowledged that the divine sanctioned the secular, the immediacies of the latter often required doctrinal or political adjustments in the former (as in Constantine’s Council of Nicaea in 325), furnishing (in addition to pillage) the dramatic momentum to the historical episodes Bauer presents. Demonstrating insight about invariably partial sources, humanism about actors’ motivations, and an apt dramatic touch, Bauer parlays her capacious knowledge of history into the exciting and terrifying subject it can be. --Gilbert Taylor

Review
Bauer (The History of the Ancient World) continues her witty and well-written examination of world history with a volume that is rich in detail and intriguing in anecdotal information. In describing dramatic events (such as the worldwide -impact of the eruption of Krakatoa in 535 C.E., or civil war among the descendants of Charlemagne), near-legendary individuals (like the great general turned mercenary El Cid), and decisive historical movements from the fourth century C.E. to the beginnings of the 12th century, attention is effectively paid not only to western and eastern Europe but to North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, the Far East, South Asia, and the Americas. The political and military rise and fall of rulers or would-be rulers and the prominence of religion in matters of conscience and state give force and power to the narrative as does the constant impact of simple human emotion and ambition on the flow of history. A bit overwhelming in its scope, Bauer's work nevertheless proves perfectly, and entertainingly, that the "more things change, the more they stay the same." --Publishers Weekly, 12/14/2009

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