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Robert S. Lopez

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Robert S. Lopez : The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages, 950ndash;1350 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages, 950ndash;1350:

13 of 14 people found the following review helpful. superb history of the birth of capitalism, credit and the middle classBy westwindThis is a serious history, not a popular account, but it is entirely readable, and so fascinating I read it with great enthusiasm. Other reviewer gives accurate description. This book changed my thinking about the middle ages entirely. It was the birth of capitalism, the middle class, the modern world. Illuminates many of the political

issues of our own time - class warfare, the hostility to businessmen, the ruinous role of taxation by a predatory central government, the necessity of freedom to allow economic progress. 12 of 14 people found the following review helpful. The miracle of the Middle Ages and its meaning for the future By Ricardo Mio Forget everything you've read about the middle ages, or "The Age of Faith" as it is also known. Yes, the gothic cathedrals were the most impressive monuments of the era; and its greatest poem was a description of Hell, Purgatory and Paradise; and the crusades dominated the headlines, so to speak. "The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages, 950-1350" by Robert S. Lopez presents quite a different story that reminds us that the past is indeed prologue, and that much of what we take for granted today was begun at this time. Commerce, which had played second fiddle in antiquity and had sharply declined in the early Middle Ages, became the leading force in economic development that more than any other single force transformed Europe into an economic powerhouse. In 1000 A.D. Europe couldn't feed itself and was badly divided, and ripe for attack by the next band of barbarians that happened along. Three-hundred years later, Europe was the most prosperous place on Earth, with an abundance of food, a wealth of luxuries, universities, soaring cathedrals, incredible art, and no longer prey but a predator looking to colonize distant lands. Commerce imported and exported not merely spices and exotic fabrics from the near east, but a world of ideas. Algebra was an import as were the writing of Plato and the Greek philosophers and playwrights. It was commerce that dramatically increased the production and variety of food, raised the standard of living, fostered reading, writing and arithmetic, financed the Renaissance, built the gothic cathedrals, invented eye glasses, eliminated slavery in Europe, created the middle class, created cities, and brought some semblance of peace to the continent. The merchant class, the men of trade, of money and banking, in going about their business, invented the corporation, created capitalism, fostered a spirit of tolerance and pluralism, and ruled democratically. Kings ruled the country, but the merchant class ran the cities. If you were a runaway serf, you found refuge--and a better job--in the city. The expression "the air breathes freer in the cities" is from this time. Christianity played a very big role too, but it was commerce that vastly improved man's temporal comforts and made his life and that of his family better, healthier, and vastly easier. Read Lopez's book and you'll come away with a better opinion of the future of mankind. 67 of 69 people found the following review helpful.

Comprehensive review of a misjudged era By Dr. Roger McIntyre This book reveals that the middle ages were not dead time as most think but the beginning of a transition from self sufficiency to taking advantage of comparative advantage by trading with others. Lopez starts out with a review of the Roman world and its commerce, transitions to the impact of the barbarian invasions, and only then turns to the takeoff of commercial growth. He describes key factors in the takeoff as creation of an agricultural surplus, the business acumen of the Jews, the adventurousness of the Italians, the role of coins and credit, the value of contracts, and developments in transportation. Of particular interest to me were his comments on the objects and patterns of trade, the pre-Columbus Italian explorations for trade, and the role of guilds in furthering and hindering economic growth. The book is well written and easy to read. Readers of this book might also want to look at *The Medieval Machine* by Gimpel; *Cathedral, Forge, and Waterwheel* by the Gies as well as *Life in a Medieval City*. *Sacred Trust* by Ekelund et al economically analyzes the medieval church as a business firm which also illustrates the commercial flavor of the times. See also N J G Pounds *An Economic History of Medieval Europe*, and also *Gold and Spices*.

Professor Robert Lopez provides an incisive analysis of the economic structure of the Middle Ages. He makes use of modern economic concepts to explain how an underdeveloped economic system gave birth to the commercial revolution through which Europe succeeded in developing itself. The book goes far beyond the familiar picture of medieval European society, with its magnificent cathedrals and imposing castles, to concentrate instead on the walled cities and open countryside, for it was here that the revolution was born. Deftly and concisely, Professor Lopez traces the history of this remarkable economic upheaval which saw the rise of merchants and craftsmen and the decline of agricultural dependence by the society.

About the Author Robert S. Lopez was professor of history at Yale University. Irving W. Raymond was professor of history at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York. Olivia Remie Constable is associate professor of history at the University of Notre Dame.